

director's cinema: the auteurs

Course #: FILM 117
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Office Hours: By email or appointment
Semester: Spring 2019
Day & Time: Th, 6pm - 8:50pm
Building: Bldg. #100, Room #133

course description

This course is a critical examination of the role of the film director as *auteur*. We will examine the work of Guillermo del Toro, Steven Spielberg, Orson Welles, Quentin Tarantino, Ana Lily Amirpour, and Mario Van Peebles as examples, and will consider the impact of their diverse filmmaking styles as larger representations of popular culture.

student learning outcomes

- ~ Think critically about the films of specific directors as reflections of popular culture.
- ~ Identify the dominant characteristics of a specific director's filmmaking style.
- ~ Recall the history and evolution of a specific filmmaker's oeuvre.
- ~ Recognize the various influences that have helped to shape specific filmmaking styles.
- ~ Demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics of classical, art, and postmodern cinema.

course requirements

Class Lectures & Screenings: You are responsible for attending the class lecture every week. Please email me if you know you cannot make it to section on a given day. There is no talking/discussion during the films, audio recordings or clips. I will dismiss you from the course if you become a disruption during the lectures. Your enrollment in this class is your responsibility. It is incumbent upon you to double-check your enrollment status periodically throughout the semester, as I do not maintain my rosters after the census has been processed. 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 course 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, taking notes), however, be sure to turn off any noisemaking functions on those and any other electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, etc. Please keep the brightness levels on all LED screens at low intensity. There is no food allowed in class at any time (drinks are okay). Copies of all the lectures are available on the course website for download and review. If you require any additional accommodations such as a note taker, testing services, captions, or special chairs/desks, please speak with me personally, or provide the proper authorization letter from the Disability Resources Department.

Readings: It is incumbent upon you to be prepared, and you should come to class each session 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.

Discussion: You are encouraged to be actively involved in the class discussions, as your participation is key to your success in 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.

assessments and grading

There are **550** total points available in the course, and your overall grade will be determined by your performance on the following assessments:

Screenings and Participation (150 pts.)	A = 550 - 494
Film Notes (150 pts.)	B = 493 - 439
Mise-en-scène Analysis (50 pts.)	C = 438 - 384
Spielberg Analysis (50 pts.)	D = 383 - 329
Auteur Essay (100 pts.)	F = 328 - 0

Film Notes & Participation: Your attendance is expected at each of the film screenings, and missing or leaving the film screenings early will result in a lowered participation grade. 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 (one page per each film). 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 on the final session of the semester, and must be submitted in one of two ways:

- 1) as an electronic document (word, pdf, text, pages, etc.)
- 2) as a packet of individual sheets of paper, assembled and stapled together

Do not turn in any three-ring binders or spiral/binded notebooks with your notes in them, as they will not be accepted.

Mise-en-scène Analysis, Spielberg Analysis, and Auteur Essay Assignments: There are three writing assignments this semester, each due by the time class starts on the assigned date. Late assignments will be accepted for up to one week, and will incur a 10-point penalty. No late assignments will be accepted after one week. There will be no opportunity for re-writes after grading, as good writing skills are a must in this course. Please submit your work to me through the Turnitin.com application (discussed in further detail in the *Assignments* section on the course website). You are required to visit the course website to view the assignment questions and clips, as there are additional writing and formatting guidelines for you to review.

**** 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 quizzes and notes until you have received a final grade for this class.

texts and materials

- 1) All course readings and materials can be accessed through Canvas.
- 2) All films screened in class, as well as any excerpt screened during the lectures.

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

schedule

Filmmaking, Directors, & the Auteur

week #1 ~ (Jan. 17th) ~ what is the role of the director?

Lecture: Intro to Course / Syllabus / Questions

Screening: *Hearts of Darkness*, dirs. Elena Coppola, George Hickenlooper, Fax Bahr (1991)

week #2 ~ (Jan. 24th) ~ the auteur theory

Reading: "The Auteur Theory," by Peter Wollen
Screening: *Rebecca*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1940)

week #3 ~ (Jan. 31st) ~ cinematography and mise-en-scène

Reading: Pgs. 87-94 in "Film Form and Narrative," by Suzanne Spiedel
Screening: *El laberinto del fauno*, dir. Guillermo del Toro (2006)

week #4 ~ (Feb. 7th) ~ classical/art cinemas and genre

Reading: "Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir," by J.A. Place and L.S. Peterson
Screening: *The Shape of Water*, dir. Guillermo del Toro (2017)

week #5 ~ (Feb. 14th) ~ no class

** *President's day recess* **

Classical Hollywood Auteurs

week #6 ~ (Feb. 21st) ~ classical heteronormativity

Reading: "Sexuality and American Film," by Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin
Screening: *North by Northwest*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1959)

** *Mise-en-scène analysis due* **

week #7 ~ (Feb. 28th) ~ Hollywood and patriarchy

Reading: "Understanding Patriarchy," by bell hooks
Screening: *Jurassic Park*, dir. Steven Spielberg (1993)

week #8 ~ (Mar. 7th) ~ no class

** *Instructor conference* **

week #9 ~ (Mar. 14th) ~ the father in crisis

Reading: "A Pervert's Guide to Family," by Slavoj Žižek
Screening: *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, dir. Steven Spielberg (2008)

week #10 ~ (Mar. 21st) ~ subversive formal and narrative structures

Reading: "*Citizen Kane*," by David Bordwell
Screening: *Citizen Kane*, dir. Orson Welles (1941)

week #11 ~ (Mar. 28th) ~ the intersection of art and classical cinema

Reading: "*Touch of Evil*," by Joseph McBride
"Carefree," by Orson Welles and Peter Bogdanovich
Screening: *Touch of Evil*, dir. Orson Welles (1958)

Postmodern Auteurs

week #12 ~ (Apr. 4th) ~ postmodernism and film

Reading: "Independent Auteurism," by E. Deidre Pribram

Screening: *Kill Bill: Vol. I*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (2003)

** *Spielberg analysis due* **

week #13 ~ (Apr. 11th) ~ modes of violence

Reading: "Violence and Film," by William Rothman

Screening: *Inglourious Basterds*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (2009)

week #14 ~ (Apr. 18th) ~ no class

** *Spring break* **

week #15 ~ (Apr. 25th) ~ counter-cinema representations

Reading: "What is Feminist Film Theory?" by Karen Hollinger

Screening: *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, dir. Ana Lily Amirpour (2014)

week #16 ~ (May 2nd) ~ avant-garde form

Reading: "Women in Avant-garde and Documentary Filmmaking," by Karen Hollinger

Screening: *The Bad Batch*, dir. Ana Lily Amirpour (2016)

week #17 ~ (May 9th) ~ appropriating genre and style

Reading: "Black American Cinema: The New Realism," by Manthia Diawara

Screening: *New Jack City*, dir. Mario Van Peebles (1991)

week #18 ~ (May 16th) ~ subversive identity politics

Reading: "The Rise and Fall of Blaxploitation," by Ed Guerrero

Screening: *Baadasssss!*, dir. Mario Van Peebles (2003)

week #19 ~ (May 23rd) ~ final class session

** *Auteur Essay due* **

** *Film notebooks due for review* **