

Study Questions on *Vertigo*
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HUM 376 San Francisco: Biography of a City
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Vertigo (1958)

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay: Alec Coppel, Samuel Taylor

Select Cast:

James Stewart	John "Scottie" Ferguson
Kim Novak	Madeline Elster/Judy Barton
Barbra Bel Geddes	Midge Wood

1. Pay close attention to the opening shots of the film and the title sequence. What is the POV (Point of View) of these shots? What are they shots of?
2. Pay attention to the framing (doors, mirrors, faces) and the shots in the restaurant scene and of the various scenes of Scotty's surveillance of Madeline, which take place thereafter.
3. How is *Vertigo* a film about looking? Who is looking and who is being looked at in this film? What are the effects of this looking? What does it mean "to-look-at" and "to-be-looked-at" as presented in the film?
4. How is *Vertigo* a film about gender construction? Note specific characters in this regard. How is this connected to the act of looking and being looked at as presented in this film? And what of the role of fetishism?
5. There is a unique "doubling" in this film (which begins to emerge in the second half of our screening). Look for and pay attention to it. What do you make of this "doubling"?
6. What do you think of the image of the spiral, which appears throughout the film?
7. Characters are presented as "unconscious" and "unaware" in this film. How is this connected to the larger concerns of the film?
8. How is *Vertigo* a film about film itself?
9. Feel free to look at (and enjoy looking at) SF as it is shot in this film. What do/did you see?
10. *Vertigo* is also a film about falling. Why do you think falling is so prominent in the film? And what do you think it could mean in the context of the film as a whole?
11. How does *Vertigo* deal with history, memory, and trauma?