Cinema records time at the same time that it represents time. It imposes duration and formulates temporal narratives, simultaneously offering the representation as well as the experience of time. This course will aim to introduce students to film theories and practices that illuminate the ways in which cinema has complexly negotiated its own relation to narrative time and phenomenological time through techniques like the long take. In particular, the course will draw on the critical framework of cinematic realism as a means to examine films whose durational and contemplative aesthetic intervenes in recent debates on temporality, materiality, and slowness in the cinema.

These aspects will be explored with reference to an eclectic corpus ranging from world cinema classics, art house fare and experimental films from around the globe. Each film will introduce a specific set of theoretical and aesthetic issues in relation to the wider themes of time, duration and realism in the cinema. For example, the temporal aesthetics of ‘the everyday’ in Umberto D. (Vittorio de Sica, 1952) and Jeanne Dielman (Chantal Akerman, 1975), the temporality of trauma as expressed in Elephant (Gus Van Sant, 2005), the metaphysical realism of Silent Light (Carlos Reygadas, 2007), the historical time of Russian Ark (Aleksandr Sokurov, 2003). By the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the mutually reinforcing conceptions of temporality and realism in the cinema through an appreciation of a plethora of films from around the world.