

**Pittsburg State University**  
**English 305: Introduction to Film Studies**  
**Grubbs Hall 303, Spring 2015**

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**Course Description**

Introduction to the basics of film aesthetics, including mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, narrative, sound, and critical and historical approaches to film.

This face-to-face course will teach you how to analyze cinema. We will study cinema’s fundamental stylistic elements: mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and sound. Students will then learn how sounds and moving images work together to structure a film or render a narrative. Students will also learn to write about cinema, and we will spend considerable class time developing writing and analytical skills.

The films we will study represent diverse styles, periods, genres, national cinemas, and production modes in order to give students an understanding of the wide range of cinema’s expressive possibilities. Throughout the course, we will concentrate on movies *as* movies—as experiences for spectators—and, wherever we are, we will never be far from our central question: What is it about the movies people like that makes people like them?

It will probably be obvious to you that our films are by no means comprehensive; this is the sad necessity of a sixteen-week course. While this class is designed to introduce you to some of the major issues in film studies, it has no pretensions to fully covering its entirety.

**Learning Objectives**

1. To help you develop the critical viewing skills necessary to understand complex texts.
2. To model the many ways that scholars talk about film and to encourage you to use these tools of cinematic analysis.
3. To give you practice in creating written discourse about film.
4. To help you appreciate film as aesthetic object, rhetorical performance, and cultural artifact.
5. To familiarize you with film and its history as it is being reconceived through the influence of feminism, cultural studies, and other perspectives.

**Required Text and Materials**

Barsam, Richard and Dave Monahan. *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film*. 4th Ed. New York: WW Norton & Co., 2012. (Combo pack with *Looking at Movies* DVD). ISBN: 978-0-393-91302-6

Outside materials available for download from Canvas.

**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, Quizzes, and Film Paragraphs (FliPs): 15%  
Midterm Exam: 10%  
Final Exam: 20%  
Film Sequence Analysis: 15%  
Film Art Analysis: 15%

Film History or Theory Analysis: 25%

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

## **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. 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 15 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.

## **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. While I will at times lecture on some material, my overall expectation is that we will

work together as a group to come to more complex and varied understandings of the texts covered over the course of the semester.

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 that portray content and themes that may be disturbing to some students. 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.

### **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 (four 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 Weekly Film Screening**

There is a scheduled weekly film screening 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. If absent on a screening day, you will need to view the film on your own prior to the first day of scheduled discussion each week.

**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/fb38ac9b-9c03-4b77-9bc4-7e71f5584060.pdf>

### **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. **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!)**

**BM and all chapter numbers refer to the relevant Barsam and Monahan textbook chapter and DVD tutorials unless otherwise noted.**

**Week One: Looking at Movies**

Jan. 12: Introduction to the Course

Jan. 13: View *Napoleon Dynamite*, Jared Hess (2004)

Jan. 14: Discuss *Napoleon Dynamite*, Jared Hess (2004)

Jan. 16: Read BM Chapter 1 and Watch Chapter 1 DVD Tutorials (Film Analysis Part I: *Juno*; Film Analysis Part II: *Harry Potter*)

**Week Two: Principles of Film Form**

Jan. 19: MLK, Jr. Day – No Class

Jan. 20: View *Battleship Potemkin*, Sergei Eisenstein (1925)

Jan. 21: Bring Take Home Sample Quiz to Class; Discuss *Battleship Potemkin*, Sergei Eisenstein (1925)

Jan. 23: Read BM Chapter 2

**Week Three: Elements of Narrative**

Jan. 26: Watch Chapter 2 DVD Tutorials (Form and Content)

Jan. 27: View *Chungking Express*, Wong Kar-Wai (1994)

Jan. 28: Quiz 1: Principles of Film Form; Discuss *Chungking Express*, Wong Kar-Wai (1994)

Jan. 30: Read BM Chapter 4

**Week Four: Mise-En-Scène**

Feb. 2: Watch Chapter 4 DVD Tutorials (Narrators, Narration, and Narrative; Diegetic and Nondiegetic Elements; Suspense and Surprise)

Feb. 3: View *Umberto D.*, Vittorio De Sica (1952)

Feb. 4: Quiz 2: Elements of Narrative; Discuss *Umberto D.*, Vittorio De Sica (1952)

Feb. 6: Read BM Chapter 5

**Week Five: Cinematography**

Feb. 9: Watch Chapter 5 DVD Tutorials (Setting and Expressionism; Lighting and Familiar Image in *The Night of the Hunter*; Composing the Frame; The Lumière Brothers' "Actualités")

Feb. 10: View *The Shining*, Stanley Kubrick (1980)

Feb. 11: Quiz 3: Mise-En-Scène; Discuss *The Shining*, Stanley Kubrick (1980)

Feb. 13: Read BM Chapter 6

### **Week Six: Editing**

Feb. 16: Watch Chapter 6 DVD Tutorials (Lighting; Shot Types and Implied Proximity; Camera Angles; Point of View; Zoom and Moving Camera Effects; The Moving Camera; Focal Length)  
**First Set of FliPs Due**

Feb. 17: View *The Godfather*, Francis Ford Coppola (1972)

Feb. 18: Quiz 4: Cinematography; Discuss *The Godfather*, Francis Ford Coppola (1972)

Feb. 20: Read BM Chapter 8

### **Week Seven: Sound**

Feb. 23: Watch Chapter 8 DVD Tutorials (The Evolution of Editing: Continuity and Classical Cutting; The Evolution of Editing: Montage; The Kuleshov Experiment; The 180-Degree Rule; Editing Techniques in Snapshot)

Feb. 24: View *The Birds*, Alfred Hitchcock (1963)

Feb. 25: Quiz 5: Editing; Discuss *The Birds*, Alfred Hitchcock (1963)

Feb. 27: Read BM Chapter 9

### **Week Eight: Types of Movies Part I – Science Fiction/Horror**

Mar. 2: Watch Chapter 9 DVD Tutorials (Sound in Snapshot)

Mar. 3: View *Alien*, Ridley Scott (1979)

Mar. 4: Quiz 6: Sound; Discuss *Alien*, Ridley Scott (1979)

Mar. 6: Read BM Chapter 3

### **Week Nine: Types of Movies Part II – Musical**

Mar. 9: Watch Chapter 3 DVD Tutorials (Genre: The Western)  
**Film Sequence Analysis Due by 11:59 p.m. on Canvas**

Mar. 10: View *Hair*, Milos Forman (1979)

Mar. 11: Quiz 7: Types of Movies Part I; Discuss *Hair*, Milos Forman (1979)

Mar. 13: **Midterm Exam (Covers Weeks 1 through 7)**

### **Week Ten**

Mar. 16: Spring Break

Mar. 18: Spring Break

Mar. 20: Spring Break

### **Week Eleven: Acting**

Mar. 23: Read Altman, Excerpt from *Film/Genre* and Gunning, “Those Drawn with a Very Fine Camel’s Hair Brush” (Canvas)

Mar. 24: View *Citizen Kane*, Orson Welles (1941)

Mar. 25: No Class – Read BM Chapter 7; **Complete Online Discussion Forum #1**

Mar. 27: No Class – Read Chapter 7 PowerPoint Presentation; Watch Chapter 7 DVD Tutorials (Persona and Performance; Editing and Performance in Snapshot); **Complete Online Discussion Forum #2**

### **Week Twelve: Film History**

Mar. 30: Read Andrew, “Film and History” (Canvas); Discuss *Citizen Kane*, Orson Welles (1941)  
**Second Set of Flips Due**

Mar. 31: View *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, Robert Weine (1920)

Apr. 1: Quiz 8: Acting; Discuss *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, Robert Weine (1920)

Apr. 3: Read BM Chapter 10

### **Week Thirteen: Women in Film and Feminist Theory Part I**

Apr. 6: Read Excerpts from Zinoman, *Shock Value*; Lanzoni, *French Cinema*; Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler* (Canvas) to compare their approaches to film history and not to remember the specifics of each excerpt

Apr. 7: View *Meshes of the Afternoon*, Maya Deren (1943) and *Cleo from 5 to 7*, Agnes Varda (1962)

Apr. 8: Quiz 9: Film History; Discuss *Meshes of the Afternoon*, Maya Deren (1943) and *Cleo from 5 to 7*, Agnes Varda (1962)

Apr. 10: Discuss *Meshes of the Afternoon*, Maya Deren (1943) and *Cleo from 5 to 7*, Agnes Varda (1962)

### **Week Fourteen: Women in Film and Feminist Theory Part II**

Apr. 13: Read White, “Feminism and Film” (Canvas)  
**Film Art Analysis Due by 11:59 p.m. on Canvas**

Apr. 14: View *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, Chantal Akerman (1975)

Apr. 15: Quiz 10: Women in Film and Feminist Theory Part I; Discuss *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, Chantal Akerman (1975)

Apr. 17: Read Fowler, “Chantal Akerman” (Canvas)

### **Week Fifteen: Race and Ethnicity**

Apr. 20: Read Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (Canvas)

Apr. 21: View *Do the Right Thing*, Spike Lee (1989)

Apr. 22: Quiz 11: Women in Film and Feminist Theory Part II; Discuss *Do the Right Thing*, Spike Lee (1989)

Apr. 24: Read Wiegman, “Race, Ethnicity, and Film” (Canvas)

### **Week Sixteen: Class**

Apr. 27: Read Kleinmans, “Marxism and Film” (Canvas)

Apr. 26: View *Snowpiercer*, Joon-ho Bong (2013)

Apr. 29: Quiz 12: Race and Ethnicity in Film; Discuss *Snowpiercer*, Joon-ho Bong (2013)

May 1: Discuss *Snowpiercer*, Joon-ho Bong (2013)

**Third Set of FliPs Due**

### **Final Exam Week**

Monday, May 4, 1:00 pm – 2:50 pm: **Final Exam (Covers Weeks 8 through 16)**

**Final Film History or Theory Analysis Due on Canvas by Friday, May 8, at 11:59 pm.**