

Course Syllabus: Understanding Film

Course Information

Course Number/Section 2332.001
Term Spring 2022
Class Meeting Time Tuesdays 2:30-5:15 pm
Classroom AH2 1.204

Professor Contact Information

Professor Stephanie Oliver
Email Address Stephanie.Oliver@UTDallas.edu
Office JO 5.206
Office Hours **Tuesdays 12 pm – 2 pm (in-person or online); By appointment (at other days and times) is also an option for in-person or online meetings**
 *Send me an email if you want to meet at a different day/time then my regular office hours

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 each week and to actively participate in discussions as well as listen and ask questions when appropriate. I expect students to watch all screenings outside of class (available for free on the platforms indicated below on the course schedule), and come ready to discuss the films at the beginning of class each week (starting 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 how to meet any course expectations.
*First Three Weeks	We will be meeting on Microsoft Teams for the first three weeks. I will record the classes and post them on eLearning under the “Class Recordings” Folder for all students to review (usually within an hour after class ends). I expect cameras to be on and frequent participation in the discussion of the reading and the screenings by all students. In week 4, we will start in-person meetings on campus. Office hours will only be virtual during the first three weeks of the class, as well.

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 cinema” in all film types (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, and 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.

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 under the “Required Readings – Links” Folder. **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 and what you will be tested over.

I will provide a PDF of the first four chapters of the textbook on eLearning on the Course Homepage (available starting January 18th) to give students time to acquire their own copy or decide how/when to use the digital copy on reserve. The first four chapters of the textbook will be available under the “Required Readings – Links” Folder.

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 and discussions 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 be able to address in exams and implement into your other your assignments.

Required Film Screenings and Clips

Most of the required outside of class screenings are available to watch for free on Kanopy. Several are available to watch for free on YouTube (the link to the films that you need to watch on YouTube are 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 – "University of Texas Dallas" - 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 also 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. If you have not heard from me after 2 days, please resend your message.

Unit 2 - The Fundamental (Formal/Technical) Elements of Film

- Week 4**
February 08 **Narrative Form**
Reading: Chapter 4
Screening: *Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948; 89 mins.)
*We will discuss *Bicycle Thieves* before discussing Chapter 5 in Week 5
– this means you need to watch the film before coming to class on
February 15 and read Chapter 5 before coming to class that day
- Week 5**
February 15 **Mise-en-Scène**
Reading: Chapter 5
Screening: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (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**
February 22 **Cinematography**
Reading: Chapter 6
Screening: *In the Mood for Love* (Kar-Wai Wong, 2000; 98 mins.)
- Week 7**
March 01 **Editing**
Reading: Chapter 7
Screening: *Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960; 90 mins.)
*Film Review – Due by 11:59 pm on eLearnign through the Turnitin link
- Week 8**
March 08 **Sound**
Reading: Chapter 8
Screening: *His Girl Friday* (Howard Hawks, 1940; 92 mins.)
- Week 9** **Spring Break (March 14 - 20) – No Class**
- Week 10**
March 22 **Midterm Exam**

Unit 3 - Film and Culture

- Week 11**
March 29 **Film and Ideology**
Reading: Chapter 10
Screening: *The Watermelon Woman* (Cheryl Dunye, 1996; 90 mins.)
- Week 12**
April 05 **Genre**
Reading: Chapter 13
Screening: *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939; 96 mins.)
Link to film (free on YouTube): [Stagecoach - Movies 1939 - John Ford - Action Western Movies \(Western Films\) - YouTube](#)
- Week 13**
April 12 **Film Stardom**
Reading: Chapter 12
Screening: *Modern Times* (Charles Chaplin, 1936; 96 mins.)
Link to film (free on YouTube): [Charlie Chaplin Modern Times 1936 Full Movie HD - YouTube](#)

Week 14 April 19	Film Authorship Reading: Chapter 14 Screening: <i>Dogtooth</i> (2009, Yorgos Lanthimos; 97 mins.) *Film Analysis Video Essay (Rough Draft) – Due by 11:59 pm on eLearning discussion board
Week 15 April 26	Documentary Film and Avant-garde Film Reading: Chapter 9 Screening: <i>Paris is Burning</i> (Jennie Livingston, 1990; 71 mins.)
Week 16 May 03	Course Conclusion; Film and Screen Media Reading: Chapter 15 Screening: None *Film Analysis Video Essay (Final Draft) - Due by 11:59 pm on eLearning discussion board
Week 17 TBD	Finals Week (May 7-13) Final Exam

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 or giving comments about the readings and/or screenings, asking for more examples and/or explanation/clarification, 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.

Please show me and your classmates respect by raising your hand (in-person and virtually) whenever you wish to speak and by waiting to be called upon before speaking.

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.

For the first three weeks of class, I will take attendance through Microsoft Teams's attendance function (I can download a list of all students who join the meeting).

Other notes about participation and attendance:

- o **You must complete all assignments and exams in full.** They are required, and if you have a zero in any cumulative column on the grading spreadsheet, you will generate an automatic failing grade for the course.

- o Since each class period represents one week's worth of work, roll will be taken for every session. **If you miss more than four class sessions (e.g., four weeks of class), you will have failed the attendance requirement and will also generate an automatic failing grade for the course.** Each unexcused absence after the first one lowers your attendance grade by 10 points (up to four). That all being said, I will not take attendance on exam days.

- o If, in spite of following these guidelines, you are not doing well in the class by mid-semester, contact me about it. The same goes for external events that might be overwhelming you in some way. Communicate with your professors!

- o Incompletes can be permitted only in the most serious circumstances (family emergency or illness) which must be documented to my and the university's satisfaction.

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 or headphones 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 only plan to record the class meeting for the first three weeks. See the table on the first page about the first three weeks for where to find the class recordings for the first three weeks.

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:** 10%
- **Film Review** (600-750 words): 15%
- **Midterm Exam:** 25 %
- **Film Analysis Video Essay** (4-5 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

I will be providing more information about the exams as they get closer. 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.

Your Final Grade will thus be based upon your attendance, one written assignment (the film review), two examinations, and one presentation (the video essay). 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 are two opportunities for extra credit.

- 1) I offer semester-long extra credit for attending my office hours (or for making an appointment to meet with me about some aspect of the course).

For meeting with me once throughout the semester, you will get 2% added to your final grade. You can only get the 2% for the first meeting with me. The last day you can meet with me is the day before the final exam.

In teaching first-generation students and students of diverse cultures (at UTD and elsewhere) as well as students who simply have very limited experience as college students given that this is their first time being such, I've found that this small incentive helps students actually see what "attending office hours" is like—not scary time with an authority figure, but often personal time with a mentor.

Students can get the extra credit for any form of attending office hours—in person, online, drop-by, with prior appointment—so long as they initiate the meeting (meaning not if I've asked you to see me). Because of the extra credit, students often come early in the semester simply to "get the points" but then return at later times because they're genuinely seeking help. I encourage you all to transfer that habit to ALL of your courses and assure them that the other members of the faculty are happy to have students "bother" them for more help and better understanding of material.

We can go over drafts of your assignments (and I will give you in-depth feedback) or any questions you have about what will be covered on the exams during our meeting.

- 2) To help jumpstart class discussions of the readings and screenings, I request that you all come ready to discuss AT LEAST one specific scene that stood out to you in the screenings (such as the diner scene between Chiron and Kevin in *Moonlight*) and one specific section of the required reading (such as “Motifs” in Chapter 2) – and be able to explain WHY they stood out to you (it may be because they confused you or intrigued you or both – or it may be the thing you most REMEMBER from the screening and reading for each week). First, I will take volunteers to share what stood out to them in the screening and readings. Then, I may call on students to share who have not spoken yet. If you share on at least 12 out of the 14 lecture/discussion class days (either by volunteer or being called on), then you will get 3% extra credit towards your final grade. To keep track of your participation in the discussions, Please keep a written log of everything you say and turn it in to me at the end of class (for in-person sessions) – you can either type up and email what you shared or write it down and turn it in to me. For online classes in the first three weeks, you will need to type all of your discussion comments in the chat (so that I have a written log of who participated in discussions on those days).

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.