COMM-1305_B01 Film and Culture
Maymester 2015
MW 12-3:45pm, Blended
Room: Bay Hall, Rm. 206

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Office Hours: MTW 10-11:30am & 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:
• Understand the vocabulary of film aesthetics.
• Understand various historical and cultural contexts of films.
• Apply critical approaches to the study of films.
• Analyze film form and content in historical and cultural context.
• Analyze film form and content using the vocabulary of film aesthetics.

Required Materials:
(Available through campus bookstore; henceforth referred to as EC)
» Netflix subscription (www.netflix.com): All films screened are available to stream instantly on Netflix.

Course Policies:
» Attendance is required – both physically and mentally. Unexcused absences will result in failure. Attendance will be taken starting exactly at 12:00 p.m. Arrivals after that time will be considered late. Any late arrival or departure prior to the finish of the class period will equate to a 50-point deduction on your final point total. Any work missed due to an unexcused absence, late arrival, or early absence cannot be made up.
» Due to there only being three class meetings throughout this very short term, absences will be excused in only the rarest of cases. Only extreme hardship with back-up documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note) will allow for consideration of any absences
being excused. In any case, it will be your responsibility to get any information from a missed class lecture from one of your classmates.

» Late work will be penalized by a ten percent deduction from the possible points available for the late assignment 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 screened 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 term 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.)

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/

**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. TBD, 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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

**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 need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible. Please have your accommodation letter from Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi Disability Services (DS) Office with you when you come see me. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Disability Services Office (located in 116 Corpus Christi Hall) 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.tamu.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
B  800-899
C  700-799
Grade Distribution:

» Attention & Participation (150 points): 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 an extreme case of hardship. Unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.

» Quizzes (150 points total): Quizzes will be administered at the beginning of Class Meetings 1, 2, and 3. These will pertain to concepts and content from readings, lecture, and/or films that you are responsible for having read, attended, or screened before the time of the quiz.

» Film Journals (300 points total): Between our class meetings, you will be asked to write short reflections based on prompts relating to our concepts and films. The dates for the three journal entries to be submitted are May 20, 23, and 27.

» Final Exam (400 points): A final exam covering all topics discussed and films screened throughout the semester will be given via Blackboard on Thursday, May 29.

Course Schedule:

Required readings and screenings are to be completed prior to noon on the latest date under which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Homework (Thursday, May 14 – Sunday, May 17) – Introduction to the Study of Film and the Language of Film

Required Reading: EC, Introduction and Chapter 1; Yale Film Analysis Web Site sections 1-5 (http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/)

Homework Screening: Fargo (dir. Joel Coen, 1996, 98 minutes)

Class Meeting 1 (Monday, May 18) – Introductions, Quiz 1, Lecture and Discussion

Homework (Tuesday, May 19) – Documentary and Experimental Film

Required Reading: EC, Chapters 2 and 3

Homework Screening: Free Radicals (dir. Pip Chodorov, 2012, 82 min.)

Film Journal Entry 1 to be submitted before midnight.

Class Meeting 2 (Wednesday, May 20) – Narrative Film, Quiz 2

Required Reading: EC, Chapter 4

Homework Screening: Bernie (dir. Richard Linklater, 2011, 98 min.)
**Homework (Thursday, May 21 – Friday, May 22) – Social Contexts of Film: Institutional and National Contexts**
Required Reading: *EC*, Chapter 6
*Ishaqzaade* (dir. Habib Faisal, 2012, 131 min.)
**Film Journal Entry 2 to be submitted before midnight on Friday, May 23.**

**Homework (Saturday, May 23 – Sunday, May 24) – Social Contexts of Film: Ideology, Race, and Ethnicity**
Required Reading: *EC*, Chapters 8 and 9
Homework Screening: *Black Girl* (dir. Ousmane Sembene, 1966, 80 min.)

**Memorial Day, Monday, May 25**

**Homework (Tuesday, May 26) – Social Contexts of Film: Genres**
Required Reading: *EC*, Chapter 7
Homework Screening: *Peeples* (dir. Tina Gordon Chism, 2013, 94 min.)
*Me and You and Everyone We Know* (dir. Miranda July, 2005, 91 min.)
**Film Journal Entry 3 to be submitted before midnight.**

**Class Meeting 3 (Wednesday, May 27) – Social Contexts of Film: Gender and Representation, Quiz 3**
Required Reading: *EC*, Chapters 10 and 11
Homework Screening: *The Hunger Games* (dir. Gary Ross, 2012, 142 min.)

**Final Exam (Thursday, May 28)**
The final exam will become available on Blackboard at noon. Students will have until 3pm to submit their completed exam.