

Las Positas College
3000 Campus Hill Drive
Livermore, CA 94551-7650
(925) 424-1000
(925) 443-0742 (Fax)

Course Outline for HUMN 44

NARRATIVE FILM AND FILM MUSIC

Effective: Spring 2018

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

HUMN 44 — NARRATIVE FILM AND FILM MUSIC — 3.00 units

An examination of narrative cinema and the function of sound and music in cinema. An exploration of the major conventions of narrative films and of the contributions of composers to the art of filmmaking. A study of the impact of film and film music on 20th-21st century culture.

3.00 Units Lecture

Grading Methods:

Letter or P/NP

Discipline:

- Humanities

	MIN
Lecture Hours:	54.00
Total Hours:	54.00

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Describe Film Studies as a distinct approach to the Humanities
- Demonstrate familiarity with historical development of narrative film and film music
- Recognize basic elements and techniques of narrative films and film music
- Demonstrate ability to analyze major film techniques (structure, mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, and sound) for their contribution to film meaning
- Identify signature techniques of major filmmakers and film composers
- Distinguish ways in which film music differs from other musical forms
- Analyze the recording and filming processes and techniques
- Describe how musical and filmic elements combine to produce a unified work of art

V. CONTENT:

- History of narrative film
 - From silent films to "talkies"
 - Major film genres
 - The studio and star systems
 - New Wave cinemas
 - Contemporary movies
- Introduction to basic techniques of narrative films
 - Narrative Structures
 - Mise-en-scene
 - Cinematography
 - Editing
 - Sound and Music
- Elements of film music
 - Musical composition and recording for film
 - The function of music in narrative films
 - Major film composers and film music supervisors
- Impact of music on dramatic realization of film
 - Representative films and/or portions of films (select several from list):
 - The Gold Rush (1925; silent)
 - Ben Hur (1926; silent)
 - Gone with the Wind (1939)
 - Citizen Kane (1941)
 - Spellbound (1945)
 - The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)
 - On the Waterfront (1954)
 - Psycho (1960)

- i. Bonnie and Clyde (1967)
- j. The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly (1966)
- k. Star Wars (1977)
- l. Apocalypse Now (1979)
- m. Fitzcarraldo (1982)
- n. Bladerunner (1982)
- o. Reservoir Dogs (1992)
- p. Schindler's List (1993)
- q. Gladiator (2000)
- r. The Lord of the Rings trilogy (2001-03)
- s. Slumdog Millionaire (2008)

VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Student Presentations** -
- B. **Projects** -
- C. Small group discussions
- D. **Audio-visual Activity** - Screening film clips and/or complete films, and listening to film recordings, then having follow-up discussions.
- E. **Lecture** -
- F. **Discussion** - Discussion of narrative film history and major narrative film techniques. Discussion of the history of film music and its role in movies.

VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Reading
 - 1. Read X chapter in textbook and be able to explain the role music plays in classic Hollywood era films and to identify that role in several film clips.
 - 2. Research a form of non-filmic music writing, e.g. symphonic, ballet, or opera and be prepared to demonstrate how it differs from writing music for films.
 - 3. Read X chapter on the development of film genres; focus on one genre and do some additional research. Be ready to share your findings with the class.
- B. Writing
 - 1. Choose a film from a list provided by the instructor to screen and analyze in a short essay. Discuss the narrative structure, mise-en-scene, and examples of cinematography and sound editing in your essay.
 - 2. In your course journals, observe in each film or film clip we view how the music or lack of music impacts the action.
 - 3. Based on your reading and the films we view, write a complete description of the relationship between the film director and the film composer.
- C. Collaborative learning
 - 1. As a class, watch and then discuss in small groups clips from films in several genres and determine the differences, both stylistic and in terms of film music.
 - 2. Attend a theatrical screening of a contemporary film with a classmate. Later, present in class on the narrative genre and style of the film, its cinematography and editing, and the role of music in the film.

VIII. EVALUATION:

A. **Methods**

- 1. Exams/Tests
- 2. Quizzes
- 3. Oral Presentation
- 4. Projects
- 5. Group Projects
- 6. Class Participation
- 7. Class Work
- 8. Home Work
- 9. Other:
 - a. Typical exam questions:
 - 1. Short answer questions
 - a. What is "found music"? How does the score for "Bonnie and Clyde" reflect this technique?
 - b. What is the 3-act narrative film structure? Explain how it works in a film of your choosing.
 - c. How does lighting affect the mood of a film?
 - d. Explain the responsibilities of the Director of Photography in moviemaking.
 - 2. Essay questions
 - a. Using three specific films, discuss the ways in which composers create a unique theme for a single character.
 - b. Why is "Citizen Kane" seen as the best (or one of the best) movies ever made? State the film's basic information (year of release, director, cinematographer, basic plot, major themes, etc.). Then discuss several examples of its innovations and importance.
 - b. Post-viewing/listening discussion and short writing assignments.
 - 1. Describe the mise-en-scene of Tim Burton's "Sleepy Hollow" and what you liked/disliked about it.
 - 2. Discuss your impressions of the sound effects and musical score in "Star Wars."
 - c. Small group presentations.
 - 1. Choose one film genre, e.g. romance, western, horror, etc. and using two classic and two contemporary films from the genre, discuss the basic stylistic and cinematographic qualities of each film, and then demonstrate how film music has or has not changed over time.

B. **Frequency**

- 1. Weekly journal/notes on readings and in-class viewing/listening/group work.
- 2. Bi-weekly post-viewing/listening and discussion of short writing assignments.
- 3. One small group presentation.
- 4. One comparative essay on two films.
- 5. Three written examinations and occasional pop or extra credit quizzes.

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

- 1. Cooke, Mervyn *A History of Film Music*. 1st ed., Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- 2. Larsen, Peter *Film Music*. 1st ed., Reaktion Books, 2008.
- 3. Wierzbicki, James *Film Music: A History*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2008.
- 4. Barsam, Richard, and Dave Monahan. *Looking at Movies*. 5th ed. ed., W. W. Norton, 2016.
- 5. Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 11th ed., McGraw Hill, 2016.

6. Kalinak, Kathryn. *Film Music: A Very Short Introduction*. 1st ed., Oxford University Press, 2010.
7. Cook, David. *A History of Narrative Film*. 5th ed., W. W. Norton, 2016.
8. Ryan, Michael, and Melissa Lenos. *An Introduction to Film Analysis*. 1st ed., Bloomsbury Academic, 2012.

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: