

**Pittsburg State University**  
**English 114: General Literature (Genre)**  
**Film Genre**  
**Grubbs Hall 114, Fall 2016**

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### **Course Description**

This face-to-face course introduces students to the study of texts in the English language and is intended to give English majors the skills necessary to succeed in more advanced courses and those students in other disciplines an additional critical consciousness crucial to any major. These skills include familiarity with important terms and concepts; close viewing skills; awareness of the sorts of questions raised by texts and addressed by scholars; and practice writing analysis papers that defend an arguable thesis based on a close viewing of films.

To help us achieve these goals, we will focus our attention on a survey of film genre. What is genre? Are film genres a marketing tool, a by-product of journalism, or a fundamental way of understanding and discussing motion pictures? What are the generic tropes (in terms of both narrative and film technique) associated with certain genres? Can a film belong to more than one genre? Does a film's genre stay the same over time? Does a genre-based view expand or delimit our conception of a motion picture? These are some of the many questions, concerns and misconceptions raised by the study of film through genre.

### **General Education**

This course counts toward the requirements in General Education for your degree program. General Education is an important part of your educational program at Pittsburg State University that has been designed to implement the following Philosophy of General Education:

General education is the study of humans in their global setting. The general education curriculum, therefore, acts as the heart of a university education by developing the capacities that typify the educated person and providing a basis for life-long learning and intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic fulfillment. General education examines the world around us and fosters an understanding of our interactions with the world and our place in the universe. General education celebrates the creative capacities of humankind and helps to preserve and transmit to future generations the values, knowledge, wisdom, and sense of history that are our common heritage.

### **Goals of General Education for this Course**

This course will help you accomplish several General Education goals and objectives, including applying the principles of effective writing and other forms of communication (Goal 1.2), demonstrating an understanding of cultural diversity within the United States and in the world at large (Goal 3.ii.3), demonstrating an awareness of the rights of individuals and groups from diverse cultural, national, and ethnic backgrounds (Goal 3.vi.2), and demonstrating an understanding of the relationships of gender, race, and class within and across cultures (Goal 3.vi.3).

ENGL 114 specially emphasizes the following General Education goals in helping you

- distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information in problem solving (Goal 2.1),
- articulate a problem and, using appropriate sources, develop a logical and reasonable response (Goal 2.2),
- apply generalizations, principles, theories, or rules to the real world (Goal 2.3),
- demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize information (Goal 2.4),
- recognize the value of diverse cultural, national, and ethnic backgrounds (Goal 3.vi.1),
- demonstrate an understanding of the creative process, both practical and theoretical, and its relationship to an audience or viewers (Goal 3.v.1),
- make informed critical responses when exposed to artistic endeavors (Goal 3.v.2),

- understand the relationship between the arts and society in a multicultural environment (3.v.3).
- demonstrate an appreciation for the range and diversity of humankind's wisdom, values, ideas, beliefs, and reasoning (3.viii.1), and
- demonstrate an understanding of human behavior, the human condition, and human institutions in the context of historical, literary, or philosophical inquiry (3.viii.2).

### **Learning Objectives**

1. Correctly define commonly used cinematic terms and concepts and use those terms and concepts to discuss and analyze works of literature.
2. Appreciate and understand the ways that representations of monsters may be used in texts across time periods and in different genres.
3. Identify structural elements of film and film genres and analyze how those elements help create specific meanings and effects.
4. Compare genres in terms of theme, structure, and use of cinematic devices.
5. Discuss and analyze works based on close reading of the films.
6. Write effective analyses defending arguable theses based on close reading of films and incorporating relevant terms and concepts.
7. Develop a deeper appreciation for film.

### **Writing to Learn**

#### *Philosophy of Writing*

The philosophy behind using writing as a way to learn course material is that as students write about concepts, they become active learners, articulating ideas in their own words and thinking about ideas from their own perspectives. Writing about course content is a skill that needs to be practiced; that is why you will be writing often and why the kinds of writing assignments may vary.

#### *Statement of Intent*

This is a Writing to Learn class. In this course we will write frequently as a way to learn course material. The writing may range from quizzes and in-class writing assignments to formal journals and essay exams. But expect to write about course content regularly.

#### *Writing to Learn Requirements*

- This is a Writing to Learn course, which means that in addition to earning an overall passing grade on other course components, you must also earn an average passing grade on the formal writing assignments to pass this course. If you do not earn an average passing grade on the formal writing assignments, you cannot pass this course.
- You will receive feedback from me on all your writing assignments, usually via the Comment tool in Word returned to you through Canvas. Pay attention to that feedback and use it to help improve your writing.
- If/when you use sources in your essay assignments, give credit for the words or ideas of others by documenting your sources, using the MLA style of documentation.
- In this course, you will write a minimum of 10 pages of formal writing in the form of essays. See the assignment handouts, available on Canvas.
- The due dates for all assignments are indicated in the course schedule.
- All writing assignments will be evaluated according to the rubrics available on Canvas.

## Required Texts and Materials

*An Introduction to Film Genres*, Lester Friedman et al.

Norton, 2013

ISBN: 978-0393930191

*Film Studies: An Introduction*, Ed Sikov

Columbia University Press, 2010

ISBN: 978-0231142939

Outside materials available for download from Canvas or on reserve in the library.

## Grading Scale

A = 93-100	B- = 80-82	D+ = 67-69
A- = 90-92	C+ = 77-79	D = 63-66
B+ = 87-89	C = 73-76	D- = 60-62
B = 83-86	C- = 70-72	F = below 60

## Assignments and Evaluations

Participation and Discussion Activities: 15%

Online Midterm and Final Exams: 20%

Paper One (5 pages): 15%

Paper Two (5 pages): 20%

Revision Assignment (a revision of Paper One or Two – 6 to 8 pages): 30%

**You must fully complete all assignments for the course in order to receive a passing grade.**

## Electronics/Technology Policy

Cell phones should be turned off or on silent during class. If I see you using your phone for either phone calls or text messaging or if the ringer is not turned off, you will receive a “0” in participation for the day. If you must keep your phone on for emergencies or another reason, please let me know.

You may use a laptop, e-reader, or other electronic device to take notes or to bring in readings or assignments that are available via Canvas or the Internet. You may not use your electronic device to do anything other than reviewing class-related material or taking notes. If you use your electronic device for any purpose other than these, your privileges will be suspended. I maintain the right to revise this policy at any point during the semester if improper usage becomes a problem.

## Presentation

This class depends upon actively engaged speakers, listeners, and writers. Your responsibility is to be an active participant. As a result, this class demands that all reading assignments are completed, **in full**, on the day they are due and that you **bring the assigned text to class**. In addition, all assignments are to be typewritten and done according to directions. I encourage you to think for yourself, challenge each other, and assume pride and ownership in every text you produce.

According to federal guidelines, you should expect to spend two out-of-class hours devoted to coursework for each hour spent in the classroom or in direct faculty instruction. Therefore, for this three-credit class, you should expect to devote at least six hours per week on average to prepare your work. Of course, some weeks may require more time, and some weeks will require less.

In this course, we will view a number of films and read a number of works that portray content and themes that may be disturbing to some students. **This is not an excuse to skip readings or viewings.** We will be analyzing and discussing, in a scholarly manner, the meaning and significance behind these representations. Students with questions or concerns about course content are encouraged to see me immediately for a short meeting.

I also suggest that you consult the following links about interacting with faculty:

### **6 Things You Should Say to Your Professor**

<http://college.usatoday.com/2013/02/19/6-things-you-should-say-to-your-professor/>

### **5 Things You Should Never Say to Your Professor**

<http://college.usatoday.com/2013/01/10/5-things-you-should-never-say-to-your-professor/>

### **No, It's Not Your Opinion. You're Just Wrong**

<http://www.houstonpress.com/arts/no-it-s-not-your-opinion-you-re-just-wrong-updated-7611752>

## **Late Work and Attendance Policy**

I reserve the right to decrease the grade of late work by ONE FULL LETTER GRADE for every day it is late including the first. For example, if an essay is two days late and the original grade is a B+, the final penalized grade would be a D+. If you have a problem with an assignment, please see me or call me BEFORE the due date. Any student who accrues excessive absences (three or more) will most likely fail the course. If you do miss class for any reason, you are still accountable for the work given and due that day unless prior arrangements have been made. Finally, I also expect you to be on-time to class. Any student who is tardy more than three times will be marked absent according to my discretion. If you have a problem getting to class on time (i.e., you have class on the other side of campus), please let me know as soon as possible.

## **Required Film Screenings**

During several weeks in the semester, there are scheduled film screenings for this course. **The showings will occur on Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m. in Yates Hall Room 102.** All students are required to attend the screening unless you have a legitimate schedule conflict. In such cases, you need to make alternative arrangements with me in the first week of school.

All films are on reserve in Axe Library, and many should be available through the public library, an online provider (Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, etc.), Redbox, or Family Video.

If absent for a screening, you will need to view the film on your own prior to the first day of scheduled discussion each week. Additionally, in exchange for not being able to attend the required screenings, you will post to Canvas a 100- to 200-word response to one specific scene in the film. You should post your response no later than 11:00 a.m. on the Thursday following the screening. Failure to post an adequate response will result in a recorded absence. Students who attend the viewing may complete a post for extra credit.

Your response should

- Refer to one specific scene in the film
- Discuss why you chose this scene
- Discuss the scene's important to the film as a whole

**Note:** Make sure to pay active attention to the films. You will likely want to take notes during the screening. Computers and other digital devices not used for taking notes should be stored out of sight.

## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism includes the presentation, without proper attribution, of another's words or ideas from printed or electronic sources. It is also plagiarism to submit, without the instructor's consent, an assignment in one class previously submitted in another. I reward plagiarism with a zero. Further action by the university may also be taken. Please familiarize yourselves with the university policy on plagiarism. If you feel that you need extra help with your assignments, tutors are available in the Writing Center in Axe Library (235-4694). If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to cite sources properly, do not hesitate to ask me for help. Please also consult PSU's Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy available online at

<http://www.pittstate.edu/audiences/current-students/policies/rights-and-responsibilities/academic-misconduct.dot>

Also, make sure to consult the Syllabus Supplement, which can be thought of as a “one-stop” place for students to access up-to-date information about campus resources, notifications, and expectations. It is available at

<http://www.pittstate.edu/dotAsset/fl17e2956-c651-4fbc-8c0c-56efa234168b.pdf>

### **Teaching Philosophy of Film Genre**

I expect you to complete the readings and discussion activities on the day they are due. The only way to learn about film, and especially film genre, is through practice, and the discussion activities will allow you to practice the ideas presented in the readings, motivate our daily discussions, and prepare you to complete the major assignments. You will also submit the discussion activities for a grade. **If you have not completed the readings or discussion activities for a given class period, I may ask you to leave the classroom, and you will be counted absent.** I will grade Discussion Activities holistically: an A (100) for complete work with above average effort, a C (75) for complete work with average effort, an F for incomplete work and/or below average effort (50), and a zero for no work.

### **Accessibility and a Word of Advice**

All students are more than welcome to drop by during office hours or schedule an appointment to ask questions, continue discussion of issues from class, or to offer comments. This is especially true during the first week of class and especially true for students with disabilities who are registered with the Center for Student Accommodations (235-4309) and who may need individual arrangements. Your well being and success in this course are important to me. I recognize that there are \*multiple\* ways to learn and that this multiplicity should be acknowledged in the design and structure of university courses and the evaluation of their participants. Thus, I encourage students registered in the course to discuss their learning styles and comprehension requirements with me during my office hours or, if necessary, at another arranged time. Every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating learning experience.

The Center for Student Accommodations is located in Russ Hall 218, or visit their website at: <http://www.pittstate.edu/office/center-for-student-accommodations/> for more information.

**Make use of your teachers!!** We are here to help you learn, and we do not expect you to be perfect (who is?). We regard intelligent questions in and out of class and an eagerness to improve one’s abilities as evidence of an A student more than written work alone. There is no such thing as a stupid question!

### **Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments (ALL DATES AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE!):**

**FG:** *An Introduction to Film Genres*

**FS:** *Film Studies: An Introduction*

**C:** Canvas

#### **Week One**

Aug. 23: Introduction to the Course  
**View:** *Clue*, Jonathan Lynn (1985)

Aug. 25: *Clue*, Jonathan Lynn (1985)  
C and FG: “Introduction”

#### **Week Two**

Aug. 30: *Clue*, Jonathan Lynn (1985)  
C and FG: “Slapstick Comedy”  
Discussion Activity 1  
**View:** *My Best Friend’s Wedding*, P. J. Hogan (1997)

Sept. 1: *My Best Friend's Wedding*, P. J. Hogan (1997)  
C and FG: "Romantic Comedy"

### Week Three

Sept. 6: *My Best Friend's Wedding*, P. J. Hogan (1997)  
FS: Introduction – "Representation and Reality"  
Discussion Activity 2  
**View:** *Silence of the Lambs*, Jonathan Demme (1991)

Sept. 8: *Silence of the Lambs*, Jonathan Demme (1991)  
FG: "The Thriller"

### Week Four

Sept. 13: *Silence of the Lambs*, Jonathan Demme (1991)  
FS: Chapter One – "Mise-En-Scene: Within the Image"  
Discussion Activity 3  
**View:** *Moulin Rouge!*, Baz Luhrmann (2001)

Sept. 15: *Moulin Rouge!*, Baz Luhrmann (2001)  
FG: "The Musical"

### Week Five

Sept. 20: *Moulin Rouge!*, Baz Luhrmann (2001)  
FS: Chapter Two – "Mise-En-Scene: Camera Movement"  
Discussion Activity 4  
**View:** *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Sergio Leone (1968)

Sept. 22: *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Sergio Leone (1968)  
FG: "The Western"

### Week Six

Sept. 27: *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Sergio Leone (1968)  
FS: Chapter Three – "Mise-En-Scene: Cinematography"  
Discussion Activity 5  
**View:** *Blade Runner*, Ridley Scott (1982)

Sept. 29: *Blade Runner*, Ridley Scott (1982)  
FG: "Science Fiction"

### Week Seven

Oct. 4: *Blade Runner*, Ridley Scott (1982)  
FS: Chapter Five – "Sound"  
Discussion Activity 6  
**View:** *Kiss Me Deadly*, Robert Aldrich (1955)

Oct. 6: Research Day – No Class

### Week Eight

Oct. 11: *Kiss Me Deadly*, Robert Aldrich (1955)  
FG: "Film Noir"  
FS: Chapter Four – "Editing: From Shot to Shot"  
**View:** *Labyrinth*, Jim Henson (1986)

Oct. 12: **Paper One Due on Canvas by 11:59 p.m.**

Oct. 13: Fall Break – No Class

### Week Nine

Oct. 18: Continue Discussion *Kiss Me Deadly*, Robert Aldrich (1955)  
Begin Discussion of *Labyrinth*, Jim Henson (1986)  
Discussion Activity 7  
**View:** *Halloween*, John Carpenter (1978)

Oct. 20: Continue Discussion of *Labyrinth*, Jim Henson (1986)  
Begin Discussion of *Halloween*, John Carpenter (1978)  
FG: “The Fantasy Film”

Oct. 21: **Online Midterm Exam Due by 11:59 p.m.**

### Week Ten

Oct. 25: *Halloween*, John Carpenter (1978)  
FG: “The Horror Film”  
Discussion Activity 8  
**View:** *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, Ana Lily Amirpour (2014)

Oct. 27: *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, Ana Lily Amirpour (2014)

### Week Eleven

Nov. 1: *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, Ana Lily Amirpour (2014)  
FS: Chapter Six – “Narrative: From Scene to Scene”  
Discussion Activity 9  
**View:** *City Lights*, Charles Chaplin (1931)

Nov. 3: *City Lights*, Charles Chaplin (1931)  
FG: “Melodrama”

### Week Twelve

Nov. 8: *City Lights*, Charles Chaplin (1931)  
FS: Chapter Seven – “From Screenplay to Film”  
Discussion Activity 10  
**View:** *Milk*, Gus Van Sant (2008)

Nov. 10: *Milk*, Gus Van Sant (2008)  
FG: “The Social Problem Film”

### Week Thirteen

Nov. 15: *Milk*, Gus Van Sant (2008)  
FS: Chapter Nine – “Performance”  
**View:** *Network*, Sidney Lumet (1976)

Nov. 16: **Paper Two Due on Canvas by 11:59 p.m.**

Nov. 17: *Network*, Sidney Lumet (1976)

### **Week Fourteen**

- Nov. 22: *Network*, Sidney Lumet (1976)  
FS: Chapter Eight – “Filmmakers”  
Discussion Activity 11  
**View:** *Phantom of the Paradise*, Brian De Palma (1974)
- Nov. 24: Thanksgiving – No Class

### **Week Fifteen**

- Nov. 29: *Phantom of the Paradise*, Brian De Palma (1974)  
Discussion Activity 12  
**View:** *The Queen of Versailles*, Lauren Greenfield (2012)
- Dec. 1: Continue Discussion of *Phantom of the Paradise*, Brian De Palma (1974)  
Begin Discussion on *The Queen of Versailles*, Lauren Greenfield (2012)

### **Week Sixteen**

- Dec. 6: *The Queen of Versailles*, Lauren Greenfield (2012)
- Dec. 8: *The Queen of Versailles*, Lauren Greenfield (2012)

### **Finals Week**

**Online Final Exam Due Friday, December 16, by 11:59 p.m.**

**Revision Assignment Due Saturday, December 17, by 11:59 p.m.**