

UPDATED: January 14, 2013

Course Syllabus

FILM 2332.501 Understanding Film - Spring 2013

Tuesdays 7-9:45pm in JO 2.604

Professor:

Dr. Shilyb Warren - shilyb.warren@utdallas.edu

Office: Jonsson Building - 5.304 | Office phone: 972-883-6316

Office hours: Tuesdays 2-4 pm and by appointment.

Emails are encouraged and will be answered within 48 hrs.

Teaching Assistants:

Julienne Greer jag077000@utdallas.edu

Office: Jonsson Building - 5.310

Office hours: Tues. 6-7 pm and by appointment.

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Office: Jonsson Building – 5.410C

Office hours: Thurs. 4-5 pm and by appointment.

Course Description:

This class is designed to familiarize students with the artistic, industrial, and socio-cultural dynamics of cinema and to enable them to become more informed and sophisticated film viewers, enthusiasts, and cultural critics. We watch a variety of film styles and genres over the semester and consider how external forces (economics, politics, culture, technology) shape film aesthetics and reception. This class is not a comprehensive historical survey of the moving image, but rather offers students a toolbox of critical concepts and approaches that can deepen their engagement with cinema. Our driving question is deceptively simple: how do films produce meaning & create experiences? Classes will consist of lecture and brief screenings as well as discussion of the readings and screening for the week. Students are fully responsible on quizzes and exams for all in- and out-of-class screening material, including the clips used in lecture.

Required Textbooks and Materials:

Corrigan, Timothy and Patricia White. *The Film Experience: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. (Bedford/St. Martin's 2012). ISBN13: 978-0312681708

All other materials (including this syllabus) are available on e-reserves. The URL for this page is: <http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=1441>

Course & Instructor Policies:

This class has a no laptop & no phone policy. Please **do not bring laptops to class** unless prior arrangements have been made. Please also keep your phones on silent and *out of sight*. Electronics are wonderful, but they can distract you and everyone around you, including your professor.

Prepare to be challenged! Many of the films we will watch will be unlike anything you've ever seen. I will not ask you to "like" or agree with the films or the views presented in the

films we see, but I will ask you to be open to new ideas, experiences, and modes of representation.

Attendance in this course is required. After 1 absence your grade will be affected by one full point for each absence. **If you miss 4 or more class sessions you will fail the course.** *If you must miss a class, you remain responsible for all course material covered in that class. Please contact your peers or TA for information.*

In-class work (including quizzes) cannot be made up. **All exams** must be completed in full and make-up exams will be permitted only in the most serious circumstances, which must be documented.

Out of class screenings are *mandatory* should be taken seriously. Watch these films on the biggest screen possible and immerse yourself in the film as if you were in a theater. This is hard work and constitutes an important part of your engagement in this class. Do not multi-task; rather, try to create a new viewing experience for yourself.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures. The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor. Please make sure you have the most updated version of this syllabus.

Student Learning Objectives for Arts and Performance:

1. Describe and apply methodology processes – Students will be able to describe and apply basic methodologies and processes by which aesthetic judgments are made
2. Demonstrate effective communication skills – Students will demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills
3. Demonstrate knowledge of principals and history – Students will demonstrate a broad knowledge of the principles and history of at least one major form of artistic expression
4. To gain experience and expertise – Students will gain experience and expertise in at least one areas of the creative and performing arts

Grading Policy

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

- Attendance = 15%
- Weekly quizzes and/or in-class writing assignments = 25%
 - I will drop your 2 lowest grades and count the top 12 of 14.
- Mid-term Exam = 30%
- Final Exam = 30%

Assignments & Academic Calendar

Love, Life & Death in the Time & Space of Cinema.

1. Jan 15 – Introduction: What Is Cinema?

In-class screening: *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958: 128 min.)

2. Jan 22 – Film Style and Analysis

Watch: *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1955: 89 min.)

Read: Corrigan & White (C&W), “Introduction: Studying Film” (5-17) and Pramaggiore & Wallis (P&W) *Film: A Critical Introduction* (Pearson, 2011), “An Approach to Film Analysis” (9-36).

3. Jan 29 - Classical Hollywood and American Culture

Watch: *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939: 238 min.)

Read: C&W Ch1 “Encountering Film” (19-59); P&W Ch10: “Film and Ideology” (309-342).

4. Feb 5 – Telling Film History

Watch: *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1974: 93 min.)

Read: C&W Ch10 “History and Historiography: Hollywood and Beyond” (355-397).

5. Feb 12 – Narrative and Narration

Watch: *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945: 111 min.)

Read: C&W Ch6 “Telling Stories: Narrative Films” (215-253).

6. Feb 19 – The Shot, Mise-en-scene

Watch: *Far From Heaven* (Todd Haynes, 2002: 107 min.)

Read: C&W Ch2 “Exploring a Material World: Mise-en-Scène” (60-93) **and** Ed Sikov, *Film Studies: An Introduction* (Columbia UP, 2009), Ch1 “Mise-en-Scene: Within the Image” in (5-23).

7. Feb 26 – The Shot, Camerawork & Cinematography

Watch: *In the Mood for Love* (Wong Kar-wai, 2000: 98 min.)

Read: C&W Ch3 “Framing What We See: Cinematography” (95-131).

8. Mar 5 – *MIDTERM*****

9. Mar 12 (Spring Break)

10. Mar 19 – Shot to Shot, Editing

Watch: *Walkabout* (Nicolas Roeg, 1971: 100 min.)

Read: C&W Ch4 “Relating Images: Editing” (133-175).

11. Mar 26 – Sound and Sound Design & Horror

Watch: *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980: 142 min.) **and** *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960: 109 min.)

Read, C&W Ch5 “Listening to the Cinema: Film Sound” (177-211).

12. Apr 2 – Genre Studies & The Wild West

Watch: *Red River* (Howard Hawks, 1948: 133 min.) or *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956: 119 min.)

Read, C&W Ch9 “Rituals, Conventions, Archetypes, and Formulas” (315-351).

13. Apr 9 – Genre Games & Adaptation

Watch: *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005: 134 min.)

Read: Gary Needham, Ch2 “Queering the Western” (31-78) in *Brokeback Mountain* and Annie Proulx, “Brokeback Mountain” (October 17, 1997) in *The New Yorker*.

14. Apr 16 – Documentary

Watch: *The Price of Sex* (Mimi Chakarova, 2011: 72 min.)

Read: C&W Ch7 “Representing the Real: Documentary Films” (255-283) and listen to *Snap Judgment* interview with Chakarova: <http://snapjudgment.org/almost-me>.

15. Apr 23 – Experimental & Avant-garde

Watch: *Free Radicals: A History of Experimental Film* (Pip Chodorov, 2010: 82 min.);

In-class screenings include: *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (Dara Birnbaum, 1978: 5 min.); *Scar Tissue* (Su Friedrich, 1979); and *Removed* (Naomi Uman, 2006: 7 min.).

Read: C&W Ch8 “Challenging Form: Experimental Film and New Media” (285-313) and <http://www.fredcamper.com/Film/AvantGardeDefinition.html>

16. Apr 30 – The Digital and The Death of Cinema

Watch: *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (Zacharias Kunuk, 2001: 172 min.) and *Side by Side* (Keanu Reeves, 2012: 99 min.)

Read:

- C&W Ch11 “Reading About Film: Critical Theories and Methods” (399-433).
- Matt Zoller Seitz, “RIP the Film Camera: 1888-2011,” *Salon* (October 13, 2011). http://www.salon.com/2011/10/13/r_i_p_the_movie_camera_1888_2011/
- Richard Brody, “The Movies Aren’t Dying (They’re Not Even Sick),” *New Yorker* (September 27, 2012). <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/movies/2012/09/the-movies-are-not-dying.html>
- Scott Tobias, “Sweet Emulsion or Why the (Near) Death of Film Matters,” *The A.V. Club* (November 22, 2011). <http://www.avclub.com/articles/sweet-emulsion-why-the-near-death-of-film-matters,65503/>
- Manohla Dargis and A.O. Scott, “Film is Dead? Long Live Movies,” *The New York Times* (September 6, 2012). <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/09/movies/how-digital-is-changing-the-nature-of-movies.html?pagewanted=all>

*****FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, May 7, 2013: 8 – 10:45pm*****
JO 2.604