

## **Online Course Syllabus**

### **Course Information**

<i>Course Number/Section</i>	FILM 2332
<i>Course Title</i>	Understanding Film
<i>Term</i>	Spring 2024

### **Professor Contact Information**

<i>Professor</i>	Mark Cooper
<i>Email Address</i>	Mark.Cooper@utdallas.edu
<i>Online Office Hours</i>	4-5 pm Wednesday, via MS Teams, and by appointment

### **TA Contact Information**

<i>TA</i>	Célia Hay
<i>Email Address</i>	Celia.Hay@UTDallas.edu
<i>Online Office Hours</i>	10-11 am Friday, via MS Teams, and by appointment

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### **Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions**

There are no pre-, co-requisites, or other restrictions for this introductory course.

### **Course Description**

Explores the history and stylistic elements of cinema as a mass medium and an art form. The course analyzes visual language and film style, cinematic codes, and the ways that films can embody or criticize popular ideas and attitudes. 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.

### **Course Modality**

This is a fully online asynchronous class. It is not entirely self-paced. Students are required to complete assigned work by deadlines listed in the course calendar, this includes group work that will require collaboration with other students within assigned windows.

### **Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

- Identify the viewing habits encouraged by mainstream commercial filmmaking and evaluate how the course has influenced your engagement with screen media.
- Analyze the significant components of film form, separating and correctly identifying the functions of mise en scène, editing, cinematography, sound design, and narration.
- Apply specialized vocabulary to describe precisely (verbally and in writing) patterns we observe (and hear) in films.
- Understand how film operates within historical and cultural contexts.
  - Summarize key concepts and methods used to relate films to their historical and cultural contexts (e.g., group style, genre, ideology, and stardom).
  - Identify key traits distinguishing alternatives to Hollywood filmmaking including documentary, experimental, and major art film movements (e.g., German Expressionism, Italian Neo-Realism, Nouvelle Vague); situate these alternatives historically.
  - Identify the production practices and forms of industrial organization characteristic of "Hollywood" at key phases of its historical development; assess the role of technology in establishing these practices and forms of organization.

- Apply course concepts and methods to develop written arguments about specific film examples.

### **Core Competencies**

- Critical Thinking (CT)-to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
- Communication (COM)-to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.
- Teamwork (TW)-to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.
- Social Responsibility (SR)-to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

### **Required Textbooks and Materials**

#### *Required Texts*

Pramaggiore, Maria, and Tom Wallis. *Film: A Critical Introduction*. Fourth Edition. Laurence King Publishing, 2020. (Indicated in the calendar as P&W.)

Both digital and print versions of the fourth edition are acceptable. The textbook can be ordered online or purchased at the [UT Dallas Bookstore](#).

Additional required short texts will be provided in eLearning and indicated in the calendar.

#### *Required Materials*

Many required films are online available for free (through the library), but students will be responsible for renting titles indicated by\* below. Most titles will also be on reserve for in-library viewing.

*Virgin Suicides* (1999, 97 mins.)

*Rules of the Game [Le Règle du Jeu]* (1939, 106 mins.)

*Slumdog Millionaire* (2014, 120 mins.)\*

*Man with a Movie Camera* (1929, 68 mins.)

*Hurt Locker* (2008, 131 min.)\*

*A Thin Blue Line* (1988, 103 mins.)

*Crossfire* (1947, 86 mins.)

*Thor: Ragnarok* (2017, 130 mins.)\*

*Celluloid Closet* (1996, 102 mins.)

*Get Out* (2017, 114 mins.)\*

*Jojo Rabbit* (2019, 108 mins.)\*

Note: Required materials may include adult themes and content that may be offensive or unsettling to some viewers. Enrolling in this class suggests that you are willing to view, discuss, and write about such material with the same kind of detail and intellectual concentration you would give to any other genre or cultural form examined in a college course. If you have any concerns about such matters, please contact the professor immediately.

### **Suggested Course Materials**

#### *Suggested Readings/Texts*

Recommended reading will be linked in eLearning.

**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, absent emergency.

**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.

## Calendar

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READING/VIEWING	ASSESSMENT / ACTIVITY	DUE DATE
1 01/16- 01/21	<b>00 Introduction</b> "Welcome! Meet Your Instructor" "What Is Film & Media Studies?" "Expectations and Assessment"	Syllabus " <a href="#">Click Restraint</a> "	Quiz Group sign-up Self-introductions Note to your future self	1/18 1/18 1/19 1/21
2 1/22- 1/28	<b>01 Film Analysis</b> "Introduction" "Cinema & Change" "References" "Writing"	P&W Ch. 1- 3 Gorky, "Kingdom of Shadows" Early Cinema Program Three clips	Quiz 1 Group Discussion 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion 2	1/24 1/24 1/28 1/28
3 1/29- 2/4	<b>02 Narrative</b> "Introduction" "Narrative Structure (1 & 2)" "Narration, Perspective, Subjectivity"	P&W Ch. 4 <i>Virgin Suicides</i> (1999)	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	2/4 2/4 2/4
4 2/5- 2/10	<b>03 Mise en Scène</b> "Introduction" "Mise en Scène Essentials (1 & 2)" "Applications: German Expressionism & Poetic Realism" "Applications: Gender Difference"	P&W Ch. 5 <i>Rule of the Game</i> (1939)	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	2/11 2/11 2/11
5 2/11- 2/18	<b>04 Cinematography</b> "Introduction" "Shot, Scene, Sequence, Frame, Take" "Depth and Scale" "Color and Racial Systems"	P&W Ch. 6 "Color Film Was Built for White People" <i>Slumdog Millionaire</i> (2008)	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	2/18 2/18 2/18

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READING/VIEWING	ASSESSMENT / ACTIVITY	DUE DATE
6 2/19- 2/25	<b>05 Editing</b> “Introduction” “Space, Narrative, and Continuity Editing” “Continuity Editing vs. Association Montage” “Bazin v. Eisenstein”	P&W Ch. 7 <i>Man with a Movie Camera (1929)</i>	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	2/25 2/25 2/25
7 2/26- 3/3	<b>06 Sound</b> “Introduction” “Sound Transition Essentials” “ <i>Jazz Singer</i> : Not the First Sound Film” “Music in <i>King Kong</i> ”	P&W Ch. 8 <i>Hurt Locker (2008)</i>	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	3/3 3/3 3/3
8 3/4- 3/10	<b>Sequence Analysis</b>	Selected Clips	Midterm Exam Sequence Analysis	3/6 3/10
9 3/18- 3/24	<b>07 Documentary &amp; Experimental</b>	P&W Ch. 9 <i>A Thin Blue Line</i>	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	3/24 3/24 3/24
10 3/25- 3/31	<b>08 Ideology</b>	P&W Ch. 10 <i>Crossfire</i>	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	3/31 3/31 3/31
11 4/1- 4/7	<b>09 Hollywood: A Global Cinema?</b>	P&W Ch. 11 <i>Thor: Ragnarok</i>	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	4/7 4/7 4/7
12 4/8- 4/14	<b>10 Stardom</b>	P&W Ch. 12 <i>Celluloid Closet</i>	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	4/14 4/14 4/14
13 4/15- 4/21	<b>11 Genre</b>	P&W Ch. 13 <i>Get Out</i>	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	4/21 4/21 4/21
14 4/22- 4/28	<b>12 Authorship</b>	P&W Ch. 14 <i>Jojo Rabbit</i>	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Group Discussion	4/28 4/28 4/28

WEEK/ DATES	TOPIC/LECTURE	READING/VIEWING	ASSESSMENT / ACTIVITY	DUE DATE
15 4/29- 5/3	<b>Short Essay</b>		Short Essay Reflection on Note to Your Future Self	5/3 5/6
Final Exam			Comprehensive Final Exam	As Scheduled

### Activities and Assessments

*Note to Self* (5% of final grade.)

To help you reflect on what you have learned over the course of the semester you will write a note (of around 250 words) to your future self in the first week of the course detailing your current thoughts on why people, including yourself, enjoy movies. Speculate on how this course might influence these views.

In the final week, you will revisit your initial note and compose an additional note on how your perspective has changed, explicitly linking these changes to specific course content.

Submissions will be assessed based on the depth and clarity of the initial observations and the connection of the final reflections to course content.

AI assistance is discouraged. Students using AI for this assignment must be able to present AI-contributed content as reflective of their own understanding. See assignment prompt for details.

*Group Discussions* (20% of final grade.)

Each week (except when major writing assignments are due) you will participate in threaded small-group discussion of an assigned film. These discussions will allow you to develop your understanding of weekly topics in collaboration with your classmates and allow me to judge and guide the progress of the class.

I will provide a specific prompt, which your group will investigate through three distinct phases: 1) concrete description of the film example (150-200 words), 2) evaluation/interpretation of descriptions (150-200 words), and 3) a summary of the group's answers (250-350 words).

Students will be assessed individually on phases 1 and 2 based on the seriousness of their engagement with the assigned film and course materials (ambitious efforts to apply course terms and concepts will earn credit even if the application is not perfect). Of 13 discussion opportunities, the top 10 will count toward your final grade.

Students will take turns to produce a single, group summary of the thread, which should distill its key insights. Everyone in the group will receive a single score based the clarity and depth of the insight.

You may use AI to help create the summary, but not the individual posts. At the end of course, students will assess their teammates' contributions; this peer assessment will be a component of your final group-discussion score.

*Quizzes* (20% of final grade.)

Each week (except when major writing assignments are due) there will be two short quizzes designed to help you recall key details from assigned reading and course lectures. Of 13 quizzes, the top 10 will count toward your final grade. Selected quiz questions may reappear on the midterm and final exams.

*Sequence Analysis* (15% of final grade)

To apply the skills of observation and description you've cultivated in the first half the semester, you will submit a sequence analysis. I will select short sequences from films we've studied in the first half of the semester. You will choose one to analyze in depth.

This assignment has two parts: 1) you will submit a shot-by-shot breakdown of the sequence in a provided chart; 2) you will submit a short (750-1250 word) essay in which you explain how the various formal elements of the sequence come together to advance thematic concerns or problems of the film.

This assignment will be assessed based on the accuracy and thoroughness of your description and as well as the persuasiveness and depth of your insights.

You may use AI to assist in drafting the essay; the shot chart should capture your observations. See assignment instructions for details.

*Midterm Exam* (10% of final grade)

To test your recall of terms and concepts from the first half of the course there will be an online midterm exam. In addition to questions selected from the preceding quizzes, the exam will include questions that invite you to synthesize and extend the lessons of modules 1-6.

*Short Essay* (15% of final grade)

To apply concepts from the second half the semester, you will write a short argumentative essay (1250 +/-250 words) about one of the films assigned for modules 7-12. I will provide sample prompts to get you started.

Depending on your argument, a small amount of research may be necessary, but course materials should provide the primary basis for the argument.

The assignment will be assessed based on the accuracy and clarity of your description of the film example, effective application of course terms and concepts, and the persuasiveness of the argument overall.

You will use AI to help draft and refine this essay and should demonstrate substantial improvement over the output it provides. See assignment prompt for details.

*Final Exam* (15% of final grade)

To test your recall of course terms and concepts there will be a comprehensive online final exam. In addition to questions selected from quizzes, this exam will include questions that invite you to synthesize and extend the lessons of the course.

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**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](#).

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### **Class Participation**

Regular class participation is expected. 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 group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or materials covered in the lectures. In addition, you are expected to review at least 80% of assigned course materials to pass. 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](#).

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### **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](#).

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.

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### **Grading Policy**

Assessment criteria are included with the description of each assignment. Both individual assignment grades and weighted final grades will be indicated as percentages of possible points earned. Percentages will be converted to letter grades according to the following scale: A+ (98-100%), A (94-97%), A- (91-93%), B+ (88-90%), B (84-87%), B- (81-83%), C+ (78-80%), C (74-77%), C- (71-73%), D+ (68- 70), D (64-67), D- (61-63%) F (0-60) )

### **Course Policies**

#### *Make-up exams*

Exams are to be taken online within the window indicated in the calendar and eLearning. Per university policy, make-up exams due to conflicts for religious observance must be approved in advance; notify your instructor of anticipated conflicts within the first two weeks of the semester. Make-up exams for documented medical (or other) emergencies will be permitted by the approval of the instructor.

### *Extra Credit*

This course does not offer extra credit.

### *Late Work*

Quizzes and contributions to group discussions submitted late will not earn credit. Under extraordinary circumstances, and with the approval of the instructor, the sequence analysis and short assignments may be accepted late for reduced credit.

### *Classroom Citizenship*

All course activities will be conducted in an atmosphere of friendly participation and interaction among colleagues, recognizing and appreciating the unique experiences, background, and point of view each student brings. You are expected to apply the highest academic standards to this course and to treat others with dignity and respect.

Please do not hesitate to correct me regarding your preferred gender pronouns or name.

### *AI Assistance*

Some use of generative AI is expected. You will be encouraged to use tools such as Bard or ChatGPT in specific ways for specific assignments and to document your engagement. You will be informed as to when, where, and how these tools are permitted to be used, along with guidance for attribution. Any use outside of this permission constitutes a violation of UT Dallas's academic integrity policy.

### **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.

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