

English 202: Introduction to Cinema

Spring 2014

Class Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30pm-1:45pm

Screenings: Tuesday, 7:00pm-9:30pm

Room: Palmer 206 (class meetings), Barrett 034 (screenings)

Instructor: Dr. Keith Corson

Email: corsonk@rhodes.edu

Office: Palmer 309A

Office hours: Thursday, 9:30am-11:30am (or by appointment)

Please be advised that this course has weekly screenings as a component of class attendance. Leaving the screening portion of class early, even if you plan on watching the film on your own time, will be counted as an absence.

Course Description

Providing an overview of moving image practices, this course will use the academic discipline of film studies to explore the aesthetic, structural, cultural, historical, and theoretical framework of cinema. Major topics include the language of film (narrative, cinematography, *mise en scène*, editing, sound), genre, authorship, ideology (race, gender, sexuality), global cinema, documentary, and avant-garde traditions.

Required texts:

1. Bill Nichols. *Engaging Cinema: An Introduction to Film Studies*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010. ISBN: 9780393934915
2. Ed Guerrero. *Do the Right Thing*. London: British Film Institute, 2008. ISBN: 0851708684
3. Your choice of an individual title from the British Film Institute's *Film Classics* series. For author information please see:
http://filmstore.bfi.org.uk/acatalog/BFI_Shop_BFI_Classics_7.html

Assignments/Grades

Grading:

93-100% A	80-82% B-	67-69% D+
90-92% A-	77-79% C+	60-66% D
87-89% B+	73-76% C	0-59% F
83-86% B	70-72% C-	

“Incomplete” grades are reserved for serious emergencies only and must be formally applied for and approved by the instructor and department beforehand.

Attendance/Participation.....	10%
Event Response.....	5%
Themes.....	10%
Quizzes	15%
Midterm Exam.....	15%
BFI Paper.....	20%
Final Exam.....	25%

Attendance/Participation (10%)

Attendance and participation are required elements of this course. Students are expected to arrive on time, stay for the entire period, and engage in class discussions and activities. Keep in mind that the participation is not an automatic grade given to students simply for showing up to class. Students will be graded based on the quality and frequency of their contributions. Attendance, on the other hand, is a minimum expectation. All absences that are not properly documented or approved in advance by the instructor will be considered unexcused. Being late to the class or leaving early will count as ½ of an absence. A fourth unexcused absence will result in the drop of a full letter grade (e.g. an A- becomes a B-), with each additional absence resulting in the drop of an additional letter in the final semester grade. The above attendance policy will be strictly enforced.

Event Response (5%)

Each student will attend one event or screening outside of class that relates to the course topic. You will be provided with updates on possible events that you can attend throughout the semester. Students hoping to attend an event or screening not provided by the instructor must first seek approval. The response will be two pages, providing an overview of the event that relates to the course material while also including your own critical observations. Students must staple documentation of their attendance to the paper (ticket, program, etc.).

Themes (10%)

Five times during the semester students will hand in a brief written response to the previous week's material, focused around a subject prompt from the instructor. This is not meant to be a summary of the readings or screenings, but a thoughtful engagement with the ideas presented in the course. Responses must be one full page, following the formatting guidelines for all hard copies. Papers will be due at the beginning of each Tuesday class meeting. With five total responses due, the choice of how to organize your responses is up to you. Keep in mind that you may only hand in one theme per week and that there will be no make up opportunities (including those missed for documented absences). Late papers and emailed copies will not be accepted. Themes are due at the beginning of class each Tuesday.

Quizzes (15%)

On four occasions during the semester there will be a brief quiz handed out at the beginning of class. The quizzes will cover the assigned readings and lecture material from previous weeks, following a multiple choice, true/false, matching, and/or short answer format. Each quiz will be worth 5% of the total grade and students will be allowed to drop their lowest grade, keeping the three highest quiz scores.

Midterm Exam (15%)

A written midterm exam will be administered in class in which students will perform two scene analyses from films we have previously screened. Each scene will be screened twice with 25 minutes allotted for writing each answer. Exams will be assessed for the depth of analysis, attention to detail, proper use of terminology, as well as the clarity of logic and writing. Each answer should be between 500-750 words in length.

BFI Paper (20%)

Students will write a brief paper (8-10 pages following the formatting guidelines) discussing an outside screening and reading of their choosing, using a selection from the British Film Institute's *Film Classics* series as the foundation for your analysis. Students are expected to screen the film and write a paper that critically engages the author's reading of the film. This is not a summary, but part of a dialogue between yourself and the author, with the film serving as the centerpiece of the discussion. Is there a point made by the author that you can expand upon and turn into an independent analysis of your own? Do you disagree with the author's analysis (in whole or in part)? The idea is that you use the book and the film as a springboard for your own thoughts and analysis. You may choose any film/book from the list of BFI titles in the appendix of the syllabus. Along with the final draft you will be required to provide the instructor with a physical copy of the BFI *Film Classics* book you will be analyzing. It is your responsibility to purchase the book (through Amazon or any other way you see fit) and secure a copy of the film to screen. Books not received in the mail or a film being unavailable to rent or stream online are not valid excuses for late assignments, so start early and secure the material as soon as possible. Late papers will be accepted, but with appropriate penalties. If for some reason you cannot hand in a paper on time you may submit the paper in person at the beginning of the following class meeting on 12/5 with a subtraction of 30% from the assignment (for example, an "B" paper receiving an 85% grade will only count as 55% if handed in on 12/5). Please be advised that technology issues such as computer crashes, loss of electricity/Internet connection, or printer problems are not acceptable excuses for late work. To avoid the possibility of any penalties students are invited (and even encouraged) to hand in their papers early. Plan ahead to ensure yourself every opportunity to succeed in the course.

Final Exam (25%)

On the final day of class students will be given a comprehensive exam covering all of the course material, focusing equally on assigned readings, screenings, and information covered during lectures. The format will follow that of the quizzes, with sections of multiple choice, true/false, matching, and short answer. It is imperative that students take notes from readings and lectures to succeed on this exam.

Formatting for Written Work

To ensure clarity and a sense of uniformity which foregrounds your writing and ideas I have instituted ten aspects of formatting for papers handed in via hard copy. Each guideline carries with it a 10% grade deduction if it is not followed, so be sure to take extra care and format your paper and responses correctly. Papers must meet the following guidelines:

1. Typewritten
2. Printed legibly in black ink
3. Stapled in the upper left corner
4. Double-spaced, with no additional spacing between paragraphs
5. Standard 1" margins
6. Times New Roman font

7. 12 point font size
8. Title on first page (do not include a cover page)
9. Include page numbers.
10. The first page must include the student's name, course number, and date at the top of the page.

Academic Integrity

Cheating will not be tolerated, either during quizzes/exams or in written work. While cheating on exams is a straightforward concept – with all students expected to work independently and without the aid of peers, notes, books, or digital devices – plagiarism is a more complex issue. To be clear, using the ideas of others without properly crediting the source is considered plagiarism. We will be working with the ideas of a number of authors, scholars, cultural critics, and filmmakers (etc.) in this course. Part of your responsibility as a student is to properly cite the ideas of others. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty and may lead to serious repercussions, including a failing grade for the course. Please refer to the student handbook for the university's policies relating to academic integrity. If you have any questions about how to cite the work of others, or are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please be sure to talk to the instructor or seek guidance from a reputable source (*MLA Handbook*, for example).

Learning Accommodations

Students with learning differences, religious obligations, or any special needs should talk to the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements.

Conduct, Behavior, and Expectations

While engaging the material and expressing informed opinions are central components of this course, students are expected to conduct themselves with courtesy and respect toward the instructor and each other. Demeaning comments in regard to race, gender, or sexual orientation will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action. This course hopes to foster open discussions dealing with a multiplicity of texts and topics, often revolving around controversial subjects. There will be differences in opinion and personal politics, so it is important that we conduct ourselves in a manner fitting the course's mission of cooperative learning.

Class Schedule

Please be advised that while the following schedule is intended to remain intact, the dates and order of assignments, exams, and screenings may be changed at the instructor's discretion.

Week 1: Introduction

1. Thursday 1/9

Week 2: Cinema Studies as a Discipline

2. Tuesday 1/14

Reading due: 3-28 (Basic Issues and Concepts)

Screening: *Citizen Kane* (1941, Orson Welles)

3. Thursday 1/16

Reading due: James Naremore “Style and Meaning in *Citizen Kane*” (handout)

Week 3: Language of Film

4. Tuesday 1/21

Reading due: 29-50 (Language of film, editing)

Screening: *Vertigo* (1958, Alfred Hitchcock)

5. Thursday 1/23

Reading due: 50-69 (cinematography, *mise en scène*)

Week 4: Narrative

6. Tuesday 1/28

Reading due: 136-152 (narrative)

Quiz 1

Screening: *Hard Eight* (1996, Paul Thomas Anderson)

7. Thursday 1/30

Reading due: 153-174 (interpretive goals)

Week 5: Writing About Film

8. Tuesday 2/4

Reading due: 435-453 (Writing)

Screening: *Metropolis* (1927, Fritz Lang)

9. Thursday 2/6

Reading due: 454-476 (Writing)

Week 6: Style

10. Tuesday 2/11

Reading due: 175-200 (realism, modernism, postmodernism)

Screening: *True Stories* (1986, David Byrne)

11. Thursday 2/13

Listening due: Talking Heads *True Stories* (1986, Sire Records)

Week 7: Social and Industrial Context

12. Tuesday 2/18

Reading due: 209-231 (Social Context)

Screening: *Design for Living* (1933, Ernst Lubitsch)

13. Thursday 2/20

Reading due: 232-247 (Hollywood system)

Quiz 2

Week 8: Genre

14. Tuesday 2/25

Reading due: 248-266 (Genre)

Screening: *They Live* (1988, John Carpenter)

15. Thursday 2/27

Reading due: 267-286 (Genre)

Week 9: Ideology

16. Tuesday 3/4

Reading due: 287-310 (Ideology)

Screening: *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her* (1967, Jean-Luc Godard)

17. Thursday 3/6

Reading due: 310-324 (Ideology)

Tuesday 3/11

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES

Thursday 3/13

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES

Week 10: BFI and Focused Analysis

18. Tuesday 3/18

Screening due: *Do the Right Thing* (1989, Spike Lee)

Reading due: Ed Guerrero. *Do the Right Thing* (full book)

*****There will be no class screening of this film. Instead, each student should watch *Do the Right Film* on their own during Spring Break on DVD, Netflix, or streaming online.*****

19. Thursday 3/20

Class activity: BFI Roundtable

Week 11: Race

20. Tuesday 3/25

Readings due: 235-358 (race and ethnicity)

Screening: *Car Wash* (1976, Michael Schultz)

21. Thursday 3/27

No readings

Week 12: Gender and Sexuality

22. Tuesday 4/1

Readings due: 359-387 (Gender and Masculinity)

Quiz 3

Screening: *Velvet Goldmine* (1998, Todd Haynes)

23. Thursday 4/3
Readings due: 388-394 (queer theory)

Week 13: Feminism

24. Tuesday 4/8
Readings due: 395-434 (feminism)
Screening: *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948, Max Ophüls)
*******BFI Paper Due*******

25. Thursday 4/10
Readings due: Tania Modleski “Time and Desire in the Woman’s Film” (handout)

Week 14: Avant-Garde

26. Tuesday 4/15
Readings due: 70-98 (avant-garde)
Screenings: *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1944, Maya Deren and Alexander Hamid), *Scorpio Rising* (1960, Kenneth Anger), *Un Chien Andalou* (1929, Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali), TBD

Thursday 4/17
EASTER RECESS: NO CLASSES

Week 15: Documentary

27. Tuesday 4/22
Readings due: 99-135 (Documentary)
*****Quiz 4*****
Screening: *Stoked: The Rise and Fall of Gator* (2002, Helen Stickler)

28. Thursday 4/24
No reading
***** **Event Response Due*******

29. Friday 5/2 at 5:30pm
*******Final Exam*******