

introduction to film studies

Course #: FMS 300
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Office Hours: 12:00p - 1:00p, #A500
Semester: Fall 2019
Day & time: M/W, 10:30a - 11:50a
Building: Main Campus Library #111

course description

This course is an introduction to the language of film, and its various forms, styles, and genres. We will be studying a wide variety of film texts (canonic Hollywood films, documentaries, short films, independent and experimental films) as a means toward furthering our understanding of the visual, aural, and narrative conventions by which motion pictures address social and aesthetic experience. Through the class lectures, readings, and films, you will be introduced to the formal and stylistic methods for understanding how films function, conventional and alternative ways of reading a film text, as well as the critical tools necessary for thinking and writing about film both as an art form, and as a medium that reflects popular culture.

student learning outcomes

- ~ Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of film as a performing/visual art form.
- ~ Identify, explain, and understand contemporary film theories and use these theories to analyze, interpret, and criticize motion pictures.
- ~ Recognize, discuss and examine the nature of culture, class, gender, and ethnicity in Hollywood mythologies and oppositional films.
- ~ Explain and examine the codes and the conventions of film genre, myth, narrative, and rhetoric.
- ~ Identify and explain the various formal and stylistic elements involved in the filmmaking process.
- ~ Articulate the core concepts of narrative storytelling and character development in popular film forms (Hollywood, independent, documentary, and avant-garde filmmaking).
- ~ Identify the various genres and styles of films that have evolved over the course of film history.

course requirements

Class Lectures & Screenings: 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. 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. 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, as well as the teaching page on apwadenius.com. 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 (DSPS).

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. 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.

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. 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 on each of the course websites). You are required to visit the course websites 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) Engaging Cinema, by Bill Nichols. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.
- 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.

~ *Film Form & Narrative* ~

week #1 ~ (Aug. 26th & 28th) ~ why do we study films?

Discussion: Intro to course | Syllabus | Questions

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

Apocalypse Now, dir. Francis Ford Coppola (1979)

week #2 ~ (Sep. 2nd & 4th) ~ film language and editing

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Introduction"

"Ch. 1 - Film as a Language," pgs. 29-50

"Ch. 12 - Writing and Speaking About Film"

Clips: *Bringing Up Baby*, dir. Howard Hawks (1938)

** No class on Monday the 2nd for Labor Day holiday **

week #3 ~ (Sep. 9th & 11th) ~ cinematography and the image

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 1 - Film as a Language," pgs. 50-59

Clips: *Three Kings*, dir. David O. Russell (1999)

Psycho, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1960)

Requiem for a Dream, dir. Darren Aronofsky (2000)

week #4 ~ (Sep. 16th & 18th) ~ the elements of mise-en-scène

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 1 - Film as a Language," pgs. 60-64

Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 5 - Three Fundamental Styles," pgs. 176-187

Clips: *City Lights*, dir. Charlie Chaplin (1931)

Wo hu cang long, dir. Ang Lee (2000)

Velvet Goldmine, dir. Todd Haynes (1998)

week #5 ~ (Sep. 23rd & 25th) ~ sound and sound design

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 1 - Film as a Language," pgs. 64-66

Clips: *The Babadook*, dir. Jennifer Kent (2014)

M, dir. Fritz Lang (1931)

Jaws, dir. Steven Spielberg (1975)

week #6 ~ (Sep. 30th & Oct. 2nd) ~ the principles of film narrative

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 4 - Storytelling and Narrative Fiction Film," pgs. 136-147

Clips: *Some Like It Hot*, dir. Billy Wilder (1959)

Magnolia, dir. Paul Thomas Anderson (1999)

Citizen Kane, dir. Orson Welles (1941)

~ *Film Genre & Style* ~

week #7 ~ (Oct. 7th & 9th) ~ ideology and cinema

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 8 - Ideology and the Cinema"

Clips: *The Little Mermaid*, dir. John Musker & Ron Clements (1989)

Blue Velvet, dir. David Lynch (1986)

Frankenstein, dir. James Whale (1931)

** Short-answer assignment due **

week #8 ~ (Oct. 14th & 16th) ~ film genres: science fiction

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 7 - Genre Films"

Clips: *Dark City*, dir. Alex Proyas (1998)

2001: A Space Odyssey, dir. Stanley Kubrick (1968)

The Thing, dir. John Carpenter (1982)

week #9 ~ (Oct. 21st & 23rd) ~ the classical Hollywood style

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 4 - Storytelling and Narrative Fiction Film," pgs. 160-172

Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 6 - The Institutional and National Contexts," pgs. 232-237

Clips: *Back to the Future*, dir. Robert Zemeckis (1985)

Raiders of the Lost Ark, dir. Steven Spielberg (1981)

The Maltese Falcon, dir. John Huston (1941)

week #10 ~ (Oct. 28th & 30th) ~ art cinema narration

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 4 - Storytelling and Narrative Fiction Film," pgs. 147-160

Clips: *Vivre sa vie*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (1962)

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

Dancer in the Dark, dir. Lars Von Trier (2000)

week #11 ~ (Nov. 4th & 6th) ~ documentary film

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 3 - Documentary Film"

Clips: Various by dirs. Ivens, Capra, Maysles, Moore, Buñuel, Zahedi

~ *Representing Culture in Film* ~

week #12 ~ (Nov. 11th & 13th) ~ race and Otherness

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 9 – Race and Ethnicity in Film"

Clips: *Do the Right Thing*, dir. Spike Lee (1989)

** No class on Monday the 11th for Veteran's Day holiday **

week #13 ~ (Nov. 18th & 20th) ~ sex and gender in film

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 10 - Gender and Masculinity," pgs. 359-388

Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 11 - Feminism and Film," pgs. 395-422

Clips: *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, dir. Amy Heckerling (1982)

Moana, dir. Ron Clements and John Musker (2016)

Dope, dir. Rick Famuyiwa (2015)

** Sequence analysis assignment due **

week #14 ~ (Nov. 25th & 27th) ~ Other sexualities in film

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 10 - Gender and Masculinity," pgs. 388-394

Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 11 - Feminism and Film," pgs. 422-431

Clips: *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, dir. John Cameron Mitchell (2001)

Tongues Untied, dir. Marlon Riggs (1989)

Tangerine, dir. Sean Baker (2014)

week #15 ~ (Dec. 2nd & 4th) ~ world cinema

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 6 - The Institutional and National Contexts," pgs. 209-231

Clips: *11'09"01 September 11* (2002) "India" dir. Mira Nair

"God, Construction, and Deconstruction" dir. Samira Makhmalbaf

"Mexico" dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu

week #16 ~ (Dec. 9th & 11th) ~ technology and realism

Reading: Engaging Cinema, "Ch. 1 - Film as a Language," pgs. 66-69

Clips: *RoboCop*, dir. Paul Verhoeven (1987)

RoboCop, dir. José Padilha (2014)

week #17 ~ (Dec. 16th & 18th) ~ finals week

*** Essay assignment due ***

*** Film notebooks due for review ***