

**Code: FLM-403:19  
FLMD-312:35**

**Course title: Fate and History: István Szabó's cinema**

(in English / angol nyelvű kurzus)

**Course convenors:** Tibor Hirsch

**Class time and place:** 14 00-15 30 Monday, Room -137

**Course type:** Lecture and practical work

**Course content:** István Szabó in his whole career was focusing on the unprepared individual being forced to meet with the always hostile East-European history.

In the films made from the early 60's Szabó depicts different sorts of surviving strategies of the average civilian when this XX. Century's history - unpredictable fate embodied by the series of well-known severe political events – "is arriving". These strategies here in this geographical region are always desperate, always deniable - and sometimes they are adopted just too late.

What were the most important provoking inputs of modern history which Szabo's "urban civilian heroes" in the whole region had to face with?

1. *New states – new borders, migration after WW I.*
2. *Revolutions, national hostilities, leftist and rightist extremes, increasing anti-Semitism*  
*Economical crisis*
3. *WW II. – the beginning: wartime restrictions of everyday life, poverty and terror, refugees, German occupation*
4. *WW II. – the end: bombing, moving frontlines, cities under siege, Holocaust, Soviet invasion and occupation*
5. *New piece-time doctrines: forced migrations and deportations*
6. *Stalinism: poverty, cultural/political oppression, endangered and terrorized classes, fake trials.*
7. *Revolutions: Fights, virulent political terror, rage of hatred.*
8. *Changing of system: social antagonisms prolonged.*

In Szabo's films we can understand and reconstruct the typical world view of people living in the region (especially in the urban Hungary) who tried to defend themselves against the threats above. This very civilian attitude had different psychologically motivated components: all of them used for survival. As we can see from the films, these survival techniques could be different depending on the period (listed above) when they were adopted, and on the people who actually used them. They are different and still - in the examinable films - there are one common world-view and attitude as a basic frame, which helps Szabó to describe ordinary city folk, young Hungarian intellectuals and German artists as well.

To prove all these we will analyse Szabo's unique urban visual poetry and his very special psychological realism.

**Requirements:** To complete the course successfully students should prove the basic knowledge of István Szabó's films, and the social-historical view of the time and the region these films are reflecting on.

First classes are rather lectures – and the basic points of the "East-European survival attitude" are explained and shown in the films.

Classes later are rather seminars – and students are expected to analyse films in independent presentations, using the common social-historical approach.

**Films to watch:**

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1963 Age of Illusions  
**1964 Father**  
**1970 Lovefilm**  
**1973 25 Fireman Street**  
1977 Budapest Tales  
**1981 Mephisto**  
1985 Colonel Redl  
1988 Hanussen  
1991 Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe  
1999 **Sunshine**  
2001 **Taking Sides**  
2006 Rokonok (Relatives)  
2012 The Door

*(Titles in bold letters will be the most frequently referred ones in the classes.  
The films will be accessible for the students with English subtitles.)*

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**Indicative Reading: Some books on Hungarian Cinema in connection with the topic of the seminar:**

Bryan Burns  
Fairleigh Dickinson Univ Press 1996 World Cinema: Hungary

Hungarian cinema: from coffee house to multiplex  
John Cunningham  
Wallflower, 2004

Word and image: history of the Hungarian cinema  
István Nemeskürty  
Corvina Press, 1968

History must answer to man: the contemporary Hungarian cinema  
Graham Petrie  
Corvina Kiadó, 1981

**Plot-summaries in English:**

Magyar Filmográfia. Játékfilmek – Hungarian Feature Films 1931-1998. (szerk. Varga Balázs) Budapest, Magyar Filmintézet 1999.

**Books on Istvan Szabó in English and in Italian:**

The spectral body : aspects of the cinematic oeuvre of István Szabó / Zoltán Dragon.  
Newcastle, UK : Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006.

Goulding, Daniel (ed.): Five filmmakers: Tarkovsky, Forman, Polanski, Szabó, Makavejev. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1994.

De Marchy, Bruno: István Szabó. Firenze. 1974. (Italian)

**Some reviews on Szabo's films, selected studies, articles, interviews in English and French)**

Paul, David: The esthetics of courage. Cineaste (1986) no. 4. pp. 16–19.

Scott, Jay: Szabo's films „a record” of his life. The Globe and Mail (29 October

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1988)

Sublett, Scott: Hungarian makes films to support people. *The Washington Times* (10 September 1982)

Christensen, P. G.: Collaboration in István Szabó's *Mephisto*. *Film Criticism* (Spring 1988) no. 3. pp. 20–32.

Martin, Marcel: *Mephisto*. *Image et Son* (Jan 1982) no. 368. pp. 29–33. (French)

McFarlane, Brian: *Mephisto*. *Cinema Papers* (June 1982) no. 38. pp 262–264.

Piette, Alain: The face in the mirror. *Literature/Film Quarterly* (April 1998) pp. 136–141.

Strick, Philip: Colonel Redl. *Films & Filming* (December 1985) no. 375. pp. 39–40.

Roth-Bettoni, Didier – Sauvaget, Daniel: *Chère Emma*. – Istvan Szabo, cinéaste européen.

*Revue du Cinéma* (September 1992) no. 485. pp. 18–21. (French)

#### **Suggestions for online-reading about Istvan Szabo:**

Art, Politics, and 'Taking Sides': An Interview with Istvan Szabo by Marty Fairbairn -Film Philosophy.

[http://zakka.dk/euroscreenwriters/interviews/istvan\\_szabo.htm](http://zakka.dk/euroscreenwriters/interviews/istvan_szabo.htm)

theartsdesk Q&A: Director István Szabó | Film reviews

<http://www.theartsdesk.com/film/theartsdesk-qa-director-istv%C3%A1n-szab%C3%B3>

The Case of István Szabó - Kinema

<http://www.kinema.uwaterloo.ca/article.php?id=109&feature>

Kinoeye| Hungarian film: Istvan Szabo interviewed

<http://www.kinoeye.org/03/02/sonmez02.php>

#### **Books on Hungarian History and Social-History in connection with the topic of the seminar:**

Peter F. Sugar; Peter Hanák (editor). *A History of Hungary*. Indiana University Press. 1994.

Fejto, F. *A History of the Peoples Democracies: Eastern Europe since Stalin*. Harmondsworth, United Kingdom: Penguin, 1974.

Gati, Charles. *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1986.

Heinrich, Hans-Georg. *Hungary: Politics, Economics, and Society*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1986.

Nigel Swain. *Hungary: The Rise and Fall of Feasible Socialism*. Verso. 1992.

Moshe Y. Herczl. Translated by Joel Lerner. *Christianity and the Holocaust of Hungarian Jewry*. NYU Press. 1995.

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Vera Ranki. *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary*. Allen & Unwin. 1999.

Peter Meusburger; Heike Jöns (editor). *Transformations in Hungary: Essays in Economy and Society*. Springer. 2001.

Charles Gati. *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt*. Stanford University Press. 2006.

Paul Lendvai. Translated by Ann Major. *One Day That Shook the Communist World: The 1956 Hungarian Uprising and Its Legacy*. Princeton University Press. 2008.

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