MEDA-1305.650 Film and Culture
(also MEDA-1305.651 & MEDA-1305.652)
Spring 2019
MWF 9:00-9:50 am
Bay Hall Rm. 207

Professor David Gurney
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Office Hours: MW 10am-12pm, R 2-3pm, & 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:
» Any 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 25-point deduction (out of a possible total of 1000 points). Attendance will be taken starting exactly at 9:00 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 three 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 (please see below section on plagiarism). In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in, at the very least, no credit for assignment or test.

**Plagiarism**

*Definition:* In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. Plagiarism is a violation academic expectations, but it is sometimes difficult to understand what plagiarism actually is. Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes:

- Using the work of another as your own,
- Downloading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,
- Using resource materials without correct documentation,
• Using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation.
• Turning in a researched project without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

When you are confused about citation of quotes or ideas, please visit the Writing Center or me to get help. Information on MLA documentation rules and APA documentation rules is available at Purdue University’s OWL: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/, and from our local Writing Center at CASA.

» 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 your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course.* 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 5, 2018, 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**
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:
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, 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 Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

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 (50 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 25-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 (150 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.

» Integrative Assignments (200 points total): In conjunction with your General Psychology and Seminar courses, you will have two integrative assignments that demonstrate your understanding of the principles of psychology by applying it to your life outside of the classroom. Each assignment will be worth up to 100 points. They will be due on the dates specified on the course calendar. More details will be provided in class and on Blackboard at a later date.

» Exams (450 points total): Three exams will be given in-class on the dates specified in the course schedule.
Course Schedule:
Required readings and homework screenings 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 (January 14-18) – Introduction
Required Readings (for January 16): EC, Introduction
Homework Screening (for January 16):
Inside Out (dir. Pete Docter, 2015, 102 min.)
Introductions, Distribution of Syllabus, Preliminary Discussion

Week 2 (January 19-25) – Film as Language: Cinematography & Mise-en-Scene
No Class on Monday, January 21
Required Readings: EC, Chapter 1 (pp. 50-64); Yale Film Studies: Film Analysis Web Site 2.0 sections 1-3 (https://filmanalysis.coursepress.yale.edu/)
Homework Screenings:
The Big Lebowski (dir. Joel Coen, 1998, 119 min.)
Moonrise Kingdom (dir. Wes Anderson, 2012, 95 min.)
Film Journal Entry 1 must be submitted through Blackboard before the end of the day on January 25.

Week 3 (January 26-February 1) – 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/filmanalysis/)
Homework Screenings:
Get Out (dir. Jordan Peele, 2017, 104 min.)
We Need to Talk about Kevin (dir. Lynne Ramsay, 2011, 112 min.)

Week 4 (February 2-8) – Institutional and National Contexts
Required Reading: EC, Chapter 6
Homework Screening:
A Woman Under the Influence (dir. John Cassavetes, 1974, 155 min.)
The Return of the Five Deadly Venoms (dir. Chang Cheh, 1978, 107 min.)
Exam 1 will be given in class on Friday, February 8.

Week 5 (February 9-15) – 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, 178 min.)
Film Journal Entry 2 must be submitted through Blackboard before the end of the day on February 15.

Week 6 (February 16-22) – Documentary and Experimental Film
Required Reading:
EC, Chapters 2 & 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 7 (February 23-March 1) – Fundamental Film Styles
Required Readings:
EC, Chapter 5
Homework Screenings:
Un Chien Andalou (dir. Luis Buñuel, 1929, 21 min.)
Assassination Nation (dir. Sam Levinson, 2018, 107 min.)
Integrative Assignment 1 must be submitted through Blackboard before the end of the day on March 1.

Week 8 (March 2-8) – Genre Films
Required Reading:
EC, Chapter 7
Homework Screenings:
Children of Men (dir. Alfonso Cuaron, 2006, 114 min.)
Robocop (dir. Paul Verhoeven, 1987, 103 min.)

Spring Break (March 9-15) – No Class Meetings

Week 9 (March 16-22) – Ideology
Required Reading:
EC, Chapter 8
Homework Screening:
They Live (dir. John Carpenter, 1988, 94 min.)
American Psycho (dir. Mary Harron, 2000, 103 min.)

Week 10 (March 23-29) – Race and Ethnicity
Required Reading:
EC, Chapter 9
Homework Screenings:
Black Girl (dir. Ousmane Sembene, 1966, 80 min.)
Omar (dir. Hany Abu-Assad, 2013, 86 min.)
Exam 2 will be given in class on Friday, March 29.

Week 11 (March 30-April 5) – Social Class
Required Reading:
Christopher Beach, “Desperately seeking status: Class, gender, and social anxiety in postwar Hollywood comedy”
Homework Screenings:
Crazy Rich Asians (dir. John M. Chu, 2018, 121 min.)
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (dir. Howard Hawks, 1953, 91 min.)
Film Journal Entry 4 must be submitted through Blackboard before the end of the day on April 5.

Week 12 (April 6-12) – Gender and Masculinity
Required Reading:
EC, Chapter 10
Homework Screenings:
Drive (dir. Nicholas Winding Refn, 2011, 95 min.)
Step Brothers (dir. Adam McKay, 2008, 106 min.)
Week 13 (April 13-19) – Gender and Femininity
Required Reading: EC, Chapter 11
Homework Screenings:
Advantageous (dir. Jennifer Phang, 2015, 90 min.)
Wonder Woman (dir. Patty Jenkins, 2017, 149 min.)
Integrative Assignment 2 must be submitted through Blackboard before the end of the day on April 19.

Week 14 (April 20-26) – Sexuality and Intersectionality
Homework Screenings:
Moonlight (dir. Barry Jenkins, 2016, 115 min.)
Certain Women (dir. Kelly Reichardt, 2016, 107 min.)

Week 15 (April 27-May 1) – Exam 3 Review

Exam 3 will be given on Wednesday, May 8, from 8am-10:30am.