Several guests are anticipated in class, including San Francisco Dance Film Festival Director Greta Schoenberg, Choreographer/Filmmaker Amy Seiwert of Smuin Ballet, and former Royal Swedish Ballet dancer Katja Bjorner, star of “The Dancer.” There is also the possibility of the presentation of films by San Francisco Ballet dancer Tiit Helimets.

A list of films to be covered will be provided (see below for films currently listed in this syllabus), and students will do most of their viewing independently outside of class. In class, excerpts will be viewed for the purpose of discussion, and we will have one or two filmmakers or other experts visit class to enhance our conversations and to screen short films. Guests and film list subject to change.

Class 1: Making Dance Films - San Francisco Dance Film Festival Screenings
Filmmaker and SFDFF Director Greta Schoenberg will highlight this year’s Festival line-up (the festival is in October). She will bring a selection of cutting-edge films to screen in class (some of these are exclusive to OLLI). Schoenberg will guide us in our film viewing, and we will discuss the latest trends in the making of dance films both nationally and internationally. We will have the opportunity to learn about a variety of genres of dance films and also learn how a film is composed and structured, and what to look for in dance films. We will also hear from Schoenberg about the creation and growth of her film festival, and about how she searches out and selects films.

Class 2: The Art of the Dance Film: American Musicals and Dance Legends - Agnes DeMille and Gene Kelly
We will focus on both contemporary and classic films, seeing the influence on cinema of great choreographer/directors like Agnes de Mille and Gene Kelly. Gene Kelly’s phenomenal performances and choreography brought dance and film to new heights. Kelly was also the first to choreograph for animated characters in his films. We’ll also take a look at the suave sophistication of Fred Astaire, and how both Kelly and Astaire incorporated tap dancing into their choreography. We will view highlights of Gene Kelly’s “Singing in the Rain” and Agnes DeMille’s “Oklahoma.”

Class 3: Dance Documentaries featuring Katja Bjorner star of “The Dancer”
We will look at the art of the documentary dance film including highlights from recent documentaries (possible selections include “First Position” and “Joffrey: Mavericks of American Dance”). Former Royal Swedish Ballet dancer Katja Bjorner will visit our class to discuss her role in the film “The Dancer.” We will have the opportunity to discuss “Mia, A Dancer’s Journey” a new film by Maria Ramas, which will be screened by San Francisco Dance Film Festival.

Class 4: From Stage to Screen - Smuin Ballet choreographer Amy Seiwert and her Dance Films
The New York Times said of Choreographer/ Filmmaker Amy Seiwert that she “follows no formulas.” Ms. Seiwert has created several films and she visits our class to discuss her choreography and her drive to make dance films.

Class 5 and 6: International Films (Iran, Spain, and more) and Upcoming Screenings
In our final classes, we will look at international films, including feature films such as “Desert Dancer,” depicting life in Iran and “Flamenco, Flamenco” by Carlos Saura. We will have a wrap-up discussion of our viewing, and in our last class we’ll preview upcoming dance film releases and festivals.