

Federico Fellini visits Mercer

By **RON LIGHT**
Opinion Page Editor

A good film in Macon. A series of good films in Macon. Does it sound too good to be true? It is. Actually, the best films to be seen in Macon are here on the MU campus.



This quarter, Dr. Steve Bluestone, Associate Professor of English 382, "The Critical Study of Film," and is focusing on the work of Federico Fellini. Through the winter he has shown a film a week from the gifted Italian filmmaker who created films which exemplify the constant interplay between reality and fantasy, between surface and the mystery that lies beneath it.

The critical study course was created three years ago with the intention of providing an introduction to the study of a medium which has blossomed in this century. "Any understanding of film requires an understanding of literature," said Bluestone, In this way the course fits comfortably in the English department's curriculum.

Since the mid-seventies, the study of film has been one of the more attractive areas of concern among teachers of English. Some believe that film art is the greatest contribution to twentieth century

art—on the same level that the Novel and Shakespearean drama contributed to their respective periods. Literature has had a tremendous influence on film, and one can see the development of film as an acceptable topic for literature.

The previous critical study class (this is only the second class to be offered as ENG 382) focused on "the Western." However, Bluestone decided that this time the course would take the work of a single director and have the students learn how to see the evolution of the filmmaker's art from the beginning, to a middle stage and to an end. Hopefully students will learn how to discuss the films in a critical way and understand the themes and techniques of the director. This method of viewing film is known as the "auteur theory" and argues that the central creative force behind the film is the director.

When asked about the difficulty in teaching film in the eighties,

Bluestone acknowledged that some problems do exist.

According to the professor, the student approach to film is somewhat restricted. If a person only see American movies then they will miss the reality of film as an international phenomenon. "When we see commercial movies we see a very small part of the spectrum of what is going on in film."

The prevalence of television as the main visual medium for an entire peer group also presents some difficulties. "TV infringes on visual literacy because the experience is vastly different from the film experience." According to Bluestone, the film image contains much more information than the television as the TV image is a "low information," medium while films are located with information.

Being use to the low information medium can cause some students to be "blinded" by their first experience with a good film, he said.

As to why Fellini was chosen as the subject for this class, Bluestone said that it is because of the director's superb combination of the real and the surreal. He says that, while Fellini's surface realism is very striking, the filmmaker combines a surreal quality, which of all the major directors, blends an inner and out reality to the point of dissolving clear boundaries between what is going on in a character's head and what is going on in the outside world.

In addition, Fellini's plots do not have the tight constraints of a novel, but rather are episodic constructs of a characters inner self and spiritual condition. Bluestone believes that Fellini comes closer than any director to fully expressing the human condition of his characters.

Two more films will be shown for the class. Anyone may attend the showing which are held Tuesdays at 2:00 p.m. in Newton 202.