

film genre

Course #: FMS 320 ~ 15137
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Office Hours: Th, 12:00p - 1:00p, #A500
Semester: Spring 2020
Day & time: Thursdays, 1:30p - 4:35p
Building: Main Campus Library #111

course description

This course is an introduction to the basic concepts and theories of film genre. Throughout the semester, we will examine the structures, styles, and major themes of film genres such as comedy, horror, science fiction, teenpics, action-adventure, social problem films, disaster movies, and the western. Special attention will be paid to the tension between Hollywood filmmaking and auteur cinema.

student learning outcomes

- ~ Understand basic genre theory, its relationship to popular culture, and role in fostering ideology.
- ~ Explain and examine the codes, conventions, myths, and cycles of film genre.
- ~ Analyze concepts of verisimilitude and mise-en-scène.
- ~ Apply current film theory to the analysis and criticism of genre films.
- ~ Identify and analyze the formal and narrative strategies that particular genres employ.
- ~ Apply a semiotic approach to the study of film genre.

course requirements

Class Lectures: You are responsible for attending the class lecture each session. Please email me if you know you cannot make it to section on a given day. I will forgive up to three absences during the semester, so long as you email me ahead of 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 for download and review on Canvas. 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 Support Office (DSPO).

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

Screenings and Participation (80 pts.)	A = 460 - 413
Film Notes (80 pts.)	B = 412 - 367
Short-answer Assignment (100 pts.)	C = 366 - 321
Sequence Analysis (100 pts.)	D = 320 - 275
Film Analysis Essay (100 pts.)	F = 274 - 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 (I will forgive up to *two* absences if you email me ahead of time). You are required to take notes on each of the films screened in class. 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. Notes 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.

Short Answer, Sequence Analysis, and Final 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 (except for the final paper). 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 Canvas (discussed in further detail in the *Assignments* section). You are required to visit the course page on Canvas 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) Genre and Hollywood, by Steve Neale. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- 2) Additional readings and materials can be accessed through Canvas.
- 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 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

~ *Genre Conventions, Iconography, Realism* ~

week #1 ~ (Jan. 23rd) ~ definitions of genre

Discussion: Intro to course | Syllabus | Questions

Clips: *Scary Movie*, dir. Keenen Ivory Wayans (2000), *Die Hard*, dir. John McTiernan (1988),

Home Alone, dir. Chris Columbus (1990)

week #2 ~ (Jan. 30th) ~ iconography and making meaning

Reading: "Semiotics and the Cinema: Metz and Wollen," by Gilbert Harman

Screening: *Baby Driver*, dir. Edgar Wright (2017)

week #3 ~ (Feb. 6th) ~ verisimilitude and the mise-en-scène

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

~ *Spectacles of Emotion and Violence* ~

week #4 ~ (Feb. 13th) ~ action-adventure and masculinity

Reading: "Ch. 3 - Major Genres," pgs. 52-60
Screening: *Mad Max: Fury Road*, dir. George Miller (2015)

week #5 ~ (Feb. 20th) ~ melodrama and the woman's film

Reading: "The Woman's Film," by Molly Haskell
Screening: *Far From Heaven*, dir. Todd Haynes (2002)

week #6 ~ (Feb. 27th) ~ the diversity of comedy

Reading: "Ch. 3 - Major Genres," pgs. 65-71
Screening: *Always Be My Maybe*, dir. Nahnatchka Khan (2019)

week #7 ~ (Mar. 5th) ~ teenpics and youth in cinema

Reading: "Ch. 3 - Major Genres," pgs. 118-125
Screening: *Dope*, dir. Rick Famuywa (2015)

** *Short-answer assignment due* **

week #8 ~ (Mar. 12th) ~ the musical film

Reading: "Ch. 3 - Major Genres," pgs. 104-112
Screening: *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, dir. John Cameron Mitchell (2001)

week #9 ~ (Mar. 19th) ~ war and anti-war films

Reading: "Ch. 3 - Major Genres," pgs. 125-133
Screening: *The Hurt Locker*, dir. Kathryn Bigelow (2008)

~ *Critiquing American Culture* ~

week #10 ~ (Mar. 26th) ~ from film noir to neo-noir

Reading: "Notes on Film Noir," by Paul Schrader
Screening: *Nightcrawler*, dir. Dan Gilroy (2014)

week #11 ~ (Apr. 2nd) ~ western antinomies

Reading: "Ch. 3 - Major Genres," pgs. 133-142
Screening: *The Bad Batch*, dir. Ana Lily Amirpour (2016)

week #12 ~ (Apr. 9th) ~ no class

** *Spring break* **

week #13 ~ (Apr. 16th) ~ horror, repression, and the Other

Reading: "Ch. 3 - Major Genres," pgs. 92-100

Screening: *Us*, dir. Jordan Peele (2019)

*** Sequence analysis assignment due ***

week #14 ~ (Apr. 23rd) ~ science-fiction and society

Reading: "Ch. 3 - Major Genres," pgs. 100-104

Screening: *Children of Men*, dir. Alfonso Cuarón (2006)

week #15 ~ (Apr. 30th) ~ disaster movies and the nuclear family

Reading: "Studying Disaster Movies," by John Sanders

Screening: *The Happening*, dir. M. Night Shyamalan (2008)

week #16 ~ (May 7th) ~ social problem films

Reading: "Ch. 3 - Major Genres," pgs. 112-118

Screening: *Joker*, dir. Todd Phillips (2019)

week #17 ~ (May 14th) ~ final class session

*** Essay assignment due ** Film notebooks due for review ***

*** Final class session meets from 12:45p to 2:45p ***