

# director's cinema: Quentin Tarantino

**Course #:** FILM 117

**Instructor:** adam wadenius

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**Website:** [www.apwadenius.com](http://www.apwadenius.com)

**Office Hours:** By email or appointment

**Semester:** Summer 2013

**Day & Time:** MTWTh, 9 am - 11:05 am

**Building:** Bldg. #800, Room #838

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## course description

This course is a critical examination of the cinema of Quentin Tarantino, and his impact on popular American culture. We will be screening the majority of his writing and directing endeavors, as well as some of the films that have had a major influence on the cultivation of his filmmaking aesthetic. We will be paying particular attention to the postmodern aspects of Tarantino's style, with an emphasis on how violence, exploitation, pastiche, and reflexivity in his films function to critique contemporary social, political, and historical experience.

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## student learning outcomes

- ~ Think critically about Quentin Tarantino's films as reflections of popular culture.
- ~ Identify the dominant characteristics of Tarantino's filmmaking style.
- ~ Recall the history and evolution of Tarantino's filmmaking endeavors.
- ~ Recognize the various influences that have helped shape Tarantino's aesthetic.
- ~ Demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics of postmodern cinema.

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## course requirements

**Lectures & Screenings:** You are responsible for attending the class lectures every day. There is no talking/discussion during the films or clips. I will dismiss you from the course if you become a disruption during the film screenings. If at any time you decide that you do not wish to continue with the course, it is your responsibility to drop, as I do not take it upon myself to drop anyone from the roster at any time.

I encourage you to use your personal computer, iPad, or other learning tool during class time if you are using it appropriately (viewing class slides, in-class research, taking notes). Be sure to turn off any noisemaking functions on these tools, as well as any other electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, etc. Please keep the brightness levels on all LED screens at low intensity.

**Readings:** It is incumbent upon you to be prepared, and you should come to class every day having read the reading assignment posted on the schedule. We will be spending as much time discussing the readings as the films, and a firm understanding of them will benefit your overall understanding/interpretation of the film texts. All readings are located in the course reader.

**Discussion:** You are encouraged to be actively involved in the class discussions, as your participation is key to the success of this course. My goal is to aid in the development of your analytical/critical skills, and I expect everyone to maintain an open mind, and take a creative approach to the material. Be respectful of your fellow classmates when addressing and critiquing conflicting viewpoints.

**Film Notes:** To compliment any notes you may be taking on the lectures and discussions, you will be required to keep a separate notebook with your notes on each of the films. This is a good habit to practice when watching and analyzing films, as it will help you to remember important narrative and stylistic elements to be used as supportive examples in your writing. This notebook will be checked and returned on the final day of the class.

**Essay Guidelines:** You are required to write one, 5-6 page essay this summer. The paper is due on the designated due date without exception, and no late papers will be accepted. I do not accept physical papers, so please email all of your assignments to [adam@apwadenius.com](mailto:adam@apwadenius.com). All emergency situations leading to late papers will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There will be no opportunity for re-writes after grading, as good writing skills are a must in this course. All of the essay questions, as well as an example of an *A* paper are located on the course website. It is required that you visit the website to view the example paper, as there are additional guidelines for writing successfully in this course.

**\*\* NOTE \*\*** ~ *Plagiarism and other issues concerning academic integrity will not be tolerated, and are grounds for an automatic failure in the course. Acknowledge all reading and research sources with appropriate footnotes and bibliography.* Keep all copies of your essays, exams, and notes until you have received a final grade for this class. ~

**Exams:** The final exam will be administered on the last class session. The exam will cover the films screened, and the reading materials read throughout the summer. There will be no opportunity for making-up a missed exam.

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assessments

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Film Notes & Participation	20%
Final Exam	30%
One 5-6 pg. Essay	50%

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texts & materials

1. All readings are posted on the course website @ [www.apwadenius.com](http://www.apwadenius.com).
2. All materials posted on the course website @ [www.apwadenius.com](http://www.apwadenius.com).
3. All films screened in class, as well as any excerpt screened during the lectures.

*Please remember that if you have any questions about the films, readings, or any of the course materials, that I am readily available to help answer them. I can be reached through the email address above, or by placing a note for me in my box in the department office.*

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schedule

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*Filmic Influences & Postmodern Culture*

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**day #1 ~ (June 17<sup>th</sup>)**

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Lecture: Intro to Course / Syllabus / Questions  
Screening: *My Best Friend's Birthday* dir. Quentin Tarantino (1987)

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**day #2 ~ (June 18<sup>th</sup>)**

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Reading: "Note on the Meaning of the Word 'Post' and Answering the Question 'What is Postmodernism?'" by Jean-François Lyotard  
Lecture: Cinema in the Postmodern Age  
Clip: "The Man From Hollywood" segment from *Four Rooms* dir. Quentin Tarantino (1995)

**day #3 ~ (June 19<sup>th</sup>)**

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Reading: "Little Q," by Jami Bernard  
Screening: *Lung fu fong wan*, dir. Ringo Lam (1987)

**day #4 ~ (June 20<sup>th</sup>)**

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Screening: *Reservoir Dogs*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (1992)  
Discussion: Pastiche vs. Plagiarism in *Reservoir Dogs*

**day #5 ~ (June 24<sup>th</sup>)**

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Reading: "He Went Thataway: The Form and Style of Leone's Italian Westerns," by Marcia Landy  
Screening: *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, dir. Sergio Leone (1966)

**day #6 ~ (June 25<sup>th</sup>)**

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Screening: *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966), dir. Sergio Leone (1966)  
Discussion: Folklore and the Popular Western Narrative

**day #7 ~ (June 26<sup>th</sup>)**

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Reading: "Video Archives," by Jami Bernard  
Screening: *Django Unchained* dir. Quentin Tarantino (2012)

**day #8 ~ (June 27<sup>th</sup>)**

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Screening: *Django Unchained*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (2012)  
Discussion: Intertextuality and Reflexivity in *Django Unchained*

**day #9 ~ (July 1<sup>st</sup>)**

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Screening: *La mariée était en noir*, dir. François Truffaut (1968)  
Discussion: High/Low Culture and Truffaut's Homage to Hitchcock

**day #10 ~ (July 2<sup>nd</sup>)**

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Reading: "Violence and Film," by William Rothman  
Screening: *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (2003)

**day #11 ~ (July 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

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Screening: *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (2003)  
Discussion: Violence and Vengeance in *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*

**day #12 ~ (July 4<sup>th</sup>)**

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**\*\* Independence day holiday \*\***

*Narrative Form & Revisionist History*

**day #13 ~ (July 8<sup>th</sup>)**

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Reading: "Tarantino's Films: What Are They About and What Can We Learn from Them,"  
by Bruce Russell  
Screening: *Pulp Fiction*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (1997)

**day #14 ~ (July 9<sup>th</sup>)**

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Screening: *Pulp Fiction*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (1997)  
Discussion: Compassion and Morality in *Pulp Fiction*

**day #15 ~ (July 10<sup>th</sup>)**

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Reading: "The Mantelpiece," by Jeff Dawson  
Screening: *Jackie Brown*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (1997)

**day #16 ~ (July 11<sup>th</sup>)**

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Screening: *Jackie Brown*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (1997)  
Discussion: Tarantino and Subverting "Grand" Narratives

**day #17 ~ (July 15<sup>th</sup>)**

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Reading: "History Is Always Virgin: Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* and the Lyotardian  
Sublime," by Marco Grosoli  
Screening: *Inglourious Basterds*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (2009)

**day #18 ~ (July 16<sup>th</sup>)**

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Screening: *Inglourious Basterds*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (2009)  
Discussion: Rewriting History and Spectator Identification

*Gender Representations & Violence*

**day #19 ~ (July 17<sup>th</sup>)**

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Reading: "Independent Auteurism: From Modern Existentialism to Postmodernism As Nostalgia"  
by E. Deidre Pribram  
Screening: *Natural Born Killers*, dir. Oliver Stone (1994)

**day #20 ~ (July 18<sup>th</sup>)**

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Screening: *Natural Born Killers*, dir. Oliver Stone (1994)  
Discussion: The Morality of Excess in *Natural Born Killers*

**day #21 ~ (July 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

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Reading: "A Sword of Righteousness: *Kill Bill* and the Ethics of Vengeance," by Timothy Dean Roth  
Screening: *Kill Bill: Vol. 2*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (2004)

**day #22 ~ (July 23<sup>rd</sup>)**

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Screening: *Kill Bill: Vol. 2*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (2004)  
Discussion: Violence and Vengeance in *Kill Bill: Vol. 2*

**day #23 ~ (July 24<sup>th</sup>)**

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Screening: *Death Proof*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (2009)  
Discussion: Representing Masculinity and Femininity in *Death Proof*

**day #24 ~ (July 25<sup>th</sup>)**

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**\*\* *Final exam* \*\***

**\*\* *5-6 pg. essay due* \*\***

**\*\* *Film notes due* \*\***