ENG 3321.001: Film and Literature
Spring 2012, M/W 3:30 – 4:45, Room TBA

Obsession and Obsessive Acts

Professor: Dr. Molly Engelhardt
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Office hours: T 2 – 3, W 1 – 3, TH 2 - 4

Course Description:
This course studies the interplay of our two most dominant art forms, literature and film. We will read a variety of literary texts adjacent to their film adaptations to better understand the choices writers make to tell their stories and how the conventions available to each genre affect meaning. In addition to studying how our stories are produced, the course examines why certain texts become popular or controversial when they do. What do our popular texts tell us about society in general, the human condition in particular? One primary focus of the course will be on obsession and obsessive acts, themes that pervade the narratives of both film and literature. Obsessive acts, beliefs, preoccupations in narrative form provide opportunities to study the psychological, physical, and social challenges of being alive, being human, in magnified form.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Respond critically to novels and short stories and their cinematic adaptations;
- Understand literary and cinematic conventions and be able to employ them in written and oral formats;
- Recognize connections between filmic and literary texts and their social, historical, and cultural contexts.
Required Texts (please purchase the editions specified so that we can be on the same page, literally).

- Benchley, Peter. *Jaws* (Pan Books)
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness* (Penguin)
- Desmond, John and Peter Hawkes. *Adaptation: Studying Film and Literature*
- Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Del Rey)
- Eugenides, Jeffrey. *Virgin Suicides* (Picador)

Required Films:

- *Bladerunner* (1982). Ridley Scott

Course Requirements:

Attendance: Attendance everyday is required. However, because unexpected crises do occasionally occur, I will allow everyone three absences without penalty (other than a tiny dip in your daily work grade—you can not make up missed in-class work). More than three absences, however, will result in a 2-point deduction in your final grade point average for each day missed. Let’s say your final average is 94 and you have six absences; your grade lowers to an 88 and you make a B in the course.

Pick a Scene: In groups of five, you will choose one scene from the text under review and creatively and collaboratively imagine it into cinematic form. You will consider such filmic elements as camera work, mise-en-scene, narrative point-of-view, sound, special effects and yes, money. After you have the adaptation mapped out, you have ten minutes to present it to the class, who will be functioning as the collective producer.

Writing Assignments: Two scene analyses (one literary, one filmic), a mini film adaptation, prompted responses to the film/literary “readings” (there will be seven of these). I will not accept late papers unless the student has a valid excuse and has requested an extension at least 48 hours before the due date. Grades of late papers will be lowered 5 points for each day late.

Exams and Final Projects: For the exam you will show proficiency and understanding of cinematic and literary terms and of concepts covered in class lecture and in the readings. It will be assumed that you have completed all of the
assigned readings, including the critical essays, and are prepared to apply terms and concepts learned in class to engage with particular scenes or moments.

Rather than a final, students will select a literary text and its film adaptation[s] and produce an eight-page, thesis-driven essay that integrates their own ideas and insights with those of scholars and professionals in the field. The idea is to learn more about the challenges and successes of adaptation including areas related to production, historical context, and/or aesthetics.

**Grade Breakdown:**
- Class work: 10%
  - Pick a scene: 5%
  - quizzes, activities: 5%
- Scene analyses: 30%
- Responses: 15%
- Exam: 20%
- Final project: 25%

**Additional Info:**

**Prerequisites:** You must have successfully completed English 1301 and 1302, and English 2332, 2333, 2334, or 2335 to be eligible for this class.

**Reminder to English Majors:** As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres that they have completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should keep a copy of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative and report writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.

**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 CCH 116, 119, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

**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.
**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.

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**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism, “the presentation of work of another as one’s own work,” is only one form of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism also includes falsification (the intentional alteration of information), fabrication (the intentional invention of information), multiple submission (using the same material for two separate assignments or courses without permission from the instructors), and abuse of academic materials (the intentional destruction of resource materials.) Sometimes students commit unintentional plagiarism (by not citing sources properly, for example) because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Because plagiarism is such a dirty word on college campuses, please see me if you have a question about violations, however minor.

**The Writing Center:** The writing center is a free service for students at TAMUCC to improve their writing skills. Writing consultants work one-on-one with writers at all stages of the writing process to help them find ideas, organize their thoughts, and formulate a thesis. You can get help with grammar and general mechanical problems too. The Writing Center is located in the Center for Academic Student Achievement (CASA) in the Glasscock Building. Both drop ins and scheduled appointments are welcome. [http://critical.tamu.edu/wiki/WC/Home/](http://critical.tamu.edu/wiki/WC/Home/)

**Office for Special Populations:** Students with disabilities or special needs should register with the Office of Special Populations. Federal and state laws and university policy require that I make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of students with qualifying conditions where such adjustments are needed.
for equal access to university facilities and programs. Please note, however, that these accommodations are determined only by application to and review by the Office of Students with Disabilities. To contact the disabilities office go to their offices in CCH 116, 119 or call 835-5816 or visit their web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/~DS.

Cell Phones, Laptops: You must turn off your cell phones before class begins. If I see you using a cell phone or other wireless device during class, I will ask you to leave and I will mark you absent for the day. Laptops are to be used for taking notes only. Enough said.

**Schedule** (readings should be completed on the dates indicated. The schedule is always subject to change). * readings must be accessed from my blackboard page.

Jan. 11: **Introductions**

Jan. 16: **MLK day. No class**

**Voyeurism/Scopophilia**

Jan. 18  
* Read “It Had to be Murder” (Cornell Woolrich)  
* “The Sexual Aberrations” (Freud)

Jan. 23: **Viewing of Rear Window**  
Read: Desmond, chaps 1 - 3  
Response #1 due

Jan. 25: **Viewing of Rear Window**  
* Read: “The Women Who Knew Too Much” (Modleski)  
Response #2 due

Jan. 30: **Montage**  
* Read “Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today” (Eisenstein)  
Read Desmond, chap 4  
Response #3 due

**Obsessive Journeys**

Feb. 1: **Read Heart of Darkness**

Feb. 6: **Viewing of Apocalypse Now**  
Read **Heart of Darkness**
Feb. 8: Read *Heart of Darkness* to end
Response #4 due

Feb. 13: Viewing of *Apocalypse Now*
* “Heart of Darkness and the Process of Apocalypse Now” (Hagen)

Feb. 15: Mise-en-scène

Feb. 20: Read *Jaws* (Benchley)
**Scene analysis #1 due**

Feb. 22: Read *Jaws*

Feb. 24: Outside viewing of Spielberg’s *Jaws*. Location TBD
Read *Jaws* to end.
Read Desmond, chapter 5

Feb. 27: The Blockbuster and the Biz
Response #5 due

**Flirting with Obsession**

Feb. 29: Read *Emma*

Mar. 5: Read *Emma*

Mar. 7: Read *Emma*
Response #6 due

Mar. 9: Outside viewing of McGrath’s *Emma*. Location TBD.

Mar. 12 – 16: Spring Break

Mar. 19: Viewing of *Clueless*

Mar. 21: Adaptation
**Scene analysis #2 due**

Mar. 26: **Exam**

**Life Obsessions**

Mar. 28: Read *Androids* (3 – 83)

Apr. 2: Read *Androids* (83 – 184)
Apr. 4: View Bladerunner
Read Androids to end
Project proposal due

Apr. 9: View Bladerunner
Read Desmond, chap 10

Apr. 11: Special Effects
Mini screenplay due

Apr. 16: Read Virgin Suicides (3 – 93)

Apr. 18: Read Virgin Suicides (93 – 171)

Apr. 23: View Virgin Suicides
Read Virgin Suicides to end

Apr. 25: Film and Culture
View Virgin Suicides
Response #7 due

Apr. 30: Class wrap

May 7: Final project due (by 4pm, my office)