

Course Syllabus: Understanding Film

Course Information

Course Number/Section 2332.0u1
Term Summer 2021
Class Meeting Times Tuesday & Thursday 12:30-2:45 pm

Professor Contact Information

Professor Stephanie Oliver
Email Address Stephanie.Oliver@UTDallas.edu
Online Office Hours By appointment only (best times are before and after class on Tuesdays & Thursdays); Phone calls are a possibility*
Other Information All meetings for office hours will take place on Microsoft Teams. Email to schedule an appointment.

Course Modality and Expectations

Instructional Mode	Remote – Synchronous online learning at the day and time of the class. The instructor delivers the instruction from home or the office. Students complete the course at a distance.
Course Platform	Lectures (Tuesdays) and Screening Discussions (Thursdays) will all occur on Microsoft Teams. All Screenings will need to be watched outside of class – which are all available on Kanopy for free. I will post links to class recordings on eLearning. All other class materials will be available on eLearning.
Expectations	I expect all students to complete the required reading(s) before coming to class and to actively participate in discussions (by speaking and/or in the chat). I expect students to watch all screenings outside of class, and come ready to discuss the films in class on Thursdays. I expect cameras to be on during lecture days for the duration of the class. I expect all students to stay informed of all due dates and to complete all assignments on time. I expect students to speak up when they have questions or any difficulties understanding the course material/or meeting any class expectations.
Asynchronous Learning Guidelines	Students choosing to take the course asynchronously must watch all class recordings. Complete all required readings and screenings – then complete the Guided Reading and Screening Response (worksheet) each week. Complete and submit all assignments on time. Email/meet with me about questions related to the course when needed.

Course Description

This course is intended to introduce you to the field of film studies in a way that will allow you to more actively engage with, and appreciate, the films that you watch. During the course of this class, we will examine the technical aspects of filmmaking (cinematography, lighting, editing, sound, etc.), the historical and cultural contexts in which films have been made, and the theoretical perspectives by which we can “unpack” film (auteur theory, genre theory, feminist theory, etc.). By the end of this course, you

should be able to look at a film as more than a simple piece of entertainment, and begin to take it apart to understand how it has been constructed and what meanings it communicates.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Develop a critical film “language” regarding analytical terminology and concepts, and to be able to discuss film and the way in which meaning is conveyed through cinematography, editing, sound, narrative, genre conventions, etc.
- Become an “active” viewer who can look beyond the simple entertainment value of film and unpack its deeper messages in a culturally-appropriate manner.
- Gain an understanding of the historical context in which film exists, and the manner in which history and popular culture intersect and influence each other.

Required Textbook

Pramaggiore, Maria and Wallis, Tom. *Film: A Critical Introduction* (4th Edition). 2020.

The textbook is widely available - from the UT Dallas Bookstore, Off Campus Books, Amazon.com, and many textbook resellers. Should you have any questions about the required readings, please set up a meeting with me to discuss them. The book will also be on reserve at the UT Dallas Library.

Additional readings, if any, will be made available on eLearning.

* PLEASE NOTE: You are responsible for all the material in each chapter assigned for you to read, whether we review that material in class or not. Lectures are designed to cover much of the information in each chapter, but length of discussions about screenings and other factors may affect that. My intention is that having read each chapter BEFORE class, you will be better prepared for the discussions we will have in class. DO NOT assume that just because we did not talk about something in class that it will not be relevant for you to know and address in your assignments.

Required Film Screenings and Clips

We will watch all required screenings in class on Thursdays – except for Week 1 (see course calendar below). If you miss class on screening days or choose to complete the screenings asynchronously, **you can watch all required screenings for free on Kanopy.**

All UT Dallas students get free access to Kanopy’s video library. You will need to set up a login (with your UTD Email and a password) the first time you visit the site (you will search for your school to make sure you get free access). The site link is:

<https://www.kanopy.com/signup>.

We will screen many clips from films in class for free from sites online. **The clips will be embedded in the PowerPoints** for asynchronous students to watch.

Technical Requirements

In addition to a confident level of computer and Internet literacy, certain minimum technical requirements must be met to enable a successful learning experience. Please review the important technical requirements on the [Getting Started with eLearning](#) webpage.

Course Access and Navigation

This course can be accessed using your UT Dallas NetID account on the [eLearning](#) website.

Please see the course access and navigation section of the [Getting Started with eLearning](#) webpage for more information.

To become familiar with the eLearning tool, please see the [Student eLearning Tutorials](#) webpage.

UT Dallas provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The [eLearning Support Center](#) includes a toll-free telephone number for immediate assistance (1-866-588-3192), email request service, and an online chat service.

Communication

This course utilizes online tools for interaction and communication. Some external communication tools such as regular email and a web conferencing tool may also be used during the semester. For more details, please visit the [Student eLearning Tutorials](#) webpage for video demonstrations on eLearning tools.

Student emails and discussion board messages will be answered within **3 working days** under normal circumstances.

Distance Learning Student Resources

Online students have access to resources including the McDermott Library, Academic Advising, The Office of Student AccessAbility, and many others. Please see the [eLearning Current Students](#) webpage for more information.

Server Unavailability or Other Technical Difficulties

The University is committed to providing a reliable learning management system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty which prevents students from completing a time sensitive assessment activity, the instructor will provide an appropriate accommodation based on the situation. Students should immediately report any problems to the instructor and also contact the online [eLearning Help Desk](#). The instructor and the eLearning Help Desk will work with the student to resolve any issues at the earliest possible time.

Course Calendar

***Guided Reading and Screening Response** will be due each week for asynchronous students (more details below)

*** Film Review** Presentations will occur in class from Week 3-7 for students choosing to complete the course synchronously; asynchronous students will record their presentations

***Starting Week 2, we will discuss the screenings listed below in class on Thursdays – but you need to watch the films outside of class before class in order to come prepared for the discussion.**

This means, none of the required screenings will be in class. You can watch the films listed below at any point during that week, but it must be before the discussion day/Thursday.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic/Reading/Screening</u>
Week 1	Introduction to Course; Introduction to Film Analysis
May 25 (Tuesday)	Screening: <i>Moonlight</i> (Barry Jenkins, 2016; 111 mins.)
May 27 (Thursday)	Reading: Chapter 1-2
Week 2	Narrative Form
June 1 (Tuesday)	Reading: Chapter 3-4
June 3 (Thursday)	Screening: <i>Bicycle Thieves</i> (Vittorio De Sica, 1948; 89 mins.)
Week 3	Mise-en-Scène
June 8 (Tuesday)	Reading: Chapter 5
June 10 (Thursday)	Screening: <i>The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari</i> (Robert Weiene 1920; 77 mins.)
Week 4	Cinematography
June 15 (Tuesday)	Reading: Chapter 6
June 17 (Thursday)	Screening: <i>In the Mood for Love</i> (Kar-Wai Wong, 2000; 98 mins.)
Week 5	Editing
June 22 (Tuesday)	Reading: Chapter 7
June 24 (Thursday)	Screening: <i>Breathless</i> (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960; 90 mins.)
Week 6	Sound
June 29 (Tuesday)	Reading: Chapter 8
July 1 (Thursday)	Screening: <i>His Girl Friday</i> (Howard Hawks, 1940; 92 mins.)
----- Midterm Exam (Take-Home) - Due Monday 7/05 by 11:59 pm -----	
Week 7	Film and Ideology
July 6 (Tuesday)	Reading: Chapter 10
July 8 (Thursday)	Screening: <i>Dogtooth</i> (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2009; 97 mins.)
Week 8	Genre
July 13 (Tuesday)	Reading: Chapter 13
July 15 (Thursday)	Screening: <i>Stagecoach</i> (John Ford, 1939; 96 mins.)
Week 9	Film Stardom and Film Authorship
July 20 (Tuesday)	Reading: Chapter 12 and 14
July 22 (Thursday)	Screening: <i>Modern Times</i> (Charles Chaplin, 1936; 96 mins.)

Week 10 Documentary Film and Avant-garde Film

July 27 (Tuesday) Reading: Chapter 9

July 29 (Thursday) Screening: *Free Radicals: A History of Experimental Film* (Pip Chodorov, 2011; 80 mins.)

----- **Short Film Analysis Paper - Due on Monday 8/02 by 11:59 pm** -----

Week 11 Course Conclusion; Writing Workshop

August 3 (Tuesday) Reading: Chapter 15

August 5 (Thursday) No class (last day of class is August 3)

----- **Final Exam (Take-Home) - Due on Monday 8/09 by 11:59 pm** -----

*All grades are due August 12 (Thursday) and become viewable on Orion

COVID-19 Guidelines and Resources

The information contained in the following link lists the University's COVID-19 resources for students and instructors of record.

Please see <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.

Class Participation

Regular class participation is expected regardless of course modality. Students who fail to participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. A portion of the grade for this course is directly tied to your participation in this class. It also includes engaging in group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or other class materials. Class participation is documented by faculty. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Synchronous Students: On lecture days, to get full participation points for the day, you must be on time and actively participating in the chat and/or speaking during film/clip discussions and when I ask questions. On screening days, to get full participation points for the day, you must be on time and actively participating during the discussion portion of the class (after the screenings). Asynchronous students: must complete the Guided Reading and Screening Response on time each week to get full participation points for the week.

Class Recordings

Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has

approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Note: if the instructor records any part of the course, then the instructor will need to add the following syllabus statement:

The instructor may record meetings of this course. These recordings will be made available to all students registered for this class if the intent is to supplement the classroom experience. If the instructor or a UTD school/department/office plans any other uses for the recordings, consent of the students identifiable in the recordings is required prior to such use unless an exception is allowed by law. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Class Materials

The Instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course, however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Grading Policy and Grade Breakdown

Your final grade will be calculated based on the following factors and percentages:

- **Participation:** Attend Class and Participate in Discussions (synchronous) *OR* Guided Reading and Screening Response (asynchronous): 15%
- **Film Review** (In-Class Presentations for synchronous; Recordings for asynchronous): 10%
- **Midterm Exam** (Take-Home): 25 %
- **Short Film Analysis Paper** (4-5 pages): 25%
- **Final Exam** (Take-Home): 25 %

My grading scale is as follows:

97-100 = A+ 94-96 = A 90-93 = A- 87-89 = B+ 84-86 = B 80-83 = B- 77-79 = C+ 74-76 = C 70-73 = C- 67-69 = D+ 64-66 = D 60-63 = D- 0-59 = F

The Guided Reading and Screening Response (GRSR for short) assignment is required for asynchronous students only. The GRSR is a worksheet that asks students to write about/answer questions about the weekly required screening and the material covered in the PowerPoints

(which covers readings, clips, and discussion points). There will be 11 weeks total with GRSSR to complete as an asynchronous student in the course. This is in addition to needing to complete all other assignments. **The worksheet is due by 11:59 pm each Friday through the Turnitin link on eLearning.**

The Film Review Presentation sign-ups for synchronous (in-class) and asynchronous (recording) students will happen in Week 2.

The Final Exam is not cumulative.

More detailed instructions for all assignments will be made available in class and on eLearning in the coming weeks.

Course Policies

Turnitin Submissions Reminder

For any assignment that requires you to submit to Turnitin, please make sure that you keep the ID #/receipt for your Turnitin submission – either the email confirmation that is sent to you or you may want to write down the number just in case. If I cannot open/find your submission in the system and you have no record of the submission, then it did not go through and I cannot grade the assignment as being on time/at all until the assignment is submitted completely.

Extra Credit

There will be no extra credit for the course at this time.

Late Work

I will accept late work, but not for full credit.

Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

Academic Support Resources

The information contained in the following link lists the University’s academic support resources for all students.

Please go to [Academic Support Resources](#) webpage for these policies.

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 review the catalog sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) or [pass/fail](#) grading option and withdrawal from class.

Please go to [UT Dallas Syllabus Policies](#) webpage for these policies.

Film Studies at UTD: UTD offers a Film Studies Minor (18 credit hours) and a major in Visual and Performing Arts with a film studies concentration. For more information contact me or visit our website: <https://www.utdallas.edu/ah/programs/arts/film/index.html>.

Accessibility: Necessary accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must contact The Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA). For more information, visit: <https://www.utdallas.edu/studentaccess/>

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes all forms of plagiarism, cheating on assignments or exams, turning in work that has been written (partially or entirely) by someone else (this includes websites), turning in work that has been previously submitted for a grade, fabricating information or citations, or helping another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. See the Student Code of Conduct: <https://policy.utdallas.edu/utdsp5003>

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.