In this course, we focus on different elements in the art of film, and discuss their philosophical implications, particularly the implications of film for the philosophy of mind and for ethics.

The first topic in the course is typical: montage, or editing. Since the early days of film, many filmmakers and philosophers have thought that the most essential element in filmmaking is montage: i.e., shooting short sequences of action, cutting these sequences to desired lengths, and connecting them together to make a longer film. This means that a film is built out of hundreds of discontinuous parts, but makes up a continuous whole. We will look at the aesthetics and techniques of montage, but our main concern is to discuss the philosophical ideas that arise from the idea of montage. What does it mean that a single “event” is broken up into dozens of bits and pieces? Is perception generally built out of discontinuous parts? Is reality itself built out of discontinuous fragments?

Other weeks’ topics include flashbacks and the nature of time, close-ups and the nature of emotion, CGI and the problem of truth. Some weeks deal with ethical issues in film, such as whether certain images ought not to be recorded or made available to the public, or conversely, whether certain images ought to be preserved.

The readings are drawn from philosophers, film theorist and directors, and filmmaking production manuals. During each class period, in addition to lecture and discussion, we will view clips from a number of films illustrating the point of the class and raising controversies.

Films and writings will be drawn from many world film cultures: from silent Russian film, to French New Wave, to Hollywood, Bollywood, and Nollywood movies, from documentaries to melodramas to slapstick, from computer animation to NASA’s scientific images. Each philosophical reading will be applied to particular films, and each film clip will raise a specific philosophical point.

In short, we investigate what the nature of film (not just plot, but every aspect of film art) can teach us about the nature of perception, reality, and ethics.

Course requirements include short essays based on readings and films viewed, and a longer term paper exploring an original idea about film and philosophy. There will also be class participation grades.

Texts:
Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures*
Also, readings on Blackboard by Sergei Eisenstein, André Bazin, Laura Mulvey, and many others

Grades are based on a short paper relating to the readings, and a longer term paper exploring an original idea about film and philosophy. There will also be bi-weekly responses to questions, and a group presentation at the end of term.