

## English 265-01: American Films of the 1970s

CRN 18441

Professor J. Brady

Palmer 306

843-3906

Fall, 2007

TR: 9:30-10:45 a.m. in Barret 034

Screenings: Monday at 7:00 p.m. in Barret 034

### Required Texts and Films:

Lester D. Friedman, *American Cinema of the 1970s*.  
Louis Giannetti. *Understanding Movies*, 11<sup>th</sup>. edition.  
*They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* Dir. Sydney Pollack. (1969)  
*Klute*. Dir. Alan J. Pakula. (1971)  
*Carnal Knowledge*. Dir. Mike Nichols. (1971)  
*McCabe and Mrs. Miller*. Dir. Robert Altman (1971)  
*The Last Picture Show*. Dir. Peter Bogdanovich. (1971)  
*Badlands*. Dir. Terrence Malick (1973)  
*The French Connection*. Dir. William Friedkin. (1971)  
*The Godfather*. Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. (1972)  
*The Conversation*. Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. (1974)  
*Chinatown*. Dir. Roman Polanski (1974)  
*Shampoo*. Dir. Hal Ashby (1975)  
*Nashville*. Dir. Robert Altman. (1975)

### Office Hours:

Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00-3:00, or by appointment from Monday through Thursday.

### Course Description:

This course is a survey of the decade of American films produced from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s by such talented directors as Altman, Ashby, Bogdanovich, Coppola, Friedkin, Malick, Nichols, Polanski and Pollack. Written and directed in the shadow of the politically- divisive war in Vietnam and the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy in 1968, the films of the 1970s reflected the sense of malaise in the country. Many of these films - *The Conversation*, *The Parallax View*, *Chinatown*, *Taxi Driver* - are vehicles for paranoia and conspiracy theories. The 1970s was also a decade of recurrent economic recessions and high unemployment; a spate of movies influenced by the surprising success of *Bonnie and Clyde* (1968) spoke to the economic woes of Americans, sometimes through historical parallels forged between the Depression and the 1970s, as in the case of Pollack's translation of Horace McCoy's 1935 novel to the screen in *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* or Altman's *Thieves Like Us* (1973), sometimes by way of allusion, as when Keith Carradine sings the lyrics to his country and western hit in Altman's *Nashville*: "Economy's depressed, not me/ My spirits high as they can be./ You may say, I ain't free,/ But it don't worry me." American films in the 1970s explore sexual relations with a new provocative frankness: *Carnal*

*Knowledge* and *Shampoo* reflect and critique the sexual revolution. These films depict changing sexual mores through their characters' hedonism or promiscuity. A number of the important movies of the early to mid-1970s focus on prostitution, proposing feminist and Marxist readings of the alienated labor of sex workers. We will study many of the iconic films of the years 1969-1975 - before the domination of such escapist blockbusters as the *Star Wars* series -- as well as signature performances by such actors as Beatty, Christie, DeNiro, Dunaway, Fonda, Hackman, Nicholson, Pacino, Sheen, and Spacek.

This is a writing-intensive course, carrying F2 credit and F5: Artistic Expression. The class will workshop the first two major essays of the term and students will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit one of their essays for regrading. The revised essay is expected to incorporate the editing suggestions about diction, argument, textual evidence, and overall persuasiveness made in the discussion by their classmates. Students will be involved in assessing their classmates' work and will be expected to make constructive written comments designed to help their classmates revise their papers. There will also be instruction on the proper use and documentation of outside sources. Students will be expected to consult relevant film criticism, including reviews of the films when they first appeared, interviews with directors and others involved in the making of these films, studies of individual films or actors' careers, and books and articles covering the more technological aspect of film-making. In addition to the three principal essays worth 20% each of the final grade, students will write two shorter essays worth 10% each, a scene analysis and an analysis of an individual actor's performance within a film. The scene analysis is due September 14<sup>th</sup>.; the other short essay focusing on an actor's performance is due by Thanksgiving break but may be submitted any time prior to that point over the semester.

### **Attendance Policy:**

Late arrivals to class will be counted as an absence and any student who misses or arrives late to class more than 4 times in a semester will receive a zero in the 10% of the grade reflecting class participation and may be asked to withdraw from the course. The film screenings on Monday night are also mandatory viewings and attendance will be taken by the projectionist.

### **Method of Evaluation:**

Scene Analysis, including editing, 3 pages	10%
Essay on a 1971 film, 6 pages	20%
Essay on a Coppola film, 6 pages	20%
Essay on Polanski or Altman, 6 pages	20%
In-class presentation, 15 minutes	10%
Analysis of an actor's performance in a role, 3 pages	10%
In-class grade	10%

**Schedule:**

Aug. 23	Introduction
Aug. 28/30	<i>They Shoot Horses, Don't They?</i>
Sept. 4/6	<i>Klute</i>
Sept. 11/13	<i>Carnal Knowledge</i>
<b>Sept 14.</b>	<b>Scene Analysis due</b>
Sept 18/20	<i>McCabe and Mrs. Miller</i>
Sept. 25/27	<i>The Last Picture Show</i>
Oct. 2/4	<i>The French Connection</i>
<b>Oct. 5</b>	<b>Essay on 1971 films due</b>
Oct. 9	<i>Badlands</i>
Oct. 11	Workshop of essays
Fall Break	
Oct. 18	Workshop of essays continues
Oct. 23/25	<i>The Godfather</i>
Oct. 30/Nov.1	<i>The Conversation</i>
Nov. 5	<b>Essay on Coppola due</b>
Nov. 6/8	Workshop of essays
Nov. 13/15	<i>Chinatown</i>
Nov. 20	<i>Shampoo</i>
Thanksgiving Break	
Nov. 27/29, Dec. 4	<i>Nashville</i>
<b>Dec. 7</b>	<b>Essay on Polanski or Altman due</b>