Online Course Syllabus

Course Information

Course Number/Section	FILM 2332.0W4
Course Title	Understanding Film
Term	Spring 2026
Instructor	Sabine Sassner
Meeting Place	Online -- asynchronous

Professor Contact Information

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 and the course as P&W.)

Available for free as an eBook through the library. You are NOT required to purchase any books for this class. One digital copy of the textbook is on reserve through the UTD library (free to access) – a link to it is on eLearning on the Course Homepage. The textbook is widely available to purchase (if you want your own copy), as an electronic copy or hard copy, from the UT Dallas Bookstore, Amazon.com, and many textbook resellers.

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

Screenings:
Full-length films are assigned weekly for viewing. *These films are required texts as well.* All films are available as DVDs on reserve at the Media Services desk at McDermott Library, some can be found on Kanopy - Stream Classic Cinema, Indie Film and Top Documentaries but are also available from other suppliers, from subscription services to YouTube to TubiTV to the Internet Archive. Some of the screenings are linked in the module folders. Depending on the resources to which you already have access, you might need to spend $30-40—it could be less—to watch assigned films.

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

Course Requirements/Evaluation Criteria

- Note to Self (around 250 words) – 5%
- Group Discussions (13 discussions, top 10 will count toward final grade) – 20%
- Quizzes (25 quizzes, top 20 will count toward final grade) – 20%
- Sequence Analysis (chart plus 750-1250 word essay) – 15%
- Midterm Exam (online) – 10%
- Short Essay (around 1250 words) – 15%
- Final Exam (online) – 15%

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.