COMM-2366_001 & COMM-2366_101 Introduction to Film Art
Fall 2011
Lecture T 11am-12:15pm
Screening/Discussion R 11am-1:45pm
O’Connor Building Rm. 117

Professor David Gurney
Office: Bay Hall Rm. 326
Office Hours: MW 10am-12pm, T 1-2pm, & by appointment

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Course Description:
In this course we will be exploring the aesthetics of film art, with some attention to the production process. We will be studying the technical, formal and stylistic components of different kinds of films in order to gain an informed, critical understanding of the artistic principles of filmmaking. By the end of the course, you should be a more perceptive film viewer, and, if you plan to make films, perhaps a smarter filmmaker.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
1. describe each phase of the production process;
2. define and apply specific analytical terms for narrative and non-narrative film forms;
3. identify and analyze the functions of specific stylistic elements, such as cinematography, editing, and sound;
4. write analytical essays applying concepts of film form and film style; and
5. take part in a group report analyzing the stylistic elements in a film scene.

Required Materials:

Course Policies:
» Attendance is required – both physically and mentally. Unexcused absences will have a direct effect on your final grade for this course, with each one equaling a five-point deduction (out of a possible total of 100 points). Attendance will be taken starting exactly at 11:00 a.m. and completed within the first five minutes of class. Arrivals after that time will be considered late. Late arrivals and departures prior to the finish of the class period will count as half-absences, meaning that two of either type will be counted as a full absence.
» You are allowed two fully excused absences throughout the semester. These are to be employed at your discretion, but they should be used to cover illness, religious holiday observances, or most any other events or circumstances that cause you to miss class. Only extreme hardship with back-up documentation (e.g. a doctor’s note) will allow for consideration of any additional absences being excused. Classes missed due to university-approved activities (athletic teams, student government, etc.) will also be considered excused. For those absences, please make me aware, and, in addition, I will need official TAMUCC documentation. If appropriate, you may arrange to make up quizzes or exams missed due to excused absences, but it will be your responsibility to get any information from a missed class lecture from one of your classmates.
» All absences not fitting into the excused categories described immediately above, will be considered unexcused. Any work missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up.
» Late work will be penalized by ten points (all assignments will be on 100-point scales) for each day it is late.
» While in class, please make sure your cell phone is off and stowed away, even during screenings.
A note on competing media: Laptops are permitted for note taking purposes during lecture only, but please do not abuse this privilege. While you may personally feel capable of multitasking during class while still paying attention to lecture and discussion, your surrounding classmates will more likely find your in-class extracurricular activities distracting, so please, for the sake of your peers, respect this restriction. No laptop use will be permitted during screenings.

A note on film content: Various films shown in this course contain strong language, nudity, sexual situations, violence, controversial subjects, and complex philosophical ideas that might be disturbing to you. I will try to highlight any potentially disturbing material before screenings and if you feel that you will be unable to view a specific film, please speak to be about arranging for an alternative screening for the week.

Please remember to check your Islander email account regularly during the week and monitor the course Blackboard site for any course updates.

If you would like to discuss any course readings, lectures, screenings, or assignments outside of class, you should feel free to contact me via email or by arranging to visit me during my office hours. If you need to schedule a time to meet outside of office hours, please let me know.

All writing for this course must be composed using a standard, 12-point font size, and with standard 1” margins.

Academic Integrity:
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade (F) for the assignment, at the very least, or a report to the Chair of the Department of Communication and Theatre, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and the Office of Student Affairs.

For the purposes of citation, please follow Modern Language Association (MLA) Style Guide. For quick reference, see: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

Dropping a Class:
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the class be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. April 1, 2011, is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Classroom/Professional Behavior:
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Academic Advising:
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.
Notice to Students with Disabilities:
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Grade Appeal Process:
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

Grade Scale:
A 90-100
B 80-89
C 70-79
D 60-69
F 59 and below

Grade Distribution:
» Attention & Participation (10%): Each student is expected to be attentive toward lecture and willing to participate in class discussion when appropriate. This grade will reflect how well you accomplish these goals.
**Reminder:** Attendance is required. It is assumed that you will be present for all class meetings and screenings unless you have a valid excuse. Unexcused absences will have a direct effect on your FINAL GRADE (not only the Attention & Participation component) for this course, with each one equaling a five-point deduction (out of a possible total of 100 points).
» Analytical Essays (15% each, 30% total): Two 3-4 page papers will be assigned over the course of the semester. One analyzing film form will be due on Tuesday, September 27th (Week 6), and one on film style will be due on Tuesday, November 29th (Week 15). The particulars of these assignments will be discussed well in advance of their due dates.
» Group Scene Analysis: (10%): This group report will focus on a specific scene from a film of your choice. Your goal will be to analyze the use of key stylistic elements in the scene. Your report should run no longer than 20 minutes, including the screening of your scene, and each group member should take part in the presentation.
» Midterm Exam (20%): A midterm exam covering all topics discussed in the first half of the semester will be given in-class on Tuesday, October 11th (Week 8).
» Final Exam (30%): A final exam covering topics discussed throughout the semester (with particular emphasis on the second half) will be given on Thursday, December 8th.
Course Schedule:
Required readings are to be completed prior to the first class meeting of the week under which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

**Week 1 (August 25) – Introduction, Course Outline, Screening**
Introductions, Review of Syllabus, Preliminary Discussion
Screening: *Good Morning (Ohayu)* (dir. Yasujiro Ozu, 1959, 93 min.)

**Week 2 (August 30 & September 1) – Film Art and Filmmaking**
Required Reading: *FA*, Ch. 1. “Film as Art: Creativity, Technology, and Business”
Screening: *Adaptation* (dir. Spike Jonze, 2002, 114 min.)

**Week 3 (September 6 & 8) – Film Form**
Required Readings: *FA*, Chapter 2. “The Significance of Film Form”
Screening: *The Wizard of Oz* (dir. Victor Fleming, 1939, 101 min.)

**Week 4 (September 13 & 15) – Film Narrative**
Required Readings: *FA*, Chapter 3. “Narrative as a Formal System”
Screening: *Reservoir Dogs* (dir. Quentin Tarantino, 1992, 99 min.)

**Week 5 (September 20 & 22) – Film Technique: Cinematography I**
Screening: *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin* (dir. Lau Kar Leung, 1979, 115 min.)

**Week 6 (September 27 & 29) – Film Technique: Cinematography II**
Paper 1 due at the beginning of class on 9/27.
Screening: *North by Northwest* (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1959, 131 min.)

**Week 7 (October 4 & 6) – Film Technique: Editing**
Required Reading: *FA*, Chapter 6. “The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing”
Screening: *Breathless* (dir. Jean-Luc Godard, 1960, 90 min.)

**Week 8 (October 11) – Midterm Exam**
The Midterm Exam will be given in class on 10/11. There will be no class meeting on 10/13 so that you may work on your Group Scene Analysis.

**Week 9 (October 18 & 20) – Film Technique: Sound**
Required Reading: *FA*, Chapter 7. “Sound in the Cinema”

**Week 10 (October 25 & 27) – Film Technique: Style**
Required Reading: *FA*, Chapter 8. “Summary: Style as a Formal System”
Screening: *Citizen Kane* (dir. Orson Welles, 1941, 119 min.)

**Week 11 (November 1 & 3) – Group Scene Analysis Presentations**

**Week 12 (November 8 & 10) – Film History**
Required Readings: *FA*, Chapter 12. “Film Art and Film History”
Screening: *Breathless* (dir. Jean-Luc Godard, 1960, 90 min.)
Week 13 (November 15 & 17) – Film Genres
Required Readings: FA, Chapter 9. “Film Genres”
Screening: Once (dir. John Carney, 2006, 85 min.)

Week 14 (November 22) – Experimental and Animated Film
No class on November 24 in observance of Thanksgiving.
Required Reading: FA, Chapter 10, pp. 366-394. “Documentary, Experimental, and Animated Films”
Screenings: various short form experimental and animated films

Week 15 (November 29 & December 1) – Documentary
Paper 2 due at the beginning of class on 11/29.
Screening: American Movie (dir. Chris Smith, 1999, 107 min.)

Week 16 (December 6) – Review
No reading scheduled, come with questions for final exam review.

Finals Week (Thursday, December 8) – Final Exam
The final exam will take place in room 117 of the O’Connor Building from 11am-1:30pm.