

INTRODUCTION TO FILM

ENGFLM 400 / Fall 2017 / Friday 9-12:50

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Office Hours: Th 10-12
and by appointment
CL 617-C

This class begins with two questions: What is “film” in the contemporary moment? And how do you study it? Each week, we’ll explore a particular approach to media culture, thinking through how the different elements of a film – from images and sounds to production techniques to paths of distribution and circulation – work together to create meaning. The goal is not to persuade you that any single approach is the best one, but rather to equip you with tools for understanding the wide range of audiovisual materials that make up contemporary media.

Throughout, we’ll pay attention to how film intersects with lived human experience. There are dynamics of gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, ability and access built into every facet of media culture. So, as we move through the semester, always consider: Who gets to make films? For what intended audience? With technology geared toward what kinds of bodies?

COURSE GOALS

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Analyze a variety of films as examples of visual art and write critically about them from various thematic and cultural perspectives.
- Construct a critical position in evaluating films in relation to popular reviews, scholarly essays, and industry categories.
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of the role film plays in society as a visual art, an industry, and a complex set of ideological constructs.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Nelmes, Jill. *Introduction to Film Studies*. 5th Edition. (Available online through eBrary or for purchase on Amazon.)

All other readings will be posted on CourseWeb.

GRADING

Reading quizzes: 15%

Group presentation: 15%

In-class participation: 15%

Annotated bibliography: 15%

Final exam: 20%
Final paper: 20%

Final grades are calculated according to the following scale:

100-91: A
90-81: B
80-71: C
70-65: D
or below: F

PRESENTATIONS

Students will work together in groups to prepare a study guide for one film during the semester. The study guides should provide information about the film and a set of discussion questions. Groups will present this study guide to the class and lead discussion about the film. Each student is required to contribute three questions to the study guide and actively participate in the class discussion.

THE R RATING

Some of the assigned films are rated 'R' or unrated: there is violence, language, and sexuality that could be considered objectionable. If a film makes you uncomfortable, you're free to leave the room, but be aware that "mature content" will often become part of our discussions.

ATTENDANCE

Come to class on time, prepared to take part in conversation. While you should try to attend every class, *you're permitted one absence. A second will affect your grade, and a third is grounds for failure.* That said, I understand that life doesn't always respect class schedules: come talk to me *before you miss class* if you expect to have a problem with this policy. If you miss class, you're responsible for finding out about and making up any missed work. You'll be considered late to class if you arrive more than five minutes after the start of the class period. Three late arrivals count as one absence.

LATE WORK

If you submit something late, your grade on it drops by a full letter each day it is late.

OFFICE HOURS

My office hours are Thursdays 10AM-12PM in CL 617-C. I encourage you to take advantage of them. You can also contact me by email to set up an appointment at another time. Office hours are a chance for us to have a one-on-one conversation, and I'm happy to talk about readings, films, assignments, or anything else you have questions about.

PLAGARISM

Cite your sources, even when paraphrasing. MLA style is the default for this class – ask if you're unsure how to cite properly. *All instances of plagiarism will result in no credit for the assignment and a report to the Dean.*

GENDER IDENTITY & EXPRESSION

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than the one on the official class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your preferred gender pronoun. If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

THE WRITING CENTER

Located in 317-B Student Center, 4024 O'Hara St., the Writing Center is an excellent resource for working on your writing with an experienced consultant. Although you should not expect consultants to correct your papers for you, they can assist you in learning to organize, edit, and revise your essays. Their services are free, but you should call ahead (412-624-6556) or make an appointment online at www.english.pitt.edu/writingcenter/

OTHER SERVICES

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both me (your instructor) and the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, 412-228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Pitt offers free personal and academic counseling at the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930). Specialized counseling services are available to victims of sexual assault; you can contact the sexual assault services coordinator via the main UCC phone line during weekday business hours or at 412-648-7856 (after 5 pm, Monday-Friday or on weekends). In a crisis situation, university police can also connect you with an on-call counselor affiliated with the UCC.

SCHEDULE

(revised 11/8)

9/1 – Introductions

Reading: none

Screening: *Okja* (Bong Joon-ho, 2017)

9/8 – Industry

Reading: *IFS* Chapter 1 & Smith, “It’s Just a Movie”

Screening: *UnREAL*, “Return” & *RocketJump: The Show*, “High Plains Drifter”

9/15 – Technology

Reading: *IFS* Chapter 2 & McFadden, “Teaching the Camera to See my Skin”

Screening: *Minority Report* (Steven Spielberg, 2002)

9/22 – Form

Reading: *IFS* Chapter 4

Screening: *The Conformist* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970)

9/29 – Audience

Reading: *IFS* Chapter 5 & Doty, “My Beautiful Wickedness”

Screening: *Nerve* (Henry Joost & Ariel Schulman, 2016)

10/6 – Stars (and Extras)

Reading: *IFS* Chapter 7 & 99% *Invisible*, “Atmospherians” (podcast)

Screening: *Niagara* (Henry Hathaway, 1953)

Project Proposal due Monday 10/9 by 11:59PM

10/13 – Genre

Reading: *IFS* Chapter 8

Screening: *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (Ana Lily Amirpour, 2014)

10/20 – Documentary

Reading: *IFS* Chapter 9

Screening: *13th* (Ava Duvernay, 2016)

10/27 – Animation

Reading: *IFS* Chapter 10 & Yoshida, “*Ghost in the Shell* and anime’s troubled history”

Screening: *Ghost in the Shell* (Mamoru Oshii, 1995)

Annotated Bibliography due Monday 10/30 by 11:59PM

11/3 – Nation

Reading: Jankovic, “You Can’t Film Here”

Screening: *The Bubble* (Eytan Fox, 2006)

11/10 – Circulation

Reading: Schultz, "The 'WarGames Scenario'"
Screening: *War Games* (John Badham, 1983)

11/17 – Archiving

Reading: *IFS* Chapter 3
Screening: *Too Much Johnson* (Orson Welles, 1938)

11/24 – Thanksgiving Break, No Class
Final Project due Monday, 11/27 by 11:59PM

12/1 – Access

Reading: Elcessor, "Captions On, Off, on TV, Online"
Screening: *Daredevil*, "Into the Ring"

12/8 – Interactivity

Reading: N/A
Screening: *Winky Dink and You* (1953)

Final Exam: Wednesday 12/13 10AM-11:50AM CL 252