

# **Online Course Syllabus**

## **Course Information**

**Course Number/Section:** FILM 2332.0W3  
**Course Title:** Understanding Film  
**Term:** Spring 2026

## **Instructor and TA Information**

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**Instructor:** Stephanie Oliver, PhD  
**Email:** Stephanie.Oliver@UTDallas.edu  
**Online Student Hours/Office Hours:** 2 pm-3 pm on Fridays via Microsoft Teams; and by appointment on other days and times

**TA:** There is no TA for this course

**Special Note:** Please do not hesitate to reach out any time for anything big or small. I check my email every day and believe the best way to navigate the course is by reaching out for help when needed. To meet on a different day and time than my regular office hours, please email me with your availability.

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## **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 stylistic aspects of filmmaking that make up the “language of cinema” as well as the way films embody or criticize popular ideas and attitudes, and the theoretical perspectives by which we can “unpack” film. We will also examine the historical, social and cultural contexts in which films have been made. 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.

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

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

## **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 below.

## **Student Learning Objectives**

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In addition to being a prerequisite for upper-level film studies courses, this course serves as a creative arts core credit. This category of courses focuses on the appreciation and analysis of creative artifacts and works of the human imagination. Creative arts courses seek to expand students' abilities to critically think, communicate, collaborate, and develop social responsibility. It is my hope that you will use these skills in your daily life. In this course, students will achieve their creative arts requirement, as they:

- Reevaluate what it means to “watch movies”
- Identify the various formal elements of film
- Develop a vocabulary for discussing and writing about cinema
- Understand how film operates within historical, social, and cultural contexts
  - Develop critical thinking and writing skills by applying concepts throughout the course when developing arguments about cinematic texts

## **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 Textbook**

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

- There is a digital copy of the textbook on reserve through the UTD library (free to access for all UTD students). A link to the free eBook is on eLearning on the Course Homepage (and linked into each week's module. Both digital and print versions of the fourth edition are

acceptable if you would like to purchase your own copy. The textbook can be ordered online or purchased at the [UT Dallas Bookstore](#), if you want to get your own copy. Using only the free eBook available through the UTD library is also acceptable.

- Additional required and/or supplemental readings, if any, will be made available on eLearning. See the course calendar below for what to read and when.

### **Required Screenings**

**HBO Max subscription/access - sign up at <https://www.hbomax.com/>**

- The films assigned in this course are just as vital for your learning as the required readings. All films are available to stream on HBO Max. You only need to sign up for the ad-supported plan to watch the required screening. But if you wish, you can choose an ad-free plan. Please see the course calendar below for your required screenings and when to watch them. One film (the required screening for week 12) is available for free on Kanopy through the UTD library (<https://www.kanopy.com/en/utdallas>).
- You may watch the films on another platform/another way if you so choose to do so (and if you can find them).
- Additional clips and/or short films will be posted on eLearning in the weekly learning modules.

**Please Note:** The content and/or form of some screenings for this course may be considered difficult or challenging for certain viewers. Enrollment in this course requires watching all assigned films. If you have any concerns about such matters, please contact the professor immediately.

### **Course Basics**

**eLearning:** All grades, weekly course modules, detailed assignment information (instructions, rubrics, and examples) and links for submission will be uploaded to eLearning. Students will submit all required assignments through eLearning. This means that you are required to always have access to all online materials throughout the semester. If you need help accessing course materials on eLearning, please email Dr. Oliver at any time.

### **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.

## **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.

## **University Policies**

It is expected that students are aware of and understand these policies. All relevant course-wide university policies can be found here:

<https://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

## **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.”*

## **Assessment**

**Philosophy of Grading:** This class serves as your primary introduction to the various elements of understanding film, which means we have a lot to cover in a short amount of time. You will never get more out of a course than what you're willing to put into it. I want to see the effort and energy that you're putting into this course so you can gain real value you from it and use that for your future career and academic goals. If you are ever unsure of what is being asked of you in a learning module or an assignment, please let Dr. Oliver know as soon as possible. I am happy to discuss drafts of assignments and answer any questions related to the course during student hours or during meetings made by appointment through email.

**Submitting Assignments:** All written assignments must be submitted as **.doc, .docx, or .pdf** file formats. No other file types are acceptable because I won't be able to open them! Please keep a copy of your Turnitin receipt for each submitted paper (sent via email to your UTD account). You will only submit the shot analysis through Turnitin.

**Generative AI:** As outlined in the UTD Student Code of Conduct (<https://policy.utdallas.edu/utdsp5003>), cheating includes using unauthorized materials to complete assignments. **Using generative AI is considered unauthorized material, and the use of any generative AI in this course is forbidden (including ChatGPT, Grammarly, or any such site).** AI-generated content including writing (for any graded writing assignments in the course), tables, code, analysis, or images should not be presented as your own work. Turnitin or other methods may be used to detect the use of AI. Under UTD rules about due process, referrals may be made to the OCSC. Inappropriate use of AI may result in penalties, including a 0 on an assignment.

**Late Work: You all get three late tokens at the start of the semester.** When you use a late token, you can turn in an assignment up to 48 hours late without a penalty. **You cannot use late tokens on exams, but you can use them on all other assignments. To use your late tokens:** Email me when you to let me know that you are using one of your three late tokens on an assignment once you have submitted it (you can also email me and let me know that you want to use a late token on an assignment as soon as you decide you are going to use it/before you submit it late). I will respond to confirm receipt of your email and to let you know how many remaining late tokens you have.

**Grading Breakdown:** Grades will be figured out of a total of **100%**. All grades will be posted to eLearning. Rounding up grades is at the sole discretion of the professor. The numerical breakdown of grade equivalents 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

**Grading Distribution:** Percentages are allocated across the assignments as follows:

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Percentage of Grade</b>
<b>Reading Quizzes</b>	<b>25% (2.5% each/10 total)</b>
<b>Shot Analysis Assignment</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>30%</b>

**Optional Assignment (Not for a grade but recommended):** There will be a discussion board (starting week 2) where you can share observations and interpretations about the required screenings, but it is not for a grade/required. This is to help you engage with the course material in another way, and to get the responses to the films of others (like you would if the class was in-person). Choosing to participate on the discussion boards will help prepare you for the graded assignments in the course.

**Assignment deadlines:** The following table lists the due dates for all assignments:

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
<b>Reading Quizzes</b>	Sunday each week (listed in the course calendar below)
<b>Shot Analysis Assignment</b>	Sunday, April 12
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	Will open at midnight on Monday, March 23 and must be completed by 11:59 pm on Sunday, March 29
<b>Final Exam</b>	Will open on at midnight on Monday, May 11 and must be completed by 11:59 pm on Friday, May 15

All assignments are **due by 11:59 pm** on the due dates listed in the table above.

## **Assignment Guide**

**Reading Quizzes:** Each week (except during exam weeks and week 1, 8, 15 and 16) there will be a short reading quiz designed to help you recall key details from recorded course lectures (which are on the required readings). Selected quiz questions may reappear on the midterm and final exams.

**Shot Analysis Assignment:** You will have to complete a focused and detailed analysis of the shots in a specific scene of a predetermined film. You will need to apply the vocabulary and material you learn about film form when analyzing the shots. More details will be available about this assignment on eLearning in week 6.

**Exams:** The midterm exam will only cover material from week 2-8. The final exam will only cover material from week 11-15 (it is not cumulative). **You will have a set amount of time to complete the exams online.** The exams will contain a variety of question type including (but not necessarily limited to) multiple-choice questions and brief written responses. I will provide study guides for each exam, and by completing them you should be prepared for any questions on the exams. More information about the exams will be made available on eLearning closer to the exam weeks.

## **IX. Course Calendar**

**Instructor's Note: The due dates, topics, readings, films, and any other elements of the syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.** I will, of course, try to keep all course changes to a minimum, but sometimes changes are necessary either to ensure the effectiveness of the course and the success of the students, or due to streaming licensing changes. All changes will updated on the course calendar and uploaded to eLearning in a revised syllabus. I will also send out an announcement about any changes to the syllabus.

**Calendar Key:** Each week's number and associated material is listed below.

**Big Picture:** Each week you will learn to analyze films in a new way as well as practice making different kinds of arguments about films' meanings. You will do all of this by watching the recorded, watching the required screenings, completing the readings, and completing the assignments. Refer to the syllabus weekly to keep up with all you need to do for the course as we move through our learning journey together.

## **Unit 1 - Introduction to the Course and Film Analysis**

### **Week 1**

January 20-25

#### **Welcome and Introduction to Course**

**Reading:** Syllabus and Chapter 1 (“Introduction”)

**Screening:** None

**Assignments:** None

### **Week 2**

January 26-  
February 01

#### **Introduction to Film Analysis**

**Reading:** Chapter 2 (“An Approach to Film Analysis”)

**Screening:** *Spirited Away* (Hayao Miyazaki, 2001; 124 mins.)

**Assignments:** Reading Quiz 1

### **Week 3**

February 02-08

#### **Introduction to Writing About Film**

**Reading:** Chapter 3 (“Writing About Film”)

**Screening:** *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939; 101 mins.)

**Assignments:** Reading Quiz 2

## **Unit 2 - The Formal Elements of Film**

### **Week 4**

February 09-15

#### **Narrative Form**

**Reading:** Chapter 4 (“Narrative Form”)

**Screening:** *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010; 148 mins.)

**Assignments:** Reading Quiz 3

### **Week 5**

February 16-22

#### **Mise en Scène (aka Production Design)**

**Reading:** Chapter 5 (“*Mise en Scène*”)

**Screening:** *The Red Shoes* (Emeric Pressburger, 1948; 135 mins.)

**Assignments:** Reading Quiz 4

### **Week 6**

February 23-  
March 01

#### **Cinematography**

**Reading:** Chapter 6 (“Cinematography”)

**Screening:** *In the Mood for Love* (Wong Kar-wai, 2000; 98 mins.)

**Assignments:** Reading Quiz 5, Read over rubric and instructions and start working on Shot Analysis

### **Week 7**

March 02-08

#### **Editing**

**Reading:** Chapter 7 (“Editing”)

**Screening:** *Cléo from 5 to 7* (Agnès Varda, 1962)

**Assignments:** Reading Quiz 6, Study for Midterm Exam (by working on Shot Analysis and completing optional study guide)

**Week 8**  
March 09-15  
**Sound**  
**Reading:** Chapter 8 (“Sound”)  
**Screening:** *Singin’ in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952; 102 mins.)  
**Assignments:** Continue studying for Midterm Exam and working on Shot Analysis

**Week 9**  
**Spring Break** – Week of **March 16-22** – NO CLASSES

**Week 10**  
**Midterm Exam** – Week of March 23-29 – **Due on March 29**

### **Unit 3 - Film and Culture**

**Week 11**  
March 30-  
April 05  
**Film and Ideology; Social Context and Film Style**  
**Reading:** Chapter 10 (“Film and Ideology”) & Chapter 11 (“Social Context and Film Style: National, International, and Transnational Cinema”)  
**Screening:** *Real Women Have Curves* (Patricia Cardaoso, 2002; 93 mins.)  
**Assignments:** Reading Quiz 7

**Week 12**  
April 06-12  
**Genre**  
**Reading:** Chapter 13 (“Genre”)  
**Screening:** *Parasite* (Bong Joon Ho, 2019; 132 mins.)  
**Assignments:** Reading Quiz 8, **Shot Analysis Due**

**Week 13**  
April 13-19  
**Film Stardom and Film Authorship**  
**Reading:** Chapter 12 (“Film Stardom as a Cultural Phenomenon”) and Chapter 14 (“Film Authorship”)  
**Screening:** *Get Out* (Jordan Peele, 2017; 104 mins.)  
**Assignments:** Reading Quiz 9

**Week 14**  
April 20-26  
Film:  
**Documentary and Avant-Garde**  
**Reading:** Chapter 9 (“Alternatives to Narrative Fiction Documentary and Avant-garde Films”)  
**Screening:** *All that Breathes* (Shaunak San, 2022; 97 mins.)  
**Assignments:** Reading Quiz 10

- Week 15**  
April 27-May 03
- Studying Screen Media and Convergence Culture**  
**Reading:** Chapter 15 (“Studying Screen Media”)  
**Screening:** *The Lego Batman Movie* (Chris McKay, 2017; 104 mins.)  
**Assignments:** Study for final exam (by completing optional study guide)
- Week 16**  
May 04-10
- Study Week**  
**Assignments:** Study for final exam
- Week 17**  
**Final Exam - Week of May 11-15 - Due on May 15**