Cinema 201
The Language of Film
Offered in Fall 2011

Description
The iconoclastic French film-maker Jean Luc Godard has provocatively said that all you need for a movie is a girl and a gun. Godard’s scathing critique of the film industry suggests that in spite of the rich history of cinema, it has come to function as little more than a branch of the cosmetics industry—an industry of “make up.” Cinema often consists of overly sanitized plotlines, politics, and bodies, and it has slowly, but surely, degraded itself and reduced its offerings to "the two big stories" of "sex and death." This course will investigate a broad variety of aesthetic possibilities inherent in cinema, and will show an alternate set of cinematic histories and possibilities that Godard and others (including myself) would surely champion.

The course provides the basic skills necessary to read a film and will help students learn to think and write effectively about this medium composed of image and sound. We will concentrate on close analyses of individual films and investigates some of the aesthetic and ideological elements that comprise the multiple languages of cinema. Although this course analyzes some work produced in the United States, it also provides an introduction to cinema as an artistic practice that spans the globe, and it covers contemporary as well as historical modes, including silent films, experimental films, short films, and feature from Europe, Africa, and Asia. This class is likely to require students to regard film in ways that they are not accustomed to. Be prepared to look at film as an art form, as a form of cultural expression, and as something more than a source of entertainment. We will always need to go beyond a response of “wow” or “yuck” or “thumbs up” or “thumbs down.”

Required Books
Counts toward the General Education requirement
Students registered for the course may access the syllabus on Blackboard Vista.