

READING AS A WRITER: FROM PAGE TO FILM

Spring 2018
CRWR 12125
Logan 801, Tuesday 2:00-4:50

Professor: Dr. Vu Tran
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12:00-2:00

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Overview of the Course

We often say of film adaptations: *it's not as good as the book*. But what can we, as readers and writers, learn from that unsuccessful transition to the screen? And more intriguingly, what can we learn from the successful ones, the films that are just as good if not better than the original written work—or so vastly different that they become their own entity? In this class, we will be reading works of short fiction and also “reading” their film adaptations, focusing on this relationship between storytelling on the page and storytelling on the screen and what is both lost and gained in that transition. If filmmaking requires a different language than fiction writing, a different approach to things like character, plot, atmosphere, even thematic development, what can we learn from that approach that we can apply to our own fiction, even if we have no interest in making films?

Responses to Readings & Films

For each short story, please type up a reading response about **a page long**, discussing your honest opinion of the story, what you think it's trying to do as a work of fiction, and any thoughts you might have on some or all of the questions I'll pose for each work.

For each film adaptation, please type up a response about **a page long**, discussing how the film has strengthened, degraded, or reimaged the original story. Has it changed or deepened certain aspects of our understanding of the story? Is there anything we can learn about storytelling or fiction writing from this adaptation?

Film Screenings

Except for *The Swimmer*, which we'll be watching in class, you are responsible for viewing each film ahead of our discussion of it in class. You're free to watch them at home if you have access to them. I've also reserved every film either at the **Regenstein** or the **D'Angelo** Law Library, where you'll have 4 hours to view each film. The films (except for *In the Bedroom* & *Arrival*) will

also be available for viewing at the **Film Studies Center** in Cobb Hall 306, which is open Mon-Fri 10am-7pm (Tues, 10am-9pm). There are two screening rooms there, which seats up to 4 people.

Attendance

Attendance is **absolutely mandatory**. Each unexcused absence, beginning with your second, will cost you two-thirds a letter grade. Please also come to class **on time**. I will not tolerate tardiness. Class begins at 3:00, not 3:05 or 3:10 or any time thereafter. Continual tardiness will mean a deduction in your participation grade.

Grading

Attendance & Class Participation	20%
Responses to Readings & Films	30%
Writing Exercises	20%
Presentation	10%
Final Paper	20%

Canvas

Please check *Canvas* for weekly writing, reading, and film viewing assignments—as well as for the screenplay for each film.

Confidentiality

Creative Writing courses rely on trust in a safe environment, so as to facilitate open and critical exchange while protecting a boundary of privacy around the class. Students should be aware, however, that course instructors are obliged to share certain kinds of information with appropriate university administrators according to University policies aimed at providing a safe, non-discriminatory environment for all students, which can be consulted at <https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/university>.

The University of Chicago recognizes that members of the university community are responsible for ensuring that the community is free from discrimination and other forms of sexual misconduct based on sex or gender, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence and dating violence. Faculty are considered “Responsible Employees” of the University and are obligated to report information to the Title IX Coordinator related to sexual misconduct. If you think your rights, or the rights of someone else in the university community, have been violated you can find information on resources and reporting at: <http://umatter.uchicago.edu/>

Plagiarism

Don’t do it. Plagiarism includes direct copying of texts as well as using someone else’s ideas without citing credit, and will mean an F for the course and a report of the offense to the Dean of the College.

Class Schedule

Week 1 – 3/27 Introductions

Discuss “Rear Window” by Cornell Woolrich (1942, 30pp)

Week 2 – 4/3 Discuss film: *Rear Window*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock (1954, 115 min)
(Amazon Video, YouTube, Regenstein, D’Angelo, Film Studies Center)

Discuss “The Swimmer” by John Cheever (1964, 9pp) & watch film adaptation

Writing Exercise #1 Due

4/9 -4/10 Kestnbaum Writer-in Residence: Percival Everett

Week 3 – 4/10 Discuss film: *The Swimmer*, directed by Frank Perry (1968, 95 min)

Discuss “The Bear Came Over the Mountain” by Alice Munro (2001, 48pp)

Student Presentation #1

Week 4 - 4/17 Discuss film: *Away From Her*, directed by Sarah Polley (2006, 110 min)
(Netflix DVD, Amazon Video, YouTube, Regenstein, Film Studies Center)

Discuss “Secretary” by Mary Gaitskill (1988, 15pp)

Writing Exercise #2 Due

Student Presentation #2 & #3

Week 5 – 4/24 Discuss film: *Secretary*, directed by Steven Shainberg (2002, 111 min)
(Netflix DVD, YouTube, Amazon Prime, D’Angelo)

Discuss “Brokeback Mountain” by E. Annie Proulx (1997, 30pp)

Student Presentation #4

Week 6 – 5/1 Discuss film: *Brokeback Mountain*, directed by Ang Lee (2005, 135 min)
(Hulu, Netflix DVD, Amazon video, YouTube, Regenstein, Film Studies Center)

Discuss “Killings” by Andre Dubus (1979, 17pp)

Writing Exercise #3 Due

Student Presentation #5 & #6

Week 7 – 5/8 Discuss film: *In the Bedroom*, directed by Todd Field (2001, 131 min)
(Amazon video, YouTube, D’Angelo, Film Studies Center)

“Dream Story” by Arthur Schnitzler (1926, 70pp)

Student Presentation #7

Week 8 – 5/15 Discuss film: *Eyes Wide Shut*, directed by Stanley Kubrick (1999, 159 min)
(Netflix DVD, Amazon Video, YouTube, Regenstein, Film Studies Center)

Discuss “Don’t Look Now” by Daphne Du Maurier (1971, 55pp)

Writing Exercise #4 Due

Student Presentation #8 & #9

Week 9 – 5/22 Discuss film: *Don't Look Now*, directed by Nicolas Roeg (1973, 110 min)
(Hulu, YouTube, Amazon Video, D'Angelo,)

Discuss "Story of My Life" by Ted Chiang (1998, 55pp)

Student Presentation #10

Week 10 – 5/29 Discuss film: *Arrival*, directed by Denise Villeneuve (2016, 116 min)
(Amazon Prime, YouTube, D'Angelo Law Library)

Student Presentation #11-#15

FINAL DUE

2:00 June 4