

Syllabus: Philosophy and *Film Noir*

OLLI, Lafayette campus, fall, 2023

Four Thursdays, 1:00-3:00, beginning October 19

Professor: Bill Smoot

Course Description

For many, *film noir* conjures up memories of black and white films with a hard-boiled detective carrying a snub nose revolver and trying to resist a femme fatale in square-shouldered. The characters smoked unfiltered cigarettes and drank whisky in a glass. Entertaining, but shallow.

If film noir is shallow, it is so in the spirit of Nietzsche's observation of the Greeks: "They were superficial—out of profundity."

In this course we will explore lurking in the shadows of *noir* and *neo-noir* films the underlying elements of existentialist, Freudian, Marxist, feminist, and post-modern philosophies. Films will be *The Third Man* (1949), *Chinatown* (1974), *Blade Runner* (1982), and *The Girl Who Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014). Students will view films on their own prior to each class meeting.

Schedule

Week One, October 19

What is film *noir*? Existentialism and the specter of nihilism in *The Third Man*. (1949)

Week Two, October 26

Marxism and Freudianism in the elegant *neo-noir*, *Chinatown*. (1974)

Week Three, November 7

What if the worst visions are true? The existentialist dystopian world of *Blade Runner: The Final Cut* (1982)

Week Four, November 9

Post-modern *Noir*: pastiche and the post-modern sensibility in *A Girl Who Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014)