

**COM 117 Intro to Film Studies (Languages of Film and Television)
Fall 2015**

Instructor: Dr. Susan Ryan

Tues. /Friday Sec. 1 9:30-10:50; Sec. 2 11-12:20 Kendall 233

Office hours, Tues + Friday 1-2, Thurs. 1:30-2:30

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course is meant as an introduction to basic concepts of film analysis. We will examine how formal elements like cinematography, editing, mise en scene and sound are used to create meaning in film. We will also consider how genre, authorship, film history, ideology, and gender, among other critical approaches, can be used to analyze films. In addition to screening and discussing clips from mainstream film and television, we will also examine alternative practices (from independent film and global cinemas) that challenge these conventions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, students should be able to do the following:

- Understand how aesthetic choices, and the different ideologies that inform them, influence how films generate meaning
- Demonstrate competency in written and oral forms with the critical analysis of film using appropriate terminology
- Develop a greater understanding of the social and technological history of film
- Understand diverse critical perspectives used in film studies (historical, genre, formalism, ideology, etc.)

REQUIRED TEXTS: Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White *The Film Experience: An Introduction, 3rd Edition* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2004), *Film (on syllabus)*

John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson, eds. *Film Studies: Critical Approaches* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) FS (on syllabus)

Readings on **Canvas**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Students are required to attend classes and participate in the discussions. They are also expected to complete all reading assignments before the week that they are listed on the syllabus. Outside of class, students will also be responsible for screening films in their entirety in media center of the library (or through Netflix or other streaming services) in order to prepare for discussion of excerpts in class.

Course assignments are as follows:

- Two (2) exams (an in-class mid-term on terminology and concepts, and a take home exam applying different critical approaches to selected films).
- 1 short response paper
- 1 (6-7) page paper using formal analysis of a film seen outside of class.
- Group video project
- Oral presentation on a film scene selected by the student

GRADING:

Mid-Term1 - 20%

Take-home Final 20%

Citizen Kane response paper 10%

Film Analysis Paper 15%

Video (group project) 10%

Presentation 15%

Class participation 10%

NOTE: Participation means coming to class and actively participating in the discussion based on the readings and the outside screenings.

ATTENDANCE

Please review TCNJ's Absence and Attendance Policy if you have any questions.:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=9134>

Academic integrity:

I expect everyone to turn in their own work and adhere to TCNJ's academic integrity policies. The policies are quite explicit about what constitutes plagiarism and can be found at <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=7642>.

Students with Disabilities: Please discuss any accommodations that you will need and I will make every attempt to comply. You should present a letter from the Office of Differing Abilities during the first two weeks of class. For more information on your rights and responsibilities, please consult the following:

Disability Support Services: <http://differingabilities.pages.tcnj.edu>

Americans with Disability Act Policy:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8082>

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Screenings

Week 1

Topic: Introduction to Film Studies; Formal Analysis, Framing and Composition

8/25 Reading: **Film**, 5-29; Richard Dyer, "Intro to Film Studies" FS 1-8

Screening: *Rear Window* (Hitchcock, 1959)

8/28 Topic: Early Cinema, Realism and Artifice

Reading: **Film** 29-58; Robert Kolker, "Film Text and Film Form" FS 9-27

Bazin, "The Myth of Total Cinema" **Canvas**

Screening: silent shorts (Lumiere/Melies/Griffith)

Note: Please try and see the rest of Rear Window in the Media Center – It will be referred to in the next few weeks.

Week 2

9/1 Topic: Elements of the Shot –Mise En Scene

Reading: Film 60-93; "Film Acting" + "Film Costume," **FS 28-40**

Perkins, "Form and Discipline" (**Canvas**)

Arnheim, "Film and Reality" **Canvas**

Screening: *excerpts from: The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Weine, 1919)*

Do The Right Thing (Lee 1989)

On the Waterfront (Kazan, 1950)

The Piano (Campion, 1993)

Outside screening: *Citizen Kane*

9/4 Cinematography and Lighting

FILM 95-112

Bazin, "The Evolution of Film Language" **Canvas**

Screening: *excerpts from Visions of Light (1992)*

Touch of Evil (Welles, 1958)

Amalie (Jeunet, 2001)

DUE: Response paper on *Citizen Kane*

Week 3

9/8 **NO CLASS –Monday Schedule**

9/11 Camera Movement

Reading: **Film 113-131**

Vertigo (Hitchcock, 1958)

Children of Men (Cuaron, 2009)

The Celebration (Dogma, 1999)

Week 4

Topic: Editing -- Continuity and Montage/Disjunctive

9/15 Film 133-175

Screening: *His Girl Friday (Hawks, 1939)*

Boyz in the Hood (Singleton, 1981)

9/18 Reading: Eisenstein: "Methods of Montage" Canvas

Screening: *Excerpts Battleship Potemkin (Eisenstein, 1925)*

Requiem for a Dream (Aronofsky, 2000)

WEEK 5**Topic: Sound, (Montage, Perspective, Soundtrack)**9/22 *Film* 177-211*Apocalypse Now* (Coppola, 1979))9/25 Reading: Murch, *Sound Doctrine: An Interview with Walter Murch* (Canvas)
Gorbman, "Film Music" FS 41-48Screening: *The Conversation* (Coppola, 1974)**Week 6****Topic: Classical Hollywood and its alternatives**9/29 Reading: **Film** 212-253Bordwell, "*Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film* (SOCS)Screening: *Casablanca* (Curtiz, 1942)*Almost Famous* (Crowe, 2000)

10/2 Alternatives to Classical Hollywood and Experimental cinema

Reading: **Film** 248-313Screening: *Inception* (Nolan, 2010)*Meshes of the Afternoon* (Deren, 1949)**Week 7**

10/6 Topic: Review for midterm

10/9 MID-TERM**Week 8**

10/13 FALL BREAK

10/16 **Topic: Concepts into Practice** (Developing Ideas Working in Groups)

Reading: Levy, "Developing your Idea" Canvas

*In-class camera demonstration - checkout procedures, storyboarding and treatments***DUE: Topic for Film analysis research paper (NOTE: Instructions for paper are attached to syllabus)****Week 9**10/20 **In-Class video project work**10/23 **Screen Video Projects****Topic: Genre—Conventions and Archetypes**Reading: *Film* Ch. 9, 315-351Screening: excerpts from *Singin' in the Rain* (Donen), and other musicals**DUE: Formal film analysis paper**

Week10

10/27 Topic : Genre reinvented

Reading: Feuer, "The Hollywood Musical" (Canvas)

Screening: *Dancer in the Dark* (Von Trier, 2000)

Moulin Rouge (Luhrman, 2010)

10/30 Topic: Topic: **Critical Theories and Authorship**

Reading: Film Ch.11 pp. 399-433

Screening: *Cleo de 5 a 7* (Varda, 1961)

Week 11

11/3 + 11/10 **Films In Historical Context –Film Noir**

Reading: Film Chap. 10 , 355-397; Andrew, " Film and History,"

Tudor, "Sociology and Film," FS 174-199

Schrader, "Notes on Film Noir" (Canvas)

Screening: *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944)

Week 12

11/10 + 11/13 Topic : **Film and Ideology--Race and Class**

Reading: Wiegman, "Race Ethnicity and Film" (Canvas)

Shohat and Stam, "Stereotype, Realism, and the Struggle over Representation"
(Canvas)

Screening: excerpts *Middle of Nowhere* (DuVernay, 2012)

Two Days, One Night (Dardenne Brothers, 2014)

Week 13

11/17 + 11/24 **Film Gender and Sexuality; explanation of final presentation**

READING: White, "Feminism and Film" FS 115-129

Doty, "Queer Theory" 146-150

Screening: excerpts *Vertigo* (Hitchcock, 1958); *Orlando* (Potter, 1992)

***My Own Private Idaho* (Van Sant, 1991)**

Week 14

11/24 Presentations begin

11/27 NO CLASS –THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15

12/1 Presentations

12/4 Presentations,

Take Home Final given out

ASSIGNMENTS

Tests

Midterm – In Class

The mid-term exam will be a combination of short answer and essay questions based on the readings, screenings, lectures and classroom discussion. It will also include a shot-by-shot analysis of a sequence screened during the exam.

Final -- Take Home

The final will consist of a series of essay questions related to methodologies discussed in class. The length and subject matter will be discussed in class.

Papers

Short Response Paper

Write a 2-3 page response paper about how *mise en scene* functions in one (1) scene in *Citizen Kane* with particular attention to composition, character placement, costumes, and setting. You must see the entire film in order to be able to discuss how the *mise en scene* creates meaning in a particular context.

Research Paper

Write a 6-7 page paper on a film selected from a list distributed in class. In a paper of this length, you should not devote more than a paragraph or two to an overall plot summary. Select two (2) different areas (e.g. editing, cinematography, *mise en scene*, sound, genre or narrative structure, and write about how they create meaning within the film. Your film should contain some type of argument (a debatable claim), evidence to support the claim, and a conclusion.

In writing the paper you should identify the themes and that the film addresses and major characters and write about the way that film techniques support those themes and characterizations. Think about answering some of the following questions when you begin your writing. For example, if you choose to write about cinematography consider discussing how the film uses color to achieve specific effects, and whether camera angles are especially significant or effective. If you decide to write about editing, you might ask yourself where shots are joined for particular effect and whether the editing is smooth and continuous or disruptive and choppy? How does this technique affect the meaning of the film?

As discussed in class, to supplement your own opinions and observations, you are asked to cite at least two (2) outside articles or references in books to your films.

Video Project

Working in groups, create a 2-3 minute video based on a common scenario handed out in class. The group should develop a shot list or storyboards and a production schedule that will be handed in prior to shooting. Students should also hand in a self-evaluation along with the finished video. You will be assessed on completing deadlines and your application of principles learned in the first part of the course.

Presentation

Each student will select a scene or sequence from a film to screen and discuss with the class. In the presentation, you will be expected to discuss the reason for your selection, give a formal analysis of how it uses film techniques, and use at least one methodology to illustrate how it can be analyzed.

RUBRIC FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

A –The argument for your writing is scholarly, genuinely debatable, and specific. The organization is clear and logical and connected with effective transitions. The paper is well researched with multiple, reliable sources as evidence to support every debatable assertion. The writing shows exact control of language with effective word choice and superior facility with language.

B – The argument for your writing is clear and debatable by may have shifting focus and specificity. The organization is generally clear and relates most ideas together effectively. The paper uses multiple resources that are not always assessed critically. The writing shows effective control of language and competence with conventions of grammar.

C – The argument is unclear and shifts in focus and specificity. The paper shows some organization and logic but transitions are sketchy and some ideas may seem illogical or not relevant to argument. The paper uses sources that are not always reliable and assessed critically. The paper shows intermittent control of language in terms of word choice and grammar.

D - The argument is vague or lacking in substance. The ideas are not developed with any kind of logical organization. The paper uses weak evidence that is incorrectly cited. The paper contains major errors in grammar and sentence variety.

F - Lacking in all of the above areas: non-existent claim, little or no research, illogical structure, poor control of language.

Rubric for Presentations

A -- Extremely well organized. Introduces the purpose of the presentation clearly and creatively. Information presented in logical, interesting sequence which class can follow. Thorough research of relevant literature with references to sources beyond those mentioned in class. Well-prepared visual aids used creatively to support presentation. Demonstrates extensive knowledge of the topic by responding confidently and appropriately to all audience questions.

B - -- Generally well organized.. Introduces the purpose of the presentation clearly. Most information presented in logical sequence; A few minor points may be confusing. Some research into literature beyond those mentioned in class. Visual ads support main points. Demonstrates knowledge of the topic by responding accurately and appropriately addressing questions . At ease with answers to all questions but fails to elaborate.

C - Somewhat organized. Introduces the purpose of the presentation but jumps around topics. Several points are confusing. Research is adequate but very little beyond what was assigned in class. Basic power point and generally and familiar examples. Demonstrates some knowledge of rudimentary questions by responding accurately to questions

D - Poor or confusing organization. Does not clearly introduce the purpose of the presentation. Presentation is choppy and disjointed with no apparent logical order. Poor choice of material for visual aids. participation. Demonstrates incomplete knowledge of the topic by responding inaccurately and inappropriately to questions.

F – Non-existent organization. No research beyond materials assigned in class. Poorly chosen or lacking in visual aids. Unable to answer questions because poorly prepared.

