

Course Syllabus: Understanding Film

Course Information

Course Number/Section 2332.002
Term Fall 2021
Class Meeting Time Fridays 1:00-3:45 pm
Classroom GR 3.302

Professor Contact Information

Professor Stephanie Oliver
Email Address Stephanie.Oliver@UTDallas.edu
Office JO 5.206
Office Hours **By appointment only** (best times are 2 hours before and after class);
Phone calls and Microsoft Teams meetings are also options;
Email me or see me before/after class to schedule an appointment
Other Information There is no TA for this class

Course Modality and Expectations

Instructional Mode	Traditional (Classroom/Laboratory) – taught entirely in person.
Course Materials	All materials presented in class will be available on eLearning – PowerPoints, study guides, etc.
Expectations	I expect all students to complete the required reading(s) before coming to class and to actively participate in discussions as well as listen and ask questions when appropriate during lectures. I expect students to watch all screenings outside of class (available for free on the platforms stated below), and come ready to discuss the films at the beginning of class each week (after week 2). 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.
De-Densification (First Three Weeks)	For the first class only, we will all meet on Microsoft Teams – not in person. The same material will be covered in week 2 and 3 – but only half of the class will meet at a time. Students with last names that start with the letter A-H will meet in person week 2, but not week 3. Students with last names that start with the letter I-Z will meet in person week 3, but not week 2. You cannot switch the week you are meant to attend (2 or 3). You cannot come to week 2 and 3 – you do not need to as the material will be the same and the point is to de-densify the classroom during the first three weeks (which is why the first week is online only and the class is split in half for week 2 and 3 in person). Week 4 onward will be in person only and all students will meet together.

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. Emphasis is on film analysis, film in relation to the other arts and mass media, films as artifacts, and understanding the ways that films are put together and how they function expressively. During the course of this class, we will examine the technical aspects of filmmaking (cinematography, lighting, editing, sound, etc.) that make up the “language of

making (cinematography, lighting, editing, sound, etc.) that make up the “language of cinema” in all film modes (narrative, documentary, and avant-garde) and film styles (classical, realist, and formalist), the historical and cultural contexts in which films have been made (i.e. Classical Hollywood, Italian Neorealism, German Expressionism, French New Wave, and New Queer Cinema – among films from other eras, movements, and countries will be screened), the way films embody or criticize popular ideas and attitudes, 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.

Students who are unwilling to explore issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality within an educational framework should consider enrolling in another class...Any form of academic dishonesty will result in an F for the course and possible further sanctions at the university level.....Use of electronic equipment in class is only permitted for note-taking purposes.

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.

There is one digital copy of the textbook on reserve through the UTD library (free to access) – a link to it is on eLearning on the Course Homepage. **Only one student can access the digital copy at a time.** The third edition of the textbook is also on reserve if you would like to use it as a resource – but make sure to read the fourth edition too as it is the basis of the course.

I will provide a PDF of the first chapter of the textbook on eLearning on the Course Homepage (available starting August 23), to give students time to acquire their own copy or decide how/when to use the digital copy on reserve.

The textbook is widely available to purchase (if you want your own copy) - from the UT Dallas Bookstore, 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.

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

Most of the required outside of class screenings are available to watch on Kanopy. Week 4's screening is available to watch on YouTube (the link to the film for that week is on the course schedule below).

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.

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 **2 working days** under normal circumstances.

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

* You can watch the films listed below at any point during that week, but it must be before the class date when it is to be discussed/the week after the date is listed by. Please complete the required reading before the class date it is listed by and be prepared to discuss it that day. The reading for each week ranges from 20 – 50 or so pages.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic/Reading/Screening</u>
Week 1 matter? August 27	Introduction to Course; What is Film and Why does it Reading: Chapter 1 Screening: <i>Moonlight</i> (Barry Jenkins, 2016; 111 mins.) *This class will be held on Microsoft Teams only – no in person option
Week 2 September 3	Introduction to Film Analysis and Writing About Film Reading: Chapter 2-3 *Only students with last names A-H only meet in person to go over the material on this day
Week 3 September 10	Same as Week 2 – but only students with last names I-Z only meet in person go over the material on this day
----- Starting week 4: All students will meet in person (no more de-densification) -----	
Week 4 September 17	Narrative Form Reading: Chapter 4 Screening: <i>Bicycle Thieves</i> (Vittorio De Sica, 1948; 89 mins.)
Week 5 September 24	Mise-en-Scène Reading: Chapter 5 Screening: <i>The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari</i> (Robert Weiene 1920; 77 mins.) Link to film (free on YouTube): The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) Fantasy, Horror, Mystery Silent Film - YouTube
Week 6 October 1	Cinematography Reading: Chapter 6 Screening: <i>In the Mood for Love</i> (Kar-Wai Wong, 2000; 98 mins.) *Film Review – Due by 11:59 pm
Week 7 October 8	Editing Reading: Chapter 7 Screening: <i>Breathless</i> (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960; 90 mins.)
Week 8 October 15	Sound Reading: Chapter 8 Screening: <i>His Girl Friday</i> (Howard Hawks, 1940; 92 mins.)
Week 9 October 22	Midterm Exam (in class)
Week 10 October 29	Film and Ideology Reading: Chapter 10 Screening: <i>The Watermelon Woman</i> (Cheryl Dunye, 1996; 90 mins.)

Week 11 November 5	Genre Reading: Chapter 13 Screening: <i>Stagecoach</i> (John Ford, 1939; 96 mins.)
Week 12 November 12	Film Stardom and Film Authorship Reading: Chapter 12 and 14 Screening: <i>Modern Times</i> (Charles Chaplin, 1936; 96 mins.)
Week 13 November 19	Documentary Film and Avant-garde Film Reading: Chapter 9 Screening: <i>Free Radicals: A History of Experimental Film</i> (Pip Chodorov, 2011; 80 mins.)
Week 14 November 26	Fall and Thanksgiving Break No Class
Week 15 December 3	Course Conclusion; Film and Screen Media Reading: Chapter 15 *Film Analysis Video Essay - Due by 11:59 pm
Week 16/17 <i>Date/Time TBA</i>	Finals Week (December 9-15) Final Exam (in class)

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>.

Special Note: If YOU test positive for COVID-19 at any point this semester and need to quarantine, email me as soon as you can and we will discuss how you will need to proceed with taking the course.

Classroom Conduct Requirements Related to Public Health Measures

UT Dallas will follow the public health and safety guidelines put forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and local public health agencies that are in effect at that time during the Fall 2021 semester to the extent allowed by state governance. Texas Governor Greg Abbott's Executive Order [GA-38](#) prohibits us from mandating vaccines and face coverings for UT Dallas employees, students, and members of the public on campus. However, we strongly encourage all Comets to get vaccinated and wear face coverings as recommended by the CDC. Check the [Comets United: Latest Updates webpage](#) for the latest guidance on the University's public health measures. Comets are expected to carry out [Student Safety](#) protocols in adherence to the Comet Commitment. Unvaccinated Comets will be expected to complete the [Required Daily Health Screening](#). Those students who do not comply will be referred to the Office of Community Standards and Conduct for disciplinary action under the [Student Code of Conduct – UTSP5003](#).

Class Participation and Attendance

Regular class participation is expected. Students who fail to participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. Asking questions, asking for more examples and/or explanation/clarification, contributing comments during lectures when asked or in discussions of films or the reading, agreeing and/or debating points with other students

about class material are all ways to regularly and effectively participate each class. If you do not participate in class regularly, you will not be engaging with the material as deeply and closely as you need to in order to succeed on the course assignments.

Attendance is mandatory. You do not need to notify me if you miss class, but it is up to you to get the class notes from another student or to schedule a meeting with me to go over what you missed/to address any questions you have about the material that you missed.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning and ending of class – you will need to sign in and sign out on the attendance sheets on the table at the front of the room. Please social distance as you sign in/out. **You get two free absences.** For every class you miss after the first two free absences (unless you have an excused reason – i.e. a doctor's note), you will lose 1 % of your total course grade. For the first week, I will take class digitally in our Microsoft Teams meeting.

Common Courtesy and Cell Phones

Please do not bring in any food or uncovered drinks to the class with you. Please keep the room clean and leave it in the condition in which you found it. Please put away all cell phones (and put them on silent) and only use electronic devices for notetaking. Please remove earphones and put them away upon arriving to class. Please always speak in a respectful manner and do not address personal business in class.

Class Recordings

*I plan to record the first class only at this time – it will be available on eLearning that same evening.

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.

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:

- **Attendance:** 15%
- **Film Review** (500-750 words): 10%
- **Midterm Exam:** 25 %
- **Film Analysis Video Essay** (3 minutes): 25%
- **Final Exam:** 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

Midterm and Final will be Multiple Choice Exams - based on lectures, screenings, readings, and discussions. The Final Exam is not cumulative. I will provide scantrons for you to use for both exams. I will also be providing study guides to help you prepare for the exams (closer to the exam dates).

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

Your Final Grade will thus be based upon two in-class examinations, one presentation, one written assignment. Students expecting to do well in this class should read the assigned materials, attend and take notes on all components of the class, including discussions and screenings. I can almost guarantee you will not pass this class if you skip the assigned readings and/or continue to miss lectures and screenings.

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. If for some reason you cannot submit your work through Turnitin, email it to me as an attachment (before the deadline) and I will submit it for you.

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.

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