COMM-1305.001 and COMM-1305.W01 Film and Culture
Fall 2014
TR 9:30-10:45am
Bay Hall Rm. 206

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Office Hours: T 3:30pm-5pm, W 10am-Noon, R 11am-12:30pm & by appointment

Course Description:
This course provides an introduction to the study of film aesthetics, history, and criticism. It introduces an aesthetic vocabulary that students will use to analyze components of film form, such as mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and genre. The course approaches films as texts that indicate cultural attitudes and norms of their time and that can be understood through textual analysis. A number of critical methodologies are introduced to study cinema's role in American culture, including issues of race, class, and gender. The course seeks to enhance the students’ understanding of film from a historical perspective, contextualizing film within the history of cinema technology and the movie industry.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:
• Closely watch films to gather information relevant to conducting critical analyses.
• Apply critical approaches to the study of films.
• Speak about, write about, and analyze film form and content in historical and cultural context.
• Speak about, write about, and analyze film form and content using the vocabulary of film aesthetics.
• Discuss and debate perspectives on film form and content.

Required Materials:
(Available through campus bookstore; henceforth referred to as EC)
» Netflix subscription (www.netflix.com): All films screened for this class will be available to stream instantly on Netflix, so the subscription will be essential for viewing the films and later analyzing them.
» All other readings will be available through the course Blackboard website.

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 20-point deduction (out of a possible total of 1000 points). Attendance will be taken starting exactly at 9:30 a.m. 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 should be used to cover illness, religious holiday observance, or most any other event or circumstance that causes 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 a deduction in points equaling ten-percent of the points possible for the assignment for each day it is late. Late work will not be accepted more than 4 days past the original due date.

» While in class, please make sure your cell phone is off and stowed away, even during screenings.

» A note on competing media devices: 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 screened for this course contain strong language, nudity, sexual situations, violence, controversial subjects, and complex philosophical ideas that might be disturbing to you. While I think there is great value to experiencing new (to you) media content with fresh eyes and ears, if you feel that you may be adversely impacted by certain types of content, it may be helpful to read story synopses available on the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com), Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), or other review websites in order to prepare yourself. If there are particularly acute reactions that you feel you may have, I encourage you to let me know so that I can advise you about any potential trouble spots and, if necessary, arrange for alternative screenings.» 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. For a more expansive definition of plagiarism please see [the relevant passage from the University's student handbook](http://www.studentaffairs.tamu.edu/).) 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 Media, the Dean of the School of Arts, Media, and Communication, and the Office of Student Affairs.

» For the purposes of citation, please follow American Psychological Association (APA) Style Guide. For reference, see: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)
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. November 7, 2014, 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 361.825.3466.

Notice to Students with Disabilities
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Grade Appeal Process:
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.
Grade Scale:
A  900-1000 points
B  800-899 points
C  700-799 points
D  600-699 points
F  599 points and below

Grade Distribution:
» Attention & Participation (100 points): Each student is expected to be attentive toward lecture and willing to participate in class discussion and small group discussion activities 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).

» Quizzes (150 points total): Periodically (and at the professor's discretion) throughout the term, quizzes will be given pertaining to readings and/or films that you are responsible for having read and/or watched.

» Blackboard Film Journals (200 points total): Following select class meetings, screenings, and readings, you will be asked to write short essay responses to questions that ask you to analyze and evaluate films by synthesizing concepts covered in the course with your observations of these films. Due dates are listed throughout the course schedule below.

» Midterm Exam (250 points): A midterm exam covering all topics discussed in the first half of the semester will be given in-class on Wednesday, October 23.

» Final Exam (300 points): A final exam covering topics discussed throughout the semester (with particular emphasis on the second half) will be given on Tuesday, December 9th.
Course Schedule:
Required readings and homework screenings are to be completed prior to the class meeting under which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Week 1 (August 28) – Introduction
Introductions, Distribution of Syllabus, Preliminary Discussion

Week 2 (September 2 & 4) – Film as Language: Cinematography & Mise-en-Scene
Required Readings:
EC, Introduction & Chapter 1 (pp. 50-64)
Yale Film Studies: Film Analysis Web Site 2.0 sections 1-3 (http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/)
Homework Screenings:
Fargo (dir. Joel Coen, 1996, 98 min.)
Traffic (dir. Steven Soderbergh, 2000, 147 min.)
Film Journal Entry 1 must be submitted through Blackboard before the end of the day on September 5.

Week 3 (September 9 & 11) – Film as Language: Editing & Sound
Required Readings:
EC, Chapter 1 (pp. 29-50, 64-69)
Yale Film Studies: Film Analysis Web Site 2.0 sections 4 & 5 (http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/)
Homework Screenings:
The Battleship Potemkin (dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1925, 74 min.)
The Conversation (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1974, 113 min.)

Week 4 (September 16 & 18) – Institutional and National Contexts
Required Reading:
EC, Chapter 6
Homework Screenings:
Ishaqzaade (dir. Habib Faisal, 2012, 131 min.)
Shakespeare in Love (dir. John Madden, 1998, 123 min.)
Film Journal Entry 2 must be submitted through Blackboard before the end of the day on September 19.

Week 5 (September 23 & 25) – Storytelling and Narrative Fiction Film
Required Reading:
EC, Chapter 4
Homework Screenings:
Bicycle Thieves a.k.a. The Bicycle Thief (dir. Vittorio de Sica, 1948, 89 min.)
Pulp Fiction (dir. Quentin Tarantino, 1994, 154 min.)

Week 6 (September 30 & October 2) – Fundamental Film Styles
Required Reading:
EC, Chapter 5
Homework Screenings:
L’Age d’Or (dir. Luis Buñuel, 1930, 60 min.)
Broken Flowers (dir. Jim Jarmusch, 2005, 105 min.)
Film Journal Entry 3 must be submitted through Blackboard before the end of the day on October 3.
Week 7 (October 7 & 9) – Documentary and Experimental Film
Required Readings:
EC, Chapters 3 & 4
Homework Screenings:
Exit through the Gift Shop (dir. Banksy, 2010, 87 min.)
Free Radicals: A History of Experimental Film (dir. Pip Chodorov, 2012, 82 min.)

Week 8 (October 14 & 16) – Midterm Exam
Monday, October 14 will be a review session.
The Midterm Exam will be given in class on Wednesday, October 16.

Week 9 (October 21 & 23) – Genre Films
Required Reading:
EC, Chapter 7
Homework Screenings:
Me and You and Everyone We Know (dir. Miranda July, 2005, 91 min.)
Sólo con Tu Pareja (dir. Alfonso Cuaron, 1991, 94 min.)
Film Journal Entry 4 must be submitted through Blackboard before the end of the day on October 24.

Week 10 (October 28 & 30) – Ideology
Required Reading:
EC, Chapter 8
Homework Screenings:
American Psycho (dir. Mary Harron, 2000, 103 min.)
Hoop Dreams (dir. Steve James, 1994, 171 min.)

Week 11 (November 4 & 6) – Race and Ethnicity
Required Reading:
EC, Chapter 9
Homework Screenings:
Black Girl (dir. Ousmane Sembene, 1966, 80 min.)
Black Mama, White Mama (dir. Eddie Romero, 1972, 86 min.)

Week 12 (November 11 & 13) – Social Class
Required Reading:
Christopher Beach, “Desperately seeking status: Class, gender, and social anxiety in postwar Hollywood comedy”
Homework Screenings:
Down and Out in Beverly Hills (dir. Paul Mazursky, 1986, 103 min.)
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (dir. Howard Hawks, 1953, 91 min.)
Madea’s Witness Protection (dir. Tyler Perry, 2012, 114 min.)
Film Journal Entry 5 must be submitted through Blackboard before the end of the day on November 14.
Week 13 (November 18 & 20) – Gender and Masculinity
Required Reading: EC, Chapter 10
Homework Screenings:
48 Hrs. (dir. Walter Hill, 1982, 96 min.)
Old Joy (dir. Kelly Reichardt, 2006, 76 min.)

Week 14 (November 25) – Gender and Femininity
Required Reading: EC, Chapter 11
Homework Screenings:
Boys Don’t Cry (dir. Kimberly Peirce, 1999, 118 min.)
The Hunger Games (dir. Gary Ross, 2012, 142 min.)

Week 15 (December 2) – Final Exam Review Session
The Final Exam will be given on Monday, December 9th from 8–10:30am.