Film and Culture

Course Description
Introduction to film aesthetics, history, and criticism for non-communication majors. Establishes a vocabulary for examining films and their roles in American culture. Satisfies the university core curriculum requirement in fine arts.

Learning Objectives
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

Major Course Requirements:
Attendance & Participation – 20%
6 Screening Journals – 10%
Formal Analysis – 15%
Group Pitch Project – 15%
Midterm Exam (on March 7) – 20%
Final Exam (on May 9) – 20%

Grade Scale:
A – 90%-100%
B – 80%-89%
C – 70%-79%
D – 60%-69%
F – 0%-59%

Required or Recommended Readings

(Available through campus bookstore; henceforth referred to as EC)

Other required readings may be added at the instructor’s discretion and added to the course Blackboard page.

Website: TAMUCC BlackBoard

Course Policies:
- Attendance is required for this course and is an important part of your participation grade. After all, you must be present and engaged to participate in class discussion. You are allowed three free absences (whether excused or unexcused) across the semester. For every additional excessive
absence, the class participation grade will be lowered by a point at the instructor’s discretion.

**Participation**

- **Complete readings and assignments as assigned.** Late assignments will receive a one-point deduction for every day that it is late. After ten days, assignments will receive a zero and will not be accepted. Exceptions will be made only for extraordinary cases and official documentation is needed.

- **Class screenings** are available online through Google Drive. The movies files are non-shareable and non-downloadable so you must have access provided by me. Please make sure that I have a current e-mail address for you at all times so that you will be able to access the course materials.

- During the semester, you will complete a minimum of six screening journals. They are due before we start discussing the film in our class. For January 7 to March 5, they are due by the start of our Wednesday class; for March 19 to April 19, they are due by the start of our Monday class. I will not accept any late screening journals. You are welcome to submit as many screening journals as you like throughout the semester; however, only the highest six scores will count toward your overall grade.

  Screening journals should demonstrate a connection between your observations about the film with the week’s reading and the course topic for that forthcoming week. I want to see your ability to understand critically the course material – both our readings and screenings. Provide and explain specific examples from the movies about the material you are reading.

- **Exams may not be rescheduled** except in extraordinary cases with official documentation. Do not make travel plans that conflict with the midterm.

- **Silence and put away cell phones during class.**

- **You may use laptops or tablets to take notes,** but please do not abuse this privilege. Your surrounding classmates may be distracted by your potential in-class extracurricular activities and could disrupt the class. If any such disruptions occur, I will ask you to put away your laptop or tablet and your day’s participation grade will be deducted.

- **Be responsible for any information and materials missed when absent.** You should ask your classmates for this information.

- **Respect the privacy and opinions of fellow students.** I expect students to participate in class discussion respectfully and I expect students to respect each other’s opinions, even if you may disagree.

- **Grades will not be discussed in the classroom** as they are considered personal information, but I will be happy to discuss your course performance with you in office hours.

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism.**

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.)
I treat plagiarism very seriously in my class. One incident of academic misconduct will result in an automatic zero for the assignment and an official misconduct report filed with the university. Two incidents of academic misconduct will result in an automatic “F” in the course and potential further disciplinary action.

**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.

**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 course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course 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 6** is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

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

**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.

**Statement of Civility (can be in place of classroom/professional behavior)**
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**Grade Appeals**
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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 Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures (available at http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C2.01_student_grade_appeal_proc
Disabilities Accommodations*

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, Room #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.

*Required by SACS or HB2504

Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

Course Schedule
(with reading assignments and screenings to be completed by the day it is assigned)

1/17   Introduction to the Course

1/22   Film Form, Content, and Context
Reading: EC, Introduction

1/24   Film as a Language: Cinematography and Mise-en-Scène
Homework Screening: The Graduate (Mike Nichols, 1967); 105 mins.
Reading: EC, Chapter 1 (29-38, 50-57, 60-64)

1/29   Film as a Language: Editing and Sound
Reading: EC, Chapter 1 (38-50, 64-70)

1/31   Storytelling & Narrative Fiction Film
Homework Screening: Gravity (Alfonso Cuaron, 2013); 91 mins.
Reading: EC, Chapter 4 (136-147); Seger, Making a Good Script Great (BlackBoard)

2/5    Storytelling, Authorship, and Social Context
Reading: EC, Chapter 4 (147-175)

2/7    Avant-Garde Cinema
Homework Screening: Compilation of shorts including Un Chien Andalou (Luis Bunuel and Salvador Dali, 1929); 21 mins; and Meshes of the Afternoon (Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid, 1943); 14 mins.
Reading: EC, Chapter 2
Formal Analysis Assignment Handed Out

2/12
Avant-Garde Cinema, Pt. II

2/14
Histories of Film Realism
Homework Screening: The Bicycle Thieves (Vittorio De Sica, 1948); 93 mins.
Reading: EC, Chapter 5 (175-188)

2/19
Realism in Contemporary Cinema

2/21
Modernism
Homework Screening: Last Year at Marienbad (Alain Resnais, 1961); 94 mins.
Reading: EC, Chapter 5 (188-200)

2/26
Art Cinema and the Auteur Theory

2/28
Postmodernism
Homework Screening: The Avengers (Joss Whedon, 2012); 143 mins.
Reading: EC, Chapter 5 (200-209)
Formal Analysis Assignment Due

3/5
Blockbuster Cinema and Transmedia Storytelling
Reading: Johnson, “Cinematic Destiny: Marvel Studios and the Trade Stories of Industrial Convergence”

3/7
MIDTERM

3/12-3/16
SPRING BREAK

3/19
Genre
Homework Screening: Aliens (James Cameron, 1986); 137 mins.
Reading: EC, Chapter 7

3/21
Genre Mixing in Aliens

3/26
Ideology & Hegemony
Homework Screening: 300 (Zack Snyder, 2006); 116 mins.
Reading: EC, Chapter 8 (287-310)

3/28
Social Context & Impact of Ideology
Reading: EC, Chapter 8 (310-325)

4/2
Race and Ethnicity
Homework Screening: Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee, 1989); 120 mins.
Reading: EC, Chapter 9

4/4
Race and Ethnicity, Pt. II

4/9
Film and Masculinity
Homework Screening: *500 Days of Summer* (Mark Webb, 2009); 95 mins.
Reading: *EC*, Chapter 10 (359-383)

4/11
**Film and Masculinity, Pt. II**

4/16
**Feminism and Film**
Homework Screening: *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993); 117 mins.
Reading: *EC*, Chapter 10 (383-395)

4/18
**Feminism and Film, Pt. II**

4/23
**INDIVIDUAL GROUP MEETINGS**

4/25
**IN-CLASS FILM PITCH PROJECTS**

4/30
**IN-CLASS FILM PITCH PROJECTS**

5/9
**FINAL EXAM – 1:45-4:15pm**