

FS_OX 270: Introduction to Film Studies
Spring 2009 Oxford College

Tuesdays, Thursdays, 11:30 am-12:45 pm Library Video Conference Center
Mandatory Screening Tuesdays 3:00-6:00pm 201 Language Hall

Instructor: Matthew Kiesner, M.A.

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Office Hours : Tuesdays 1:00-2:45 Humanities 205. (office phone 4-4605)

Textbook

Phillips, William H. Film: An Introduction, Third Edition, 2005.

Course Objectives: This course will teach the student to understand the specific formal components within film/television/media that, when combined, help create both meaning and enjoyment in the spectator. By drawing from the course readings and films screened, the student will be able to conduct similar analysis towards any film or related media. Furthermore, this course will explore the variety of film form and consider filmmaking within various national, economic, aesthetic and historical contexts, giving the student a greater understanding of the richness and complexity of cinema.

Requirements: You are required to complete one introductory 3-page paper, one shot-by-shot analysis, a 5-7 page film review and two exams (midterm and final). In the first paper, pick your favorite film (or at least a film you know well.) Give a brief plot synopsis and then describe an important scene and detail how the style makes that scene effective. For the shot-by-shot analysis, the class will watch the beginning of a film that I select. The clip will have multiple shots and various framing, camera, and editing devices. You will be responsible for describing the clip (shot-by-shot) and writing briefly on how the shots cumulatively create meaning. For the analytical film review you will select a film of your choosing (not screened in class) and write on how the film uses various devices to create meaning. You must submit a proposal beforehand so that I can approve your choice (but don't worry, I'm pretty open-minded about acceptable films).

Grade Breakdown

Attendance & Participation	10%
Introductory Paper	5%
Shot-By-Shot Analysis	15%
Midterm Exam	25%
Analytical Film Review	20%
Final Exam	25%

My grading will use the +/- system on the final grade for accuracy. Late work will not be accepted, unless you provide a letter of explanation from Oxford faculty and/or administration.

Attendance is mandatory for all scheduled classes and screenings. Attendance will be taken at all class meetings. While some of the films are available for rental, you will benefit immensely from seeing them on a large screen in a space void from distractions. If there is a conflict with the screening time and your schedule, I do not recommend taking this course at this time. The first absence is free, but any additional unexcused absences will cost you 10% of your attendance and participation grade (1% of your total grade). This can make a huge impact on your final grade, so please attend every class period. Think of in-class participation as bonus points that can prove to me that you are engaged with the course material.

Electronic Device Policy: Laptops and PDAs are not permitted to be used during lectures or screenings. Cel phones must be silenced during lectures and screenings. Checking of messages and texting is not permitted. All headphones, ear buds and Bluetooth headsets must be removed. Failure to respect these policies will lead to a point loss on your attendance and participation grade of up to five points.

Please Note that this course will show films, stills and clips that include nudity, explicit sexuality, vulgar language, and graphic violence that some students may find troubling. Your enrollment in this course indicates your awareness of this and your willingness to approach these films and/or images in an adult, critical manner.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

NOTE: The reading listed for each week should be done before class on Tuesday.

1/15

Introduction to course and film production

Phillips, appendix 613-620

1/20-1/22

Mise-en-scene

Phillips, Introduction, Ch. One,

Rausch, "George Melies and the Artificially Arranged Scene" on reserve

Screening: *The Royal Tenenbaums* (Wes Anderson, 2001)

1/27-1/28

Cinematography

Phillips, Ch. Two

Rausch, Ch. Fifteen

Screening: *Seconds* (John Frankenheimer, 1966)

1/28 Introductory Paper Due

2/3-2/5

Editing

Phillips, Ch. Three

Screening: *The Limey* (Steven Soderburgh, 1999)

2/10-2/12

Sound

Phillips, Ch. Four,

Rausch, "The Movies learn to Speak" on reserve

Bordwell "Diegesis and Sound" on reserve

Corrigan and White "Values and traditions in *The Conversation*" on reserve

Screening: *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)

2/12 In class screening of shot by shot analysis clip

2/17-2/19

Understanding Film Form in action

Rausch, "Citizen Kane" on reserve

Screening: *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941)

2/19 Shot-by-shot analysis due

2/24-2/26

Sources of Fictional Films

Phillips, Ch. Six

Screening: *Ghost World* (Terry Zwigoff, 2001)

2/24 Midterm

3/3-3/5

Narrative

Phillips, Ch. Six

Screening: *Election* (Alexander Payne, 1999)

3/10-3/12 Spring Break

3/17-3/19

Hollywood Cinema

Phillips, Ch. Seven, pp. 291-316

Rausch, "The Edison Monopoly Decision," "The Hollywood Studio System"

"The Dark Streets of Film Noir," on reserve

Schatz, "The New Hollywood" on reserve

Screening: *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903), *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941)

3/24-3/26

Art and International Cinema

Phillips, Ch. Seven, pp. 317-344

Rausch, "Italian Neorealism," Andre Bazin, "French New Wave" on reserve

Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice" on reserve

Screening: *Breathless* (a.k.a. *A Bout de Souffle*) (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)

3/31-4/2

Documentary

Phillips, Ch. Eight pp. 345-366

Screening: *Grizzly Man* (Werner Herzog, 2005)

4/7-4/9

Experimental Film and Animation

Phillips, Ch. Eight pp. 367-408

Brakhage, Excerpt from "Metaphors of Vision" on reserve

Screening: Experimental Film Festival

Proposal for Film Review Due 4/7

4/14-4/16

Films and Context

Phillips, Ch. Nine

Rausch, "The Hays Code," "The Emergence of Television"

Screening: *Written in the Wind* (Douglas Sirk, 1956)

4/21-4/23

Films and Meaning

Phillips, Ch. Ten

Screening: *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974)

4/28

Last Class

Surprise Screening

Analytical Film Review Due

Final Exam

Tuesday May 6th. 2pm-5pm

Oxford's Final Exam policy:

Students must have the permission of the Dean of Academic Affairs to take an exam earlier or later than scheduled. Permission is usually granted for medical reasons or for participating in educational programs.

Leaving early for rides or flights, vacations, relatives' or friends' weddings or graduation, jobs or having more than one exam on one day, are not considered valid reasons to request an earlier or later exam.

Requests must be in writing and turned in to the Records and Registration Office.