

Film Studies 270: Introduction to Film

Spring Semester, 2001

TTh 12:30-1:50, VCC

Screening: Tuesdays, 3-6pm

Instructor: Victoria Sturtevant

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Office: Language Hall 102

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2-3, and by appt.

Required Texts:

Stephen Prince, *Movies and Meaning: An Introduction to Film, 2nd Edition* (MM)

Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*.

Various Reserve Texts and Articles (R)

This course will introduce you to basic issues of structure, aesthetics, and ideology in film. In order to learn these fundamentals, it is absolutely essential that you be willing to discard passive viewing habits and force yourselves to become knowledgeable, critical, and informed consumers of visual culture. This process is harder than it sounds, and it will take practice. In the pursuit of this goal, the course will take up a great deal of your time: in addition to a full reading/writing load, I require one screening a week, plus a visual media assignment to be completed in the library. These assignments must be approached with an active mind: take notes, make connections, formulate theses as you watch. Students who regard media assignments as opportunities to sit back and take in a movie will not perform well in class participation, writing assignments, or exams. On the other hand, as you learn to watch visual media in different ways, your ability to take pleasure in a really good, really interesting film will increase dramatically. It is an exciting class, and it is a hard class. Please be prepared for both.

Requirements and Particulars:

Readings: Complete the assigned readings before the first class of the week. You will be responsible for the information contained in the readings whether I go over it in lecture or not. I also reserve the right to assign extra readings during the course of the semester, with as little as one class-period warning. If you miss a class, please check with another student in case there has been some supplemental reading assigned.

Screenings: There is a screening for this course every Tuesday from 3-6 p.m. If you know now that you will miss this screening even once this semester, drop the course now. Attendance will be taken religiously. Every film screened is absolutely vital to your experience of the class. *Do not assume* that you can rent the video in lieu of a screening. Video store copies of films, when not letterboxed, cut off large portions of the image in order to fit it into the aspect ratio of your television. VHS compromises sound quality, as well as image quality, and even DVD looks and sounds better in our classroom than on your puny home monitor. *Be early to every screening.* We will make every effort to start promptly at 3, and to see people slipping through the door after the lights are out is incredibly irritating. Be prepared to take notes.

Conferences: Students may arrange to meet with me any time during the semester. If you have any concerns about your performance, your grade, or if you are falling behind, *please let me know as early as possible* so we can arrange a strategy to help you. It is your responsibility to let me know if you need help. I am available by email, by office phone, during office drop-in hours (Tuesdays 2-3), or by appointment.

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If you have any condition or disability which requires accommodation, please notify me as soon as possible (today after class or via email).

Grading: The plus/minus grading system is in effect for this course. Your grade will be broken down in the following way:

Participation (20%): This grade includes attendance, preparedness, attention, and verbal class comments. Attendance alone is not remotely sufficient. Each student is responsible for making one comment, or asking or answering one question at each and every class meeting. It is up to you to make sure you are an active part of the class dynamic. If you miss more than three class periods, this grade will suffer. Please notify me if you know that you will be absent for any reason, so I can give you make-up materials. Although it is helpful to me to know where you are, be advised that notifying me does not constitute an 'excused' absence.

I reserve the right to quiz you on the readings any day of the semester. Quiz grades will count toward your participation grade. If you are absent on the day of a quiz, the quiz will not be figured into your grade, although the absence will.

Short papers, group work, and other daily informal assignments will also be figured into the participation grade. Do not take this 20% for granted: you start with zero and must earn your way up.

Screening Journal (20%): Every week from January 23 through March 1, you will compose a typed, one page double-spaced (times new roman 12pt font) journal paper on the film screened. Journal instructions will be distributed Tuesdays, completed entries will be collected Thursdays. No exceptions.

Midterm Exam (20%): The in-class midterm will be in an essay/short answer format. A review session will precede the exam, but please do not take for granted that I will cover every question at this session. Because some of the exam questions will involve film clips that I will show during the exam period, make-up or early examinations will only be permitted under the most dire circumstances.

One 5-page Paper (20%): This paper will be a very structured analysis of a film I assign. Many many details to follow.

Final Exam (20%): The final will be in take-home essay format. Instructions and details to be distributed May 1.

A Note on Grading: Completing all the requirements of this course does not earn a student a grade of A. To earn an A, one must complete all the requirements in a way that I find exceptional. The fact that this course is introductory does not guarantee that the grading scale will be lenient or that all students will receive high marks.

Extra Credit: Throughout the semester, I will announce various events and films which students may earn extra credit for attending. In each case, the student must save the ticket stub and write an extra journal entry on the film or event to earn the equivalent of one to two exam points, for a maximum of five points for the semester. Generally, films screened in Atlanta's High Museum Rich Auditorium (Student Admission \$4.00) or as part of a campus film studies event will qualify.

High Museum Jan/Feb Schedule:

Jan 19, 8pm Our Man in Havana
Jan 20, 4pm Grandma and Her Ghosts
Jan 20, 8pm Grande Illusion
Jan 21, 3pm Grandma and Her Ghosts
Jan 26, 8pm Kind Hearts and Coronets
Jan 27, 8pm The Saragossa Manuscript
Feb 2, 8pm The Wind Will Carry Us
Feb 3, 8pm The Wind Will Carry Us

Feb 9, 8pm The Red Shoes
 Feb 16, 8pm Swing Time
 Feb 17, 8pm Shower
 Feb 23, 8pm Shall We Dance
 Feb 24, 8pm Sound and Fury

The Honor Code is in effect throughout this course. Academic honesty is absolutely essential to our conduct as a university, and any student found to be in violation of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Council and will receive an F in the course.

Course Schedule

Jan. 18 **Introductions, basics**

Jan. 23-25 **Structure**

Reading: MM Ch. 2, also pp. 263-270

Jan. 23 <i>Run Lola Run (Lola Rennt)</i> (Tom Tykwer, 1998)	81 min.	DVD
<i>Creature Comforts</i> (Aardman, 1990)	33 min.	VHS

Jan. 30-Feb. 1 **Cinematography and Production Design**

Reading: MM Ch. 3

Jan. 30 <i>L.A. Confidential</i> (Curtis Hanson, 1997)	136 min.	DVD
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Feb. 6-8 **Mise-en-Scene**

Reading: MM Ch. 4

Feb. 6 <i>Modern Times</i> (Charlie Chaplin, 1936)	103 min.	LD
<i>Begone Dull Care</i> (Norman McLaren, 1949)	9 min.	16MM

Feb. 13-15 **Editing and the Continuity System**

Reading: MM Ch. 5

Feb. 13 <i>Casablanca</i> (Michael Curtiz, 1942)	103 min.	DVD
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Feb. 20-22 **Sound**

Reading: MM Ch. 6

Feb. 20 <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> (Stanley Kubrick, 1968)	148 min.	DVD
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Feb. 27-Mar. 1 **Narrative/Narration/Meaning**

Reading: MM pp. 2-31

Feb. 27 <i>Citizen Kane</i> (Orson Welles, 1941)	119 min.	LD
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Mar. 6-8 **Mid-Semester Wrap-up**

Mar. 6 **Exam Review**

Mar. 6 <i>Yojimbo</i> (Akira Kurosawa, 1961)	110 min.	DVD
(screening required, it will be on the midterm)		

Mar. 8 **Midterm Exam**

Mar. 12-16 No Class--Spring Break

Mar. 20-22 **Documentary**

Reading: MM pp. 259-263, Corrigan Ch. 1-3

Mar. 20 TBA

Paper Assignment Distributed

Mar. 27-29 **Genre and Ideology**

Reading: MM pp. 31-47, Corrigan Ch. 4-7

Mar. 27 *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen/Gene Kelly, 1952) 120 min. DVD

Apr. 3-5 **Industrial Issues and Film Criticism**

Reading: MM Ch. 8, 10

Apr. 4 *Being John Malkovich* (Spike Jonze, 1999) 113 min. DVD

Apr. 10-12 **National/Historical Contexts and Movements**

Reading: MM Ch. 9

Apr. 10 *Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1946) 105 min. LD

Apr. 17-19 **Avant-Garde and Art Film**

Reading: Stan Brakhage, "Metaphors on Vision" (R)

Apr. 17 *The Seventh Seal* (Ingmar Bergman, 1956) 96 min. DVD

Meshes of the Afternoon (Maya Deren, 1943) 14 min. 16MM

Apr. 19 **Paper Due**

Apr. 24-26: **Gender and the Gaze**

Reading: John Berger, Ch. 3 of **Ways of Seeing** (R)

Apr. 24 *She Done Him Wrong* (Lowell Sherman, 1933) 66 min. VHS

Heaven (Tracey Moffatt, 1997) 28 min. VHS

May 1 **Wrap-up/Take-Home Exam Distributed**