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ENG 202: INTRODUCTION TO FILM STUDIES

South Hall 101, Term 8, 2014-15

REQUIRED TEXTS

Corrigan, Timothy and Patricia White. *The Film Experience: An Introduction*

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 and communicate meaning. More specifically, students will

- learn how to do a “close viewing” of a cinematic text.
- become adept using film studies terminology to analyze film.
- encounter multiple types of film: narrative film, documentary film, experimental or avant-garde film (including animation).
- learn how to write about film from a film studies perspective.
- develop an appreciation for film as a vital lens into, and shaped by, diverse time periods, cultures, and perspectives.
- 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.
- be introduced to multiple approaches to film studies, such as genre theory, film as art, film history, film as cultural practice, film as industry, film theory.

Class time will include screenings, discussion, group activities, and mini-lectures.

REQUIREMENTS

Film Screenings. You are required to view, and take notes on, each film listed below during a scheduled screening, either an evening or a morning screening (or both, if you wish to see a film twice). Unless otherwise indicated, evening screenings will be held in Cole Library 108, and morning screenings will be held in South Hall 100. I provide this option in order to allow you to optimize your time for learning. Consider when you will be most alert watching films, and when you will be most productive reading and writing. Will you be more successful if you complete the readings before or after viewing the films? You may also wish to review films on your own, particularly for writing assignments, but it is essential that you watch each film *also* with the class. It is also important to take detailed notes in case you are unable to review a film before writing about it.

I will be responsible for setting up all morning screenings. On one evening, along with a classmate, you will be responsible for setting up an evening screening. You will

- arrive at least 15 minutes early and meeting your partner at the library’s reserve desk to check out the film
- put a roll sheet by the door for people to sign

I will review these film notes several times during the term at random, so be sure to have it with you in class at all times, and to keep it up to date. I will grade these based on thoroughness and accuracy in note-taking, on thoughtfulness, and on your attempt to integrate terminology in reflections.

Feel free to designate a section at the back of this notebook for reading notes, lists of vocabulary words, or lists of films you wish to see in future, etc.

Quizzes. You will take weekly multiple choice quizzes, primarily on vocabulary and concepts from your readings, as indicated on the syllabus. There may also be unannounced reading quizzes. The best way to prepare is to take good notes on your reading, particularly on the words and concepts that are least clear, so that you can ask for clarification in class discussion.

Close Reading: 2 Essays on an Element of Cinematic Language.

What contributions do cinematic elements make to a film's meaning? In this paper, explore the effect of a single, salient element of cinematic language has on the overall meaning of a film that we have seen (e.g. lighting in *Citizen Kane*). Assume that your reader has seen the film and is familiar with the basic plot structure, though they have not attended to the film as closely as you will. You will impress and even thrill your reader, not by retelling the story, but by pointing out unobserved details and developing insights about how the film works, and by using clean but vivid prose that helps your reader to see, hear, and to understand the film in a new way.

The paper should include a thesis statement—a sentence or two that makes a debatable claim, which the paper will attempt to argue persuasively—near beginning of the paper. Usually, a thesis statement comes at the end of the introductory paragraph, and is followed by an indication of the argument's significance. The body of the paper will then lay out your argument in a logical order, in well-shaped paragraphs. Each paragraph should include a helpful "topic" sentence (a point of argument that supports the broader thesis statement), followed by evidence to back it up—rich, analytic and descriptive detail of relevant aspects of the film—with an explanation of how these details support the point. When it comes to choosing evidence, avoid plot summary (what happens) and instead provide close analysis of the cinematic element under discussion.

Moreover, the evidence you choose should be selected judiciously—that is, you cannot talk about everything in the film, but it would be unfair to select only the pieces that back up your argument while ignoring significant pieces of evidence that would counter or undermine your argument. If you find yourself doing this, perhaps you need to revise your thesis to make it more comprehensive and complex, or at the least to address counter arguments and suggest why your interpretation is stronger. In any case, keep in mind that the crux of this paper is to demonstrate strong analytic skills and attention to the details of the film's language.

The paper should thus employ film terminology correctly and effectively. It should also be relatively free of grammatical, spelling, and other mechanical errors—print to proofread. The paper does not require the use of outside sources; however, any sources you do consult, including online sources as well as your textbook, should be documented using MLA's citation style, even if you do not quote them directly. Please use Calibri 11-point font or something comparable, and format the paper according to MLA recommendations.

Length: 1000-1200 words. Due: First and Second Saturdays at 5PM. Format: See Hacker on MLA paper formatting. Upload to Moodle.

20%	Film notebook
15%	3 Quizzes, 15 questions each
15%	Paper 1
15%	Paper 2
20%	Liner Notes
15%	Final Exam

All assignments must be completed in order to pass this course. 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 without my prior permission. 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 suggest immaturity; lateness to class will suggest disorganization. Please be on time and alert.

Accessibility: I encourage you to speak with me at any time about anything that you fear may impede your learning, or that you believe will enhance your learning. To obtain an appropriate accommodation for a learning disability, you must approach me with the request within three days of the start of the block, and your documentation should be on file with the registrar. Here is Cornell's official policy:

"Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml

"Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the disabilities services coordinator as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. Ideally, this meeting would take place well before the start of classes.

"At the beginning of each course, the student must notify the instructor within the first three days of the term of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course."

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.

- 1
X
- T Reading: Ch. 2 (Production)
AM: Screening of *Side by Side*
PM: Discussion
EVE: Screening of *400 Blows*
- 63-84 PP 14-15 12
- W Reading: Ch. 2, blue-page essay on *400 Blows*; Ch. 14, "Writing a Film Essay"; "Practical Advice" (Moodle)
AM: Screening of *400 Blows*
PM: Discussion
EVE: Screening of *Citizen Kane*
- Th Reading: ~~Ch. 3~~ (Mis-en-scene), including essays on *Citizen Kane*
AM: Screening of *Citizen Kane*
PM: Discussion, including discussion of paper
EVE: No Screening
- F AM: Terminology Quiz 1
PM: Available for paper conferences
- Sat. Paper 1 due. Submit to Moodle by 5PM
EVE: Screening of *Vertigo*

WEEK II

- 3
- M Reading: Ch. 4 (Cinematography), including essay on *Vertigo*
AM: Screening of *Vertigo*
PM: Discussion
EVE: screening of *Battleship Potemkin*
- 4
- T Reading: Ch. 5 (Editing), including essay on *Battleship Potemkin*
AM: Screening of *Battleship Potemkin*
PM: Discussion
EVE: Screening of *The Conversation*
- 5
- W Reading: Ch. 6 (Sound), including essay on *The Conversation*
AM: Screening of *The Conversation*
PM: Discussion
EVE: Screening of *Alphaville*
- 9
- Th Reading: Ch 10 (Genre)
AM: Screening of *Alphaville*
PM: Discussion
EVE: Free
- F AM: Terminology Quiz 2
PM: Available for paper conferences
- Sa Paper Due at 5PM