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**ENG 202: INTRODUCTION TO FILM STUDIES**  
PARIS, THOMAS COMMONS, 6-2016-2017

**REQUIRED MATERIALS**

- Corrigan, Timothy and Patricia White. *The Film Experience: An Introduction*. 4th ed.
- Readings on Moodle (Always print to read and bring to class ON PAPER.)
- Laptops—may not be used in class during film screenings and discussions but may be required for certain group activities.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This course introduces students to the academic discipline of Film Studies, a discipline that asks—and attempts to answer in a variety of ways—how films create meaning. More specifically, students will

- learn film studies terminology.
- apply film studies terminology to perform a “close reading” of a film.
- develop well-supported interpretive arguments about film.
- develop academic writing skills, discussion, and teamwork skills.
- be introduced to multiple kinds of film, including but not limited to narrative film, documentary film, experimental or avant-garde film, and animation.
- Be introduced to a variety of international and domestic U.S. filmmaking traditions.
- develop an awareness of scholarly resources on film studies, including books, journal articles, reviews, subject encyclopedias, online scholarly databases, scholarly e-texts, academic blogs, and other media relevant to the study of film.
- become familiar with various theoretical approaches to film prominent in film studies including genre theory, film as art, film history, film as cultural practice, film as industry, film theory.

Class time will include screenings, mini-lectures, discussion and group activities. Students are expected to keep good notes on film screenings, class discussion and lectures, and to rescreen films independently in order to write about them effectively.

**EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES**

This course supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College, with emphases on knowledge, reasoning, communication, and intercultural literacy.

**REQUIREMENTS**

Attendance at Film Screenings. Film screenings will begin at 9:00 AM and will last until 11:00 AM or until the length of the film, whichever is longer. (Film lengths are indicated on the schedule below so that you can make arrangements to avoid conflicts with class times.) I encourage you to review films on your own in addition to a scheduled screening, particularly for writing assignments, but it is essential that you watch each film *also* at a scheduled screening from beginning to end. Because latecomers are a distraction, films will start promptly at 9:00 (or as soon as I have the film ready to go), so be seated, unpacked, and ready to take notes at 9:00. Students who are late may be locked out.

By the way, note that that the opening (and closing) film credits should always be approached as a part of the film itself, not something that precedes the film proper, so they're worth noting too!

Class Participation. In class, I expect universal participation each day: every person will contribute ideas and questions, and will listen carefully to others. This requires you not only to speak but to attend to whether other class participants have had a chance to contribute each day. When we have full class discussions, since this is a large class, please raise a hand for acknowledgement before speaking so that I can encourage balance. In your comments, note points of agreement and disagreement with respect to interpretation, explain your reasoning, and be prepared to defend your views or to change your views according to evidence.

#### A Note on Film Content

Some of our films deal with challenging subject matter that may or may not be announced in advance of the screening. If you have concerns about being able to engage with particular film content or types of films, please see me early in the term to discuss this. I expect students to view and be willing to discuss all the assigned material honestly and with respect towards class members, even when—especially when—the material raises controversial or emotional issues.

#### How to Read Our Textbook

Most chapters of Corrigan and White begin with a discussion of film history, then turn to the nuts and bolts of terminology related to the chapter's theme, and ends with a discussion of the significance of theme from one or more theoretical perspectives. For each chapter, I'll provide a set of study questions, as well as a list of terminology that you should be able to define, and ultimately, to apply to film analysis.

I also encourage you to construct a timeline related to the historical milestones mentioned in the beginning sections of each chapter. Note that your textbook has a glossary that may define terms slightly differently from the chapters: look at both definitions and ask yourself whether you fully understand the material.

Finally, you should keep a list of questions about difficult terms or obscure ideas as you read. Bring these to class and periodically raise them in discussion to be certain of your own comprehension of the material. I encourage you to talk with me during office hours if you have questions as well.

#### How to Keep a Film Notebook

You are expected to keep a film notebook, which should include a set of extensive and detailed viewing notes on each film, followed by 2-3 pages of reflections.

Include a *header* for each film that specifies

- the name of the film
- the director of the film
- the date of the film's making
- if a scene rather than an entire film, provide a name for the scene

Writing reflections will help to solidify impressions and questions. For example, what patterns did you notice in the film? What surprised you? What do you want to know more about? What aspect of the reading did you observe in the film? Reflections should be completed prior to class discussion on that film—not during class. Keep these up to date, as I may ask to see them, or ask you to share them, at any

time during class. I will not formally grade these but may use them to help you evaluate and improve your learning strategies.

### Friday Exams

Each Friday morning you will complete an exam that covers the readings and films of that week. The first part of the exam will be on film terminology and history and will be “objective.” For example, I might ask you about an important date in film history, or to define terms related to the “mis-en-scene” of a film. The second part of the exam will ask you to apply film terminology: for example, I might ask you to do a close reading of a film still, or to analyze the edits of a film strip, or to write an essay.

Analytic Film Essay. You will submit one 4-5 page essay in response to a provided prompt. The paper should have a clear aim, be analytic, be coherent, and be readable. It should employ film terminology correctly and effectively. You do not need to consult outside sources but must *carefully* document any works that you do consult, including online sources, using MLA’s citation style. The paper should be double spaced, in Calibri 11-point font, and formatted otherwise according to MLA recommendations. Further paper parameters will be distributed in class.

Film Trailor Group Project and Presentation. In small groups you’ll create a film trailer for one of the films that we’ve watched during class. Details to come!

### **GRADING POLICY**

Papers will be graded holistically according to the following rubric:

"A" = thoughtful and in-depth analysis of the text, highly convincing and memorable presentation of ideas, clear and careful organization, smooth and concise writing with very few or no errors;

"B" = solid development of ideas, good organization, generally good writing with few errors;

"C" = presentation of ideas is adequate but still sketchy in some places, organization is not always clear, writing is rough in a number of places (major and minor writing errors);

"D" = incomplete development of ideas, unproved assertions, unclear organization, many errors in writing;

"F" = undeveloped ideas, little or no organization, lack of focus, multiple mechanical errors in writing (e.g., poor grammar, inappropriate choice of words, misspellings, etc.).

Note that grades are earned and not assumed. That is, you should not assume that you begin with 100 points and are “marked down” for errors, particularly in writing assignments. Instead, you *earn* credit for what is good about your critical thinking and writing, while being pointed to areas for improvement. Furthermore, your written work will be graded based on its quality and not simply based on the fact of your having completed it, or on the effort you spend on it.

Your final grade will be weighted (roughly) as listed here:

20%	Exam 1
20%	Exam 2

10%	Exam 3
20%	Paper 1
20%	Trailer Project and Essay 2
10%	Participation in Class Discussion

Your final grade will reflect the overall quality of your work in the course.

## **POLICIES**

**Technology:** Laptops and cell phones may not be used in class or during screenings, unless announced in class. Be certain that your cell phone is turned off (not on vibrate) at the start of class.

**Professionalism in the classroom:** While class discussion may seem relatively informal at times, behaviors that suggest disinterest, such as yawning, engaging in side conversations, eating breakfast, and so forth are distracting to others; feel free to bring beverages but please eat snacks and meals outside of class time or during breaks. I expect you to be on time and alert.

**Accessibility:** Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format. For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>.

**Attendance:** I expect you to come to class every day and to participate constructively. Because our class format will be based primarily on discussion, you'll learn most from being fully present and engaged. Any absence after two missed class periods (not days) will result in the automatic diminishment of your final grade by ½ letter grade. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so I advise you to save these two class periods for illness, travel, co-curricular events, and other times you might really need them. Perfect attendance will work in your favor should your final grade be a borderline percentage.

**Coordinating Co-Curricular Activities and Religious Observances:** Although I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, if you have a sports or other co-curricular activity scheduled that could interfere with your ability to attend class, or plan to observe a religious holiday, please notify me at the beginning of the term and provide me with a schedule of events. Afterwards, you should consult others in the class about what you may have missed. I will also meet with you before or after that class period at your request to discuss options.

**Deadlines:** Because getting behind on the block plan can be fatal for later assignments, I typically will not accept late papers, and I do not grant extensions except for true emergencies. If you find yourself falling behind, talk with me about it as soon as possible, and I will help you to strategize.

**Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism is using others' words, research, or ideas without crediting them fully and accurately, and it is a serious academic offense. Plagiarism can include writing a classmate's paper, stealing (or buying) an essay and submitting it as your own, cutting and pasting from the internet, or mis-paraphrasing an article that you document. Cheating includes receiving unauthorized assistance in class discussions or exams (e.g., relying on crib notes rather than your own reading). We will talk more in class about what constitutes plagiarism and cheating and how to avoid them. Whatever the form, know that you are ultimately the person responsible for maintaining academic integrity. If you plagiarize or cheat, whether it is intentional or not, you'll receive an F as your final course grade and I will document the incident with the registrar. Feel free to ask me questions any time about properly documenting sources, or the distinction between collaboration and cheating. Here is Cornell's official policy:

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

Writing Studio: The Writing Studio is part of Cornell's Center for Teaching and Learning and is housed on the third floor of Cole Library. Peer tutors and professional writing instructors are available to meet with you throughout your writing process—whether to talk through ideas or to respond to drafts. They will not *edit* your work for you, but rather provide consultation and feedback as you write and revise. They accept walk-ins when there's room, but also schedule appointments. Appointments are recommended, particularly toward the end of term.

Contacting Me: I would be happy to discuss your coursework during my office hours or by appointment. The best way to reach me, outside of office hours, is through email. If urgent, you may also text me at 319-560-2973. Know that I am unlikely to look at either after 7:00, but will generally respond within 24 hours.

## Schedule

- **Students not present for the start of the film may be locked out.** Note that some films will be longer than 2 hours, as indicated below, and prepare accordingly.
- Meet 8:50-11:00 (or 11:30 if needed) for morning screening, or 9:00-11:00 for regular class time if no screening is indicated below.
- Meet 1:00-3:00 for lecture, discussion, and group work.
- Have readings completed *prior to* the day on which they are listed below. Unless otherwise specified below, you may skip the essays on blue pages in your textbook (e.g., pp. 56-57 in chapter 1).

## WEEK I

M	Film—Cecil B. DeMille, <i>The Cheat</i> , 1915 (59 mins) Chapter 12, pp. 430-441—Writing a Film Essay
T	Film—Vittorio De Sica, <i>The Bicycle Thieves</i> , 1948 (1 hr, 33 mins) Introduction—Why Film Studies Matters Chapter 1—Encountering Film: From Preproduction to Exhibition, including the blue-page essay on page 14.
W	Focus Film: Alfred Hitchcock, <i>The Birds</i> , 1963 (1 hr, 55 mins) Chapter 2—Mis-en-Scene: Exploring a Material World
Th	Film—Orson Welles, <i>Citizen Kane</i> , 1941 (1 hr, 59 mins) Chapter 3—Cinematography: Framing What We See
F	Exam 1—Chapters 1-3 Afternoon Writing Workshop—How to Grade a Film Essay Read, printout, and bring "Writing in English" on Moodle

## WEEK II

- M Film—Sergei Eisenstein, ***Battleship Potemkin***, 1925 (1hr, 20 mins)  
Chapter 4—Editing: Relating Images
- T Film—Francis Ford Coppola, ***The Conversation***, 1974 (1 hr, 53 mins)  
Chapter 5—Sound: Listening to Cinema, including blue-page essay starting on p. 206.
- W Essay 1 Due, 9: AM  
Film—John Luc Godard, ***Alphaville***, 1965 (1 hr, 39 mins)
- Th Christopher Nolan, ***Sunset Boulevard***, 1950 (1 hr, 55 mins)  
Chapter 6—Narrative Films: Telling Stories
- F Exam 2—Chs. 4-6

## WEEK III

- M Film—Rob Epstein, ***The Celluloid Closet***, 1995 (1 hr, 47 mins)  
Chapter 7—Documentary Films: Representing the Reals
- T Film—Ousmane Sembene, ***Mandabi***, 1968 (1 hr, 30 mins)  
Chapter 10—History and Historiography: Hollywood and Beyond, pp. 353-377
- W Film—Cheryl Dunye, ***Watermelon Woman***, 1996 (1 hr, 30 mins)  
Chapter 10, pp. 378-end.
- Th Film: **TBA**  
Chapter 8—Experimental Film and New Media: Challenging Form: read pp. 286-295;  
skim 295-301; read 301-end.
- F Exam 3, chs. 7, 9, 10

## WEEK IV

- M Understanding Theoretical Perspectives, Ch. 11 (skim)
- T Project Working Day
- W Projects Due, Presentations of Projects from 9-11; Essay 2 Due.