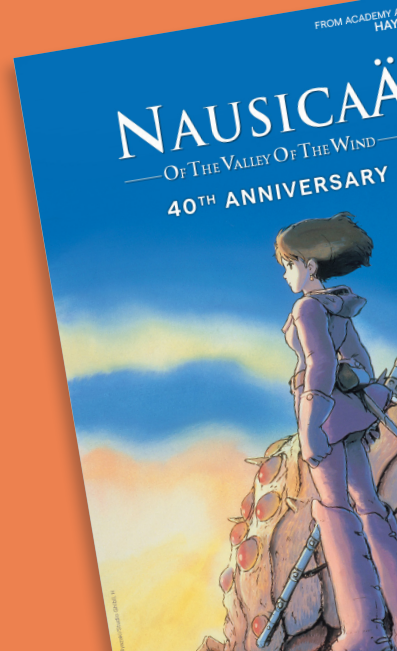
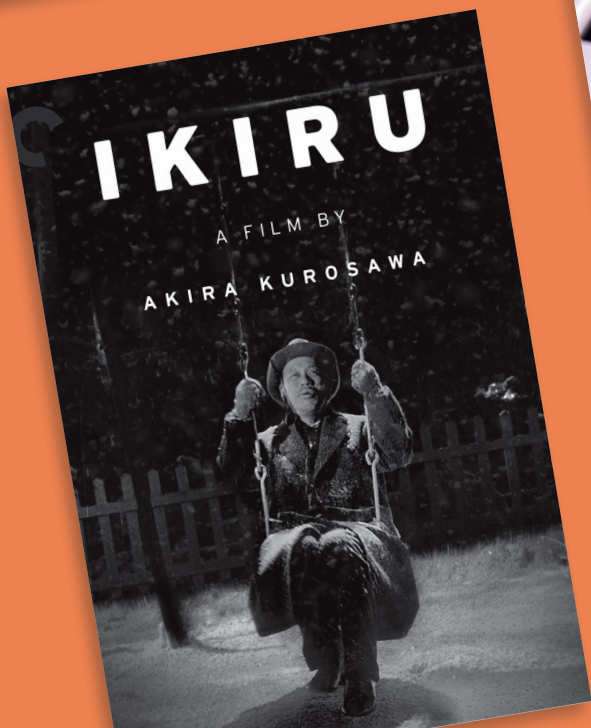
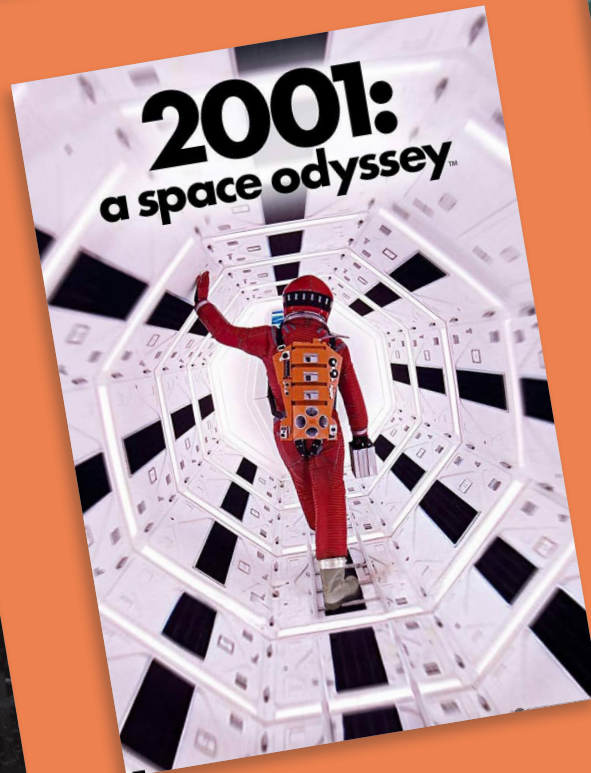


Faculty Favorites



The Two Popes

A historical event in the Catholic Church retold as a profound comedy and drama.

“*The Two Popes* (2019) highlights the relationship between the more conservative Pope Benedict XVI and his successor Pope Francis. Pope Benedict was the first pope to abdicate the papacy in over 500 years, knowing that the more progressive Pope Francis would likely take his place. The interactions between the two make it clear that they see the church and its role in the world differently. At the same time, they both wrestle with questions about faith, forgiveness, and how to hear God’s voice. In addition to excellent acting and emotive music, the film represents a beautiful rendition on a theme of finding commonality and friendship in a world that is too often caustic and polarized.”

Jeffrey Parker (Morphology)

Perfect Days

An unexpected reminder to enjoy the simple things in life.

“When Hirayama, a public toilet cleaner in Tokyo, leaves his modest apartment for work each morning, he gazes up at the sky and smiles, welcoming a new day. His job might appear demeaning and his days unbearably dull, but there is beauty to be found everywhere, provided one has a spirit that has been cultivated to see and cherish it. *Perfect Days* (2023), directed by German auteur Wim Wenders and starring Kōji Yakusho, is less a film than an act of poetic grace, and it cannot help but transform anyone who sees it. Ten out of ten, would highly recommend.”

David Laraway (Hispanic Literature, Philosophy of Art)

Stalker

A psychological adventure and exploration of the psyche and its desires.

“*Stalker* (1979) follows the journey of three individuals—the ‘Stalker’ or group leader, a writer, and a professor—into a restricted area,

or ‘Zone,’ in which normal laws of physics do not apply and in which, if one successfully navigates the perils of the Zone, one reaches a ‘Room’ that promises to grant a person’s innermost desires. Police who guard the Zone restrict knowledge and protect unprepared individuals from accessing knowledge prematurely. The writer and professor understand their limits and choose not to enter the Room, which becomes a painful decision for the Stalker to witness, as he desperately wants to share with others what he can see.”

Tony Brown (Russian Language and Culture)

Ikiru

Groundbreaking and deeply existential cinema that unconventionally inspires the viewer to explore the true meaning of life.

“My favorite film is Akira Kurosawa’s *Ikiru* (1952). It’s about a bureaucrat in postwar Japan who learns that he is dying of cancer and decides to explore what it means ‘to live’ (which is how the film’s title translates into English). The film is at once deeply touching and skeptical about the idea that encountering a moving story like this will lead anyone to live differently. For me, the skepticism is a big reason why the film has stayed with me for so many years. The 2022 remake with Bill Nighy, *Living*, is surprisingly good.”

Jason Kerr (17th-Century English Literature)

2001: A Space Odyssey

A thought-provoking and inspiring sci-fi classic that paved the way for modern special effects.

“I recently rewatched Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and remembered just how great it is. The film is also a cultural touchstone for a lot of reasons. Not only is it visually stunning with its pre-CGI special effects, but it also immortalized Richard Strauss’s *Sprach Zarathustra* and was the inspiration for the opening scene of the film *Barbie* (2023). In this age of major advancements in AI, it might be a good idea for us to carefully consider the case of HAL 9000, the sentient AI interface more interested in protecting itself than its human companions. This movie

asks all the big questions about humanity and science and the meaning of life without answering a single one of them.”

Anna-Lisa Halling (Iberian Women Writers)

A Hidden Life

An epic historical drama based on real events.

“The director Terrence Malick made a handful of genius movies, then a handful of annoyingly artsy movies, and then came *A Hidden Life* (2019), a straight-forwardly brilliant film with beautiful shots of the Austrian countryside and the people in it, all framing the true story of Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian farmer executed for refusing to fight for the Nazis. Malick films in natural light, so there is a candid beauty to the scenes of this modest man (played by German actor August Diehl) with his family, quietly but resolutely resisting the Wehrmacht machine. Need a dose of moral courage? Check out *A Hidden Life*.”

Brian Jackson (Rhetorical Theory and Criticism)

Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind

A sci-fi fantasy film written and directed by the Academy Award-winning Japanese master Hayao Miyazaki.

“The female protagonists in Hayao Miyazaki’s films are often compared to Disney princesses. While Disney princesses usually have a prince who saves the day, the princesses in Miyazaki’s works almost always overcome their predicaments on their own. *Nausicaä* (1984) isn’t an exception. The film depicts Nausicaä, a young girl seeking a path for man and nature in a postapocalyptic world covered by an oddly shaped ecosystem after the collapse of scientific civilization due to war. Mr. Miyazaki insists on using celluloid techniques, and I think *Nausicaä* has an overall gentler finish than works made with computer graphics. The music is also beautiful, and the whole family can enjoy this movie.”

Keiko Barney (Japanese, Center for Language Studies)