

Comparative Literature 271
Great Directors: Alfred Hitchcock
Second Midterm Review

Part I: Short Essay (approximately 50%)

Part II: Clip Analysis (approximately 50%)

Possible Short Essay Topics

Authorship of Hitchcock's films

- Beyond the obvious markers ("Directed by Alfred Hitchcock"), how do we know that we're watching a Hitchcock film?
- Which other people and institutions were important factors in the production of films that Hitchcock directed?
- How do we identify their contributions and influences?
- What do we mean when we speak of the "author" of a film, and how does the case of Alfred Hitchcock help us understand and complicate that question?
- What is "auteur theory" and when does it begin to take hold in France and the United States?
- How does the development of this auteurist perspective affect Hitchcock's reputation?

Hitchcock and his French Critics

- Who were Hitchcock's primary champions in France in the 1950s and after? Who were the Hitchcocko-Hawksians?
- What are the main tenets of the Chabrol/Rohmer interpretation of Hitchcock?
- Can you discern Truffaut's particular interpretation or approach to Hitchcock from the interviews in his book? What are the basic characteristics of Truffaut's Hitchcock?
- What was the effect of the *Cahiers du cinéma* "school of Hitchcock studies" on Hitchcock's legacy? What was Hitchcock's general reputation before this moment? And after?
- What effect did this interaction with French critics have on his films?

Hitchcock and Post-WWII Cinema

- What are the characteristics that distinguish art cinema in this period from classical Hollywood cinema?
- What does Hitchcock have in common with art cinema from the time?
- What about exploitation films and B movies?
- When and why was Hitchcock eventually perceived as both a maker of art films and a mainstream director?
- Which Hitchcock films most clearly display the influence of post-WWII art cinema? And exploitation films?

Gender in Hitchcock's Films

- What are the most common criticisms of Hitchcock's representation of women in his films? What are the most compelling responses to those critiques?
- Which films are most clearly concerned with the gaze of the male spectator or director? Which are most clearly concerned with the way women are made into objects of that gaze?
- Is there a difference between the representation of women in these Hitchcock films and classical Hollywood cinema?
- Are Hitchcock's male characters based on stereotypes of the

masculine leading man? How do Hitchcock's heroes and villains confirm or challenge those stereotypes?

- How does Hitchcock's real-life relationship with the leading actresses affect the way you and other critics understand the representation of gender in his films?

Hitchcock on Television

- What are the major differences between the production and reception situations in television and cinema? What possibilities are opened when a film director moves to television? What limitations are presented?
- How did Hitchcock adapt to this new environment on his television program?

Hitchcock's process (there's some variability from film to film, so a question on this could focus on either broad trends over the course of his career or a particular production)

- What was unusual or idiosyncratic about Hitchcock's approach to filmmaking in the last three decades of his career? What was conventional?
- What is remarkable about his approach to the visual image, to sound, and to the links and conflicts between image and sound? How did Hitchcock's collaboration with Bernard Herrmann influence his approach to sound?
- Based on the films and the production histories that we've considered, how would you describe Hitch's relationship with his collaborators (actors, designers, composers, etc.)?

Hitchcock's Collaborators

- Hitchcock's screenwriters
- Edith Head and costume design
- Saul Bass and title design
- Bernard Herrmann and music

Common strategies and themes in Hitchcock's films

- The MacGuffin and Hitchcock's approach to narrative
- Theatricality, stages, and role-playing
- Characteristic cinematography and mise-en-scene (dramatic high or low angles, Expressionist lighting, shifting POV, use of color, etc.)
- Doubles, fragmented identity
- Hitchcock's heroes and heroines
- Hitchcock's use of film genres
- Suspense
- Family plots and oedipal scenarios
- Hitchcock's "murderous gays"
- Hitchcock's "murderous gaze"
- Music
- Varieties of horror