

English 382: Film Theory

Spring 2014

Class Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00pm-3:15pm

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

Room: Clough 417 (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 a comprehensive overview of film theory, this course will explore the key concepts and historical progression of the discipline. Centered around basic and deceptively simple questions like “What is cinema?,” film theory has expanded our understanding of the medium as an art form, rhetorical device, and social practice. Key concepts include: narrative, genre, semiotics, formalism, postmodernism, transnationalism, race, gender, and sexuality.

Required texts:

1. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism*. 7th edition. New York: Oxford, 2009. ISBN: 0195365623
2. Bram Stoker. *Dracula*. (Norton Critical Edition) New York: W.W. Norton, 1996. ISBN: 0393970124
3. Additional readings will be provided

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%
Film Event.....	5%
Discussion Leader.....	10%
FTC Paper 1.....	10%
FTC Paper 2.....	10%
Paper Presentation.....	10%
<i>Dracula</i> Paper.....	15%
Research Paper.....	30%

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. 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.

Film Event (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 should also staple documentation of their attendance to the paper (ticket, program, etc.).

Discussion Leader (10%)

Each student will serve as a discussion leader for two class sessions during the semester. Your responsibilities for that day will be to facilitate a discussion of the material that engages your peers and expands our understanding of the readings and screenings. You may use media (power point, audio clips, etc.) to elaborate your points, but keep in mind that group discussion should be the focus.

Film Theory and Criticism Papers (20%)

Twice during the semester students will be given a prompt from the instructor and asked to write a brief paper (3-4 pages). Structured like a written take-home exam, students will use the course material to answer directed questions relating to film theory.

***Dracula* Paper (15%)**

Having read Bram Stoker's novel and screened two of its adaptations in class (Murnau's *Nosferatu* and Coppola's *Dracula*), students will write a 4-5 page paper discussing the novel, its film adaptations, and the ideas from the course readings (namely Chatman, Andrew, and McFarlane). In addition to the two films screened in class, each student must pick one other adaptation of *Dracula* to screen on their own and place it within the framework of your argument and analysis.

Paper Presentation (10%)

At the end of the semester each student will give a formal presentation of their research project. Presentations will last 8-10 minutes each, followed by a brief Q&A.

Research Paper (30%)

At the end of the semester students will turn in a research paper of 10-12 pages. The paper may focus on a single film, artist, cinematic movement, or theoretical school, so long as it provides fresh analysis and utilizes the critical tools we have developed throughout the semester. Formal proposals are due at the beginning of class on Thursday, February 27th, providing an overview of your topic, initial research questions, and preliminary source material. Of course, proposals may be handed in early. For students who are interested, paper drafts received on or before April 15th will receive thorough feedback from the professor and guidance for revision. The final paper is due on April 29th, with absolutely no late papers accepted.

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. Classical Film Theory

Monday 1/13

Screening: *The Conformist* (1970, Bernardo Bertolucci)

2. Tuesday 1/14

Readings due:

- Siegfried Kracauer "The Establishment of Physical Existence" (from *Theory of Film*)
- Rudolf Arnheim "The Complete Film" (from *Film As Art*)

3. Thursday 1/16

Readings due:

- André Bazin "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" and "The Myth of Total Cinema" (from *What is Cinema?*)

Week 3. Apparatus and Narrative

Monday 1/20

No Screening in Observance of Martin Luther King Holiday

4. Tuesday 1/21

Readings due:

- Jean-Louis Baudry "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema"
- Noel Carroll "Jean-Louis Baudry and "The Apparatus"" (from *Mystifying Movies*)

5. Thursday 1/23

Readings due:

- Tom Gunning “Narrative Discourse and the Narrator System”

Week 4. Soviet Montage

Monday 1/27

Screening: *Battleship Potemkin* (1925, Sergei Eisenstein)

6. Tuesday 1/28

Readings due:

- Vsevelod Pudovkin “[On Editing]” (from *Film Technique*)
- Sergei Eisenstein “Beyond the Shot [The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram]” and “The Dramaturgy of Film Form [The Dialectic Approach to Film Form]” (from *Film Form*)

*****FTC Paper 1 Prompt Handed Out In Class*****

7. Thursday 1/30

Readings due:

- Sergei Eisenstein “[On Color]” (handout)
- Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevelod Pudovkin, and Grogori Alexandrov “Statement on Sound”

Week 5. Image and Sound

Monday 2/3

Screening: *Singin’ In the Rain* (1952, Stanley Donen and Gene Kelley)

8. Tuesday 2/4

Readings due:

- Erwin Panofsky “Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures”
- Béla Balász “The Close-up” and “The Face of Man” (from *Theory of the Film*)
- Noel Carroll “The Specificity Thesis” (from *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory*)

*****FTC Paper 1 Due*****

9. Thursday 2/6

Readings due:

- Mary Ann Doane “The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space”
- John Belton “Technology and Aesthetics of Film Sound”

Week 6. Culture Industry

Monday 2/10

Screening: *Top Gun* (1986, Tony Scott)

10. Tuesday 2/11

Readings due:

- Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
- Jean Comolli and Jean Narboni "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism"

11. Thursday 2/13

Readings due:

- Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" (handout)

Week 7. Semiotics

Monday 2/17

Screening: *Psycho* (1960, Alfred Hitchcock)

12. Tuesday 2/18

Readings due:

- Christian Metz "Some Points in the Semiotics of Cinema: Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film" (from *Film Language*)
- Gilbert Harman "Semiotics and the Cinema: Metz and Wollen"

*****FTC Paper 2 Prompt Handed Out In Class*****

13. Thursday 2/20

Readings due:

- William Rothman "Against "The System of the Suture"" (handout)
- Kaja Silverman "[On Suture]" (from *The Subject of Semiotics*) (handout)

Week 8. Genre

Monday 2/24

Screening: *My Darling Clementine* (1946, John Ford)

14. Tuesday 2/25

Readings due:

- Leo Braudy "Genre: The Conventions of Connection" (from *The World in a Frame*)
- Rick Altman "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre"

*****FTC Paper 2 Due*****

15. Thursday 2/27

Readings due:

- Thomas Schatz "Film Genre and the Genre Film" (from *Hollywood Genres*)
- Robin Wood "Ideology, Genre, Auteur"

*****Research Paper Proposal Due*****

Week 9. Film Artist

Monday 3/3

Screening: *Touch of Evil* (1958, Orson Welles)

16. Tuesday 3/4

Readings due:

- Andrew Sarris “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962”

17. Thursday 3/6

Readings due: star

- Richard Dyer from *Stars*
- James Naremore (from *Acting in the Cinema*)

3/9-3/16

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES

Week 10. Film and Literature

Monday 3.17

Screening: *Nosferatu* (1922, F.W. Murnau)

18. Tuesday 3/18

Readings due: Seymour Chatman “What Novels Can Do That Films Can’t (and Vice Versa)” (handout)

19. Thursday 3/20

Readings due: Bram Stoker. *Dracula* (full novel)

Week 11. Adaptation

Monday 2/24

Screening: *Dracula* (1992, Francis Ford Coppola)

20. Tuesday 3/25

Readings due: Supplemental readings from the Norton edition of *Dracula* (Pages 371-407)

21. Thursday 3/27

Readings due:

- Dudley Andrew (from *Concepts in Film Theory Adaptation*)
- Brian McFarlane (from *Novel to Film*)

Week 12. Gender and Sexuality

Monday 3/31

Screening: *Safe* (1995, Todd Haynes)

22. Tuesday 4/1

Readings due:

- Christian Metz “Identification, Mirror,” “The Passion for Perceiving” and “Fetishism, Disavowal” (from *The Imaginary Signifier*)
- Laura Mulvey “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

*****Dracula Paper Due*****

23. Thursday 4/3

Readings due:

- B. Ruby Rich “The New Queer Cinema” (handout)
- Linda Williams “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess”

Week 13. Race

Monday 4/7

Screening: *Willie Dynamite* (1974, Gilbert Moses)

24. Tuesday 4/8

Readings due:

- Robert Stam and Louise Spence “Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction”

25. Thursday 4/10

Readings due:

- Manthia Diawara “Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance”

Week 14. Transnationalism

Monday 4/14

Screening: *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (2003, Nikhil Advani and Ron Reid, Jr.)

26. Tuesday 4/15

Readings due:

- Stephen Crofts “Reconceptualizing National Cinemas”
- Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto “The Difficulty of Being Radical: The Discipline of Film Studies and the Postcolonial World Order”
- Wimal Dissanayake “Issues in World Cinema”

Thursday 4/17

EASTER RECESS: NO CLASSES

Week 15. New Media and Postmodernism

Monday 4/23

Screening: *Speed Racer* (2008, The Wachowskis)

27. Tuesday 4/22

Readings due:

- Lev Manovich (from *The Language of New Media*)
- Anne Friedberg "The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change"

28. Thursday 4/24

Readings due:

- Michael Allen "The Impact of Digital Technologies on Film Aesthetics"
- Kristen Whissel "Tales of Upward Mobility: The New Verticality and Digital Special Effects"

29. Wednesday 4/30 at 8:30am

*******Paper presentations*******

30. Friday 5/2

*******Research Paper Due on Friday by 5:00pm*******