Top Ten Lists for Students:

As promised in our Zoom meeting earlier this week, Faculty, Admin, and Tech have all been coming up with works to watch while shuttered inside (in the physical, and not psychological, sense). We will have more forthcoming from other members of the department, I’d hope next week, to get you through the exam period and beyond. The range below is eclectic, at times challenging, and most of all fun of all sorts. A lot of the material is easily streamable and/or downloadable; I’m sure there are other ways you can find material too. We hope you find stuff here to get you through the days and nights and days and nights and days and nights. We are all in this together, so feel free to come up with lists (on your own, or even better, get together digitally and socialize) of works you think faculty, admin, and techs ought to be watching. Teach us something and make it a two-way street!

Web-based streaming: From Steph

Here’s my list of non-academic (mostly guilty pleasure) picks:

*Fleebag* (Amazon Prime)
*Clueless* (Netflix)
*Annie* (1982 original, Netflix)
*Tiger King* (Netflix)
*The Jinx: The Life & Deaths of Robert Durst* (Crave)
*Making a Murderer* (Netflix)
*Gilmore Girls* (Netflix)
*Marriage Story* (Netflix)
*Molly’s Game* (Netflix)
*Dirty Money* (Netflix)

Films for students: From Scott

Top 10 Films for Students: 'It's Not the Apocalypse, It's Just a Very Nasty Virus' Edition

These aren’t my ‘top 10’, though I love them all, but they offer a wide range of works I think are, for lack of a better term, ‘great viewing’. I’ve tried to avoid works I have taught in class, but a few have slipped through. Many were made under the ethos of creativity under constraint. They are listed alphabetically, and not ranked.

1. **A Bucket of Blood** (Roger Corman, USA, 1959)

A very low budget classic about the perils of what fame brings to being an artist – especially a *beatnik* artist -- shot in five days, and directed by Roger Corman, who made dozens of low

2. **Classical Hollywood Double Feature: *Cat People*** (Jacques Tourneur, USA, 1942) and *Outrage* (Ida Lupino, USA, 1940)

Tourneur’s film demonstrates how one can create terror on a very low budget, bringing in elements of both melodrama and *film noir* (while also addressing the ‘fear’ of female sexuality). Play attention to the use of shadows to create terror with a good eye and no money. Lupino’s film, one of the very few directed by women in Classical Hollywood, uses to tropes of the melodrama to address rape and sexual violence, areas rarely addressed in American film at the time, and certainly not from a woman’s perspective. Both of these low budget films show what can be accomplished on low budgets and with the constraints of the Production Code.


The best, in my opinion, of the Dogme ‘95 films and a great example of creativity and constraint. If you hate/fear/loathe family dinners, this film will top your worst nightmares. If you think living in social isolation is hard, you’ll feel much better that you don’t live with this family. Or in upper-middle class Denmark. In a time of constraint, the film was made with handheld digital cameras and blown up to 35mm. To see the rules Vinterberg was following from the Dogme ‘95 manifesto, see this link: [http://www.dogme95.dk/the-vow-of-chastity/](http://www.dogme95.dk/the-vow-of-chastity/)

4. **Hiroshima mon amour** (Alain Resnais, France, 1959)

The film that I saw when I was seventeen in CEGEP in Québec that made me – along with a few others – want to study film. I had absolutely no clue what was going on in the film, but I still loved it; it made me think that everything I had been taught by high school and family and society thus far could be thrown into question and not taken as a given. After that, there was no looking back. Set against the backdrop of post-War Hiroshima, Resnais’ film is a great work on the lingering effects of trauma and memory, with a magnificent script by the French writer, essayist and filmmaker Marguerite Duras.

5. **The Man Who Left His Will on Film** (*Tôkyô sensô senso hiwa*, Nagisa Oshima, Japan, 1970)

While there are great many films that address filmmaking and recording technology, there was a surge in films addressing filmmaking from various political angles at the end of the 1960s -- including Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Blowup* (UK/USA/Italy, 1966), Haskell Wexler’s *Medium Cool* (USA, 1969), Andrzej Wajda’s *Everything for Sale* (*Wszystko na sprzedaż*, Poland, 1969), and Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Conversation* (USA, 1974) -- Nagisa Oshima’s film addresses the politics of Japan in the post-1968 context (a year when there were student uprisings all over the
world), drawing on many radical filmmaking techniques of the time. The film uses natural settings to create a feeling of paranoia and potentially political panic.

6. **Monty Python’s Life of Brian** (Terry Jones, UK, 1979)

My favorite film about religion (“Blessed are the cheesemakers?”) and about the sad and ongoing breakdown of left-wing politics through blinkered ideology (“Judean People's Front” not “The People's Front of Judea”). The Pythons originally decided to make a film called *Jesus Christ: Lust for Glory*, but then thought that the things Jesus said made him a quite reasonable bloke, and that the problem was with what stupid humans decided to do with his teachings.

*Added bonus:* a totally over-the-top debate between Python members John Cleese and Michael Palin with Malcolm Muggeridge and Mervyn Stockwood, the then Bishop of Southwark (look at the way he fondles his crucifix!) on the film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYmpObbt2rs

7. **Orders** (*Les ordres*, Michel Brault, Canada, 1974)

If I had to pick one Canadian/Québécois(e) film that everyone should see, it is Michel Brault’s *Les ordres*. Combining a documentary aesthetic through the use of hand-held cameras and black and white footage, and combining this with docudrama, the film tells the story of the arrests made during La crise d’Octobre/The October Crisis in Québec in 1970. Formally audacious – echoing the mod-60s work of Godard -- and telling a story of the perils of the State enacting authoritarian powers, the film is all the more chilling because of the implications today.

8. **Touki Bouki** (Djibril Diop Mambéty, Senegal, 1973)

Another film made on a shoestring budget, *Touki Bouki* addresses the conflicting tensions coming out of the history of colonialism. While not an example of ‘Third Cinema’ *per se* (a movement that emerged out of Latin America in the 1960s), *Touki Bouki* shares some of the aesthetic and political characteristics of the movement, foregrounding the tension between imagining the world of the Anglo-American colonizers (in this case France) as a means to freedom, and the conflicting desire to make a post-colonial culture of one’s own. The film’s aesthetic parallels this tension: it is both influenced by the French *nouvelle vague* and at the same time coming up with its own language of cinema.


Two films by great women directors that address the question of time. Varda’s film is shot almost in real time, detailing the hour and a half the main character awaits a cancer diagnosis, and was a central film in the emergent French *nouvelle vague*. Akerman’s film, in contrast, slowly depicts the domestic life of the main character as she peels potatoes, cleans her home,
and engages in sex work, set over three days and running 225 minutes (you have the time). Both films place female subjectivity and their experience of time at the heart of their narratives.

10. **Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown** (*Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios*, Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, 1988)

A film that brings together many of the key themes found in Almodóvar’s work, with strong female characters who are nevertheless distraught, disreputable men -- one of whom may or may not be based on Federico Fellini – Gazpacho (try it! Recipes can be found online. Leave out sleeping pills), vibrant po-mo colours, lots of kinds of obsession, and yet another mediation on the cinema. A humorous black comedy, and mostly set in one apartment, very much like our own lives now.

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**Films for students: Movies to Watch for Cinematography From Ryan**

1) **Lighthouse** (DP: Jarin Blaschke)
Of all the recent movie releases, *Lighthouse* is utterly unique and shows the tight relation between concept, production design, and photography. From the claustrophobic and notoriously hard to compose 1.9:1 aspect ratio, to the custom filtration that mimics period orthochromatic film, and historic re-housed Bausch & Lomb lenses; all tightly bind the images to theme and setting. Watch for the character position in the frame vis-a-vis their mental state.

2) **Road to Perdition** (DP: Conrad L. Hall, also *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*)
Simply one of the most sublimely shot films and my favourite in terms of photography. After an illustrious career, this was Conrad’s last film and he won the Oscar posthumously for it. Based on a graphic novel, period photography (and production design) and naturalistic lighting settles into the story seamlessly. The camera movement is masterfully complicated yet integrated so tightly you are nearly unaware of the complexities. Look for the subtle (and some not) choice of camera angles to form each character’s perspective.

3) **Blade Runner 2049** (DP: Roger Deakins, also *O Brother Where Art Now*)
It was hard to pick which of Roger Deakin’s films to put on this list, as he is the most consistently stellar DP’s working today. For every one of his films his painterly approach to lighting that naturally falls into the film’s environment, the love of silhouettes, the ease at which pictorial elements and characters fall into perfect compositions. In *Blade Runner 2049*, the post-apocalyptic wasteland is eerily and beautifully envisioned, like newsreel-footage we have seen fleeing a forest fire in Australia, California, and Fort McMurray (and building on the techniques he used in the oil-well fire in his other film *Jarhead*, continued in 1917).

4) **Gravity** (DP: Emmanuel Lubezki, also *The Revenant*)
Lubezki is similar to Deakins in consistency and any one of the films he has DP’d could be on this list. *Gravity* is short, sweet, and tight genre film. The integration of visual effects, photography
and production design are seamless. The photography is balanced, fluid and elegant while contrastingly tense when necessary. All of Lubezki’s work hides wildly complicated camera and lighting techniques into aesthetically simple shots that get lost in the story.

5) **The City of Lost Children** (DP: Darius Khondji, also *Seven*)
Khondji’s work in *City of Lost Children* is absurd, fantastical, and weird, as it should be. Exuberant and dire aesthetics, expressive hues, and hefty dose of contrast combine with bold lens choices and compositions. If you haven’t seen any of the early films of Jeunet and Caro with Khondji, you should.

6) **Arrival** (DP: Bradford Young)
A simplistic and natural sci-fi film. Young’s photography grounds the fantastic into a real world with density, complexity, and naturalism. The images lend themselves to the out-of-this-world (pun-intended) narrative with ease. Subtly and nuance abounds.

7) **There Will Be Blood** (DP: Robert Elswit)
An epic visual landscape to match an epic narrative. The use of anamorphic lenses captures the vastness of the environment and punctuates the grandiose characters. The palette is restricted and the lighting natural. A puristic, all-film approach is devoid of digital correction, lest for fire effects shots: it is purely exposed cellulose, lighting, and lenses.

8) **Requiem for a Dream** (DP: Matthew Libatique)
When a director and DP start their career off together. Building on the low-budget starkness and robust camera work in *Pi* (see that too), the visual language and photography is punctuated and follows the degradation of the character through lens choices and growing contrast and saturation.

9) **The Darkest Hour** (DP: Bruno Delbonnel, also: *Amelie*)
This film is suggested as polar rebound to another film Delbonnel DP’d in *Amelie*, the visual range seems vast yet the approach and techniques are very similar (the edit pacing drives the visual approach further apart). The surrounding world of the protagonist is pressing in while they respond. In the *Darkest Hour*, Delbonnel depicts and uncertain world collapsing in while struggling for control and stability.

10) **Atonement** (DP: Seamus McGarvey)
A growing visual world and coming of age story. The visual fabric expands from the soft, comforting tones of grand manors to the epic, vast confusion of full blown war. Like many other films on this list the subtly of how the visual and aesthetic approach is grounded into the narrative is the strength.

***This list is heavily biased by the current events

What next on my list of things to watch, for reference for future projects and interest:
Films for students: From Dan

Dear Students,

To help with the solitude of quarantine life, I have put together a list of film suggestions for your every waking mood. The challenge – as posed by our Acting Head, Prof. Scott MacKenzie – was to stay within the range of 1959-2000. As you’ll see, I have chosen to subvert these authoritarian conditions on two worthwhile occasions. The rest conform nicely. (PSA: Do not disregard assignment instructions. Do NOT model this behaviour). [A note from Scott: I did send the range to Dan, but it was not an edict, it was just the constraint I was using. And then abandoned. Editing is power].

So, fasten your seatbelts, and remember to take restorative breaks! And, feel free to send me your own lists.

Wishing you care and comfort,
Prof. Dan Vena

10 Movies for Every Quarantine Mood

   You want to watch a thinker – maybe even two! Something that reminds you of the by-gone days of in-person classes…. Then look no further than these two head-scratchers! They’re existential meditations on female subjectivity, vampiric lesbian erotics, the decline of Hollywood, the madness of interrelationality, and honestly a whole lot more that no one has ever really figured out… Cue up a Roy Orbison playlist after watching to keep the memories alive.

2. Your brain is goop, or you fear aliens will turn your brain into goop: Mars Attacks (1996, dir Tim Burton)
   Face it. Working on finishing multiple courses from home is slowly sucking all your life energy. Sit back and let your brain relax for a bit as you watch this postmodern send-up to the Golden Age of 1950’s science fiction films. Make a bingo card of classic tropes (aliens: check; White House attacks: check) and then-popular 90’s actors (Pierce Brosnan, Sarah Jessica Parker) and see if you get a line! Chase this down with Tim Burton’s Ed Wood (1994), a loose biopic of Hollywood’s worst director. Then chase that down with Ed Wood’s Plan 9 From Outer Space (1959).
Pick your favourite pup and cheer them on as they go from floppy-eared trainees to working guide dogs for the blind. It’s feel-good. It’s full of fluffy little critters. And it offers insight into the life-giving relationship between guide dogs and their visually impaired owners. Enough said.

4. Dressing up to the Nines: *Top Hat* (1935, dir Mark Sandrich)
You’ve been in sweatpants for a month. And while that may not be particularly unusual for student life, it’s starting to bum you out that you have nothing to dress up for anymore. Invite your friends via Zoom (or whatever the hell you use these days) and get dolled up for this Art Deco-adorned visual feast. *Top Hat* is the second feature to star dynamic dancing duo, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. If it could cheer folks up during the Great Depression, it can certainly boost your spirits now. Slap on some fancy clothes and let them whisk you away to better days.

5. The Living Nightmare: *Safe* (1995, dir Todd Haynes)
To grapple with trauma and grief, we sometimes need to watch images onscreen that reflect the violent upheaval we are experiencing in waking life. Indeed, the conditions of the world right now are one of a nightmare in which we all cannot wake. *Safe* is a stylish yet haunting metaphor for the AIDS crisis, while also serving as a more general meditation on experiences of paranoia, fear, and personal resilience amidst chaotic times. The film will undoubtedly resonate now more than ever.

6. Ready to start the Revolution: *Daisies* (1966, dir Vera Chytilová)
I think many of us agree that the system is broken. Global leaders continue to put the privileged interests of the few above the marginalized needs of the many. Most likely, the pandemic will only exacerbate this inequity. And frankly, you – for one – are fucking sick of it! Prof. Emily Pelstring introduced me to this film a few years back and I’ve been thinking about its final dinner scene ever since. Described as a “a patriarchy-exploding Molotov cocktail,” *Daisies* “still stuns with its exuberantly experimental visuals and anarchic energy.” Channel your rage and raise your fists (full of food) against the status quo.

7. You Feel Like Dancin’: *Car Wash* (1976, dir Michael Schultz)
Gym? What’s a gym? Your legs are starting to cramp from the various couch positions you have pretzeled yourself into these past weeks. You desperately need an excuse to move around and groove. Allow me to introduce you to *Car Wash*. Made during the heyday of blaxploitation filmmaking, this disco-era classic offers a socially conscious and infectiously musical day-in-the-life glimpse of employees at a LA car wash. Should these toons stick in your head, allow me to recommend *Saturday Night Fever* (1976) and *Boogie Nights* (1997) as follow ups. Critical reflections on representations of race, class, and masculinity highly encouraged.

8. When You Need to Believe the World is Good Again: *Shall We Dance?* (1996, dir Masayuki Suo)
Humorous yet accurate memes about the absurd conditions of daily life can only keep your dopamine levels elevated for so long. You’re needing a boost of happiness, joy and let’s be honest, love, to get you through the next 24-hour news cycle. Find the original *Shall We Dance?*
(it was remade in 2004 with J-Lo and Richard Gere) and become inspired by one man’s journey from unhappy office-drone to graceful two-stepper. After I watched this film, I immediately enrolled in a beginner tango class. My two-left feet have never moved so well.

You’re at home with your family and it’s your turn to pick what to watch. Quick! You need to figure out a film appropriate for everyone’s interests. Also, it needs to make you look kinda movie-savvy so your family doesn’t think your degree is totally meaningless.¹ This heart-warming gem encapsulates the over-the-top passion, conflict, and joy of Italian families – all while showcasing some delicious, authentic Italian cuisine. Before you watch, raise a glass of red wine to the Italian spirit, which continues to inspire. If your family likes this one, program Moonstruck (1987) next – it’s got Cher in!
¹ You can also politely remind them the only thing keeping people from utter boredom right now are moving images!

10. You Hate being Recommended Movies but You Need Company – Waiting for Guffman (1996, dir Christopher Guest)
You miss your goofy art pals or your over-the-top theatre nerds. These are lonely days and you need some quirky friends who you can laugh along with and probably even judge a little (because isn’t that true friendship). Never fear! The cast of Waiting for Guffman is here! A comedic re-telling of Samuel Beckett’s play Waiting for Godot, this loveable ensemble of characters will surely make this experience of waiting in the wings a tad more bearable. Spoiler Alert: Godot/Guffman never comes.

Films for students: From Gary

I used 3 criteria in selecting these works. I tried to find work which are seminal, that is, works which are either highly original or are among the best of a genre, but which are also aesthetically pleasurable.

1. Jeanne Dielman, Chantal Ackerman, 1975.
A 200-minute film, where domestic work becomes inexplicably fascinating. Actually, best seen with a group. Resist the urge to fast forward (very difficult when watching by yourself on a computer screen!)

2. Sink or Swim, Su Friedrich, 1990
A great example of “subjective cinema,” or first person cinema. Uses a very interesting structuring scheme.

A seminal animation. Based on a painfully beautifully written story by Polish writer Bruno Schulz (which would make for excellent summer reading...).
A strangely hilarious cause and effect, Rube Goldberg series. An argument for the existence of God, or the non-existence of God.

5. **His Girl Friday**, Howard Hawks, 1940.
Best screwball comedy; extraordinary comedic performances. The pacing (which often prevents younger audiences from watching older films) is occasionally breathtaking.

Nothing puts our bourgeois assumptions to the test like this film. It’s also the kind of film that cannot be made anymore.

Represents an interesting development in “ethnographic film.”

Brilliant, challenging narrative construction.

Video art. A beautifully disorienting – and only slightly disturbing – oblique gaze into the subconscious.

10. **Tambourine**, Chris Rock, 2019
Comedy act. The first half is rich with commentary.

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**Game suggestions: From Philippe (and a preview of his new course FILM 316: Video Games, to be offered next year!)**

*PeaceMaker* (2007). Free here [http://www.gamesforchange.org/game/peacemaker/](http://www.gamesforchange.org/game/peacemaker/). This game challenges players to establish peace in the Middle East. It is often pitched as “a video game to promote peace.”

*Papers, Please* (2013). $11 on Steam: [https://store.steampowered.com/app/239030/Papers_Please/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/239030/Papers_Please/). This game presents players constant moral choices as they take on the role of a border-crossing immigration officer in the fictional dystopian Eastern Bloc-like country of Arstotzka.

*This War of Mine* (2014). $22 on Steam: [https://store.steampowered.com/app/282070/This_War_of_Mine/](https://store.steampowered.com/app/282070/This_War_of_Mine/). This game differs
from most war-themed video games by focusing on the civilian experience of war rather than front line combat.

**Broforce** (2015). $17 on Steam: https://store.steampowered.com/app/274190/Broforce/. This game was designed to be a lighthearted hyperbole of the 1980s action film genre and to challenge “bro culture” stereotypes.

**Life Is Strange** (2015). First episode free right now on Steam ($22 normally): https://store.steampowered.com/app/319630/Life_is_Strange_Episode_1/ This game addresses subjects like social division, online bullying, parental conflict and suicide.

**Dys4ia** (2012). Free here https://freegames.org/dys4ia/ This game recounts the developer experiences of gender dysphoria and hormone replacement therapy.

**Stanley Parable** (2013). $17 on Steam: https://store.steampowered.com/app/221910/The_Stanley_Parable/ This game is very interesting for its meta-commentary on player choice and decision-making.

**Gone Home** (2013). $17 on Steam: https://store.steampowered.com/app/232430/Gone_Home/ This game addresses in sensitive ways some LGBT issues with which some players could identify.

**Never Alone** (2014). $17 on Steam: https://store.steampowered.com/app/295790/Never_Alone_Kisima_Ingitchuna/ Based on the traditional Inupiaq tale, “Kunuuksaayuka.” Beautiful art design which blends simple, cartoon style with scrimshaw influences.


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**Films for Students: Favourite Food Films (and some TV): From Dorit**

It seems that staying home inspired many to learn how to bake bread, and cook elaborate meals. I love to cook, but ironically, I find that I am cooking less, or differently, as I cannot host and feed others... at any rate, so that you can combine your love of food with love of movies (and may be satiated by enjoying food while NOT eating) here is my list of favourite food films. Perhaps not surprisingly, most of these are not from North America, but from places better known for their cuisine and intimate relationships to food. Making this list made me want to design a new course on film and food. Anyone interested? Enjoy!
*Eat, Drink, Man Woman* (Ang Lee, 1994)
*Lunch Box* (Irrfan Khan, 2013)
*Babette’s Feast* (Gabriel Axel, 1987)
*Like Water for Chocolate* (Alfonso Arau, 1992)
*Big Night* (Campbell Scott, Stanley Tucci, 1996)
*Ratatouille* (Brad Bird, Jan Pinkava, 2007)
*The Trip* (Michael Winterbottom, 2010) and its sequels
*Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (David Gelb, 2011)
*Chef* (Jon Favreau, 2014)
*City of Gold* (Laura Gabbert, 2015)
*Tampopo* (Juzo Itami, 1985)
*Chocolat* (Lasse Hallström, 2000)
*I Am Love* (Luca Guadagnino, 2009)
*Julie and Julia* (Nora Ephron, 2009)
*Chef’s Table* (2015, Netflix TV series, various directors)