

**INTRODUCTION TO CINEMA
ENGL 202.01**

Professor Rashna Richards

Office: 308A Palmer

Office Hours: MW 1:00-3:00 and by appt.

Office Phone: 843-3399

Email: richardsr@rhodes.edu

Semester: Spring 2009

Class: MWF 12:00-12:50

Room: 205 Palmer

Screening: R 7:00-9:30

Room: 34 Barret

Course Description



While the cinematograph was a product of scientific innovation--Louis Lumière, one of its creators, declared it an invention without a future--film quickly became the most popular and influential cultural medium of the twentieth century. Only a decade after its invention, cinema had spread to all parts of the globe, and the motion pictures became a way of telling our stories to ourselves while simultaneously transporting us away from our lives to what Maxim Gorky called "the Kingdom of Shadows." Since then, films have intrigued and frustrated, perplexed and inspired billions of viewers worldwide. The issues that preoccupied the earliest film critics continue to puzzle later generations: What is cinema? Is it an art? Is it a language? What do movies reveal about the underlying ideologies of the cultures that produce them? How do they address, exploit, and satisfy various audience desires? This course offers an introduction to film studies. We will learn and practice close reading of films through an examination of various cinematic elements, such as *mise en scène*, editing, sound, lighting, framing, and so on. Using different interpretive approaches, we will also consider questions of ideology, aesthetics, and power as well as issues of race, gender, sexuality, and representation.

Most of the examples will come from the tradition we are familiar with--Hollywood narrative cinema. But we will also sample international cinema, silent films, as well as other forms of film, such as experimental, avant-garde, and documentary cinema. Specifically, ENGL 202 will enable you to:

- ✓ use key technical terms in thinking and writing about the movies
- ✓ analyze films using various critical approaches and methodologies
- ✓ develop an understanding of cinema as an art and an industry, an imaginary pleasure and a symbolic language, a hallucination and a fact

Standard of Work: This course offers an introduction to film analysis by enabling students to develop a set of critical skills to explicate, interpret, and interrogate cinematic texts. It is not a course in film appreciation. Our primary focus will be on interpretation and analysis; we will not be making evaluative claims or trying to judge whether a film is "good" or "bad." The readings are intellectually challenging, as are the films. Some films are black-and-white, and some are subtitled. You will need to take careful notes on the films, readings, and in-class discussions. In addition, this is an intensive writing course. Assignments will expect you to read significant cinematic details, use film terminology to analyze scenes, make interpretive claims about a film's themes or motifs, and participate in the ongoing scholarly conversation about film history and criticism. We will never write popular reviews, engage in a thumbs up-thumbs down appraisal of films, or treat films as mere entertainment. Therefore, you are encouraged to think seriously about your commitment to the course.

Course Policies

Attendance: You are required to attend all classes and screenings. You should not email me about your absences. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get information and/or handouts from a classmate. You are allowed three absences over the course of the semester, no questions asked, for extracurricular activities or medical/personal emergencies. After the third absence, each subsequent absence will result in a deduction of 20 points from your final course grade. After six absences, you will fail the course.

Tardiness: You are required to be on time. Habitual tardiness, even if it's only a couple of minutes, will hurt your participation grade.

Late Work: I do not accept late work. If you do not plan on being here when an assignment is due, it must be in my mailbox before the deadline. You will receive a zero on an assignment if it is not turned in when it is due. Please note that you are required to complete all assignments in order to receive a passing grade.

Class Participation: You are required to come to class prepared with the assigned reading for that day. I expect constructive verbal contribution to each class meeting. A student who disrupts class, interrupts another student's presentation, or in any way creates a hostile environment will be subject to disciplinary action. A student who reads the newspaper, chats with a neighbor, leaves to go to the restroom, or simply dozes off should expect a low participation grade even if they have contributed to class discussions on other occasions. I will likely say nothing at the time of the incident, but disruptive behavior will adversely affect your participation grade.

Screenings: We will view a wide variety of films in class. You may find these films intellectually challenging or troubling. Learning how to watch and analyze them critically will be an important part of our discussions and assignments.

Electronic Devices: You should turn off all electronic devices before class begins. Do not allow cell phones, pagers, or any type of beepers to go off in class. You are expected to refrain from sending or receiving calls as well as text messaging. A laptop may be used for taking notes. However, instant messaging, gaming, or surfing the web is prohibited.

Food or Drink: I don't mind if you bring something to drink, but please avoid bringing any food into the classroom.

Consultation: I'll be happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you have about the class. Feel free to stop by during my office hours. If those times don't work, I can make an appointment to meet with you at a time that is mutually convenient. If you have questions about an assignment, do not wait until the last minute. Remember, I want you to do well in the class and am always willing to work with you.

Email: It is always preferable to meet in person to discuss any questions or concerns, since the impersonal medium of electronic communication is a poor substitute for a genuine face-to-face conversation. However, I'm available by email for simple queries (expect a response during business hours: 9am-5pm Monday-Friday). Please regard email correspondence as formal communication. It is always best to ask specific rather than general questions in an email and abide by rules of professional etiquette. It is not advisable to email me the evening before an assignment is due asking for help because there is very little I can do at that point; besides, last-minute emails are very unprofessional. Email is absolutely not the medium for negotiating special requests or addressing grade concerns; those issues must be handled in person.

Format of Assignments: All written assignments need to be typed and double spaced, in 12 pt. font, using Times New Roman, with one-inch margins on all sides. The format and citations must conform to MLA specifications, or the assignment may not be accepted. You do not need a title page; instead, include your name, my name, course name/number, and date in the top left corner of the first page. Be sure to number and staple your pages; also, proofread your work before printing up the final draft. I do not accept any assignments via email. A paper copy is expected at the beginning of class on the day the assignment is due.

Plagiarism: Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Plagiarism is considered a serious breach of academic integrity and is a major violation of the Rhodes Honor Code; suspected cases will be referred to the Honor Council. If you are ever uncertain about whether something in your assignment constitutes a violation, please contact me.

Disability Issues: Students with documented disabilities may be entitled to specific accommodations. Please contact the office of Student Disability Services for more information. In every case, it is your responsibility to provide me with an official letter from SDS.

Course Evaluation

Grade Distribution

Participation	20%	200 points
Creative Project	10%	100 points
Scene Analysis Paper	10%	100 points
Film Analysis Paper	20%	200 points
Research Paper	40%	400 points
Total	100%	1000 points

Assignments (Additional guidelines will be provided when each assignment is introduced.)

Participation: You are required to contribute comments and questions that further class discussion. Simply agreeing or disagreeing with your classmates and/or the readings is not enough. You are expected to add thoughtful ideas to the debate by engaging with the texts in a sophisticated manner. Participation will be evaluated in terms of quantity and quality. From time to time, you will also be quizzed or asked to respond to specific short-answer questions on the week's film or reading. Quizzes are always unannounced, and they cannot be made up.

Creative Project: After we have discussed various film techniques, you will be participating in a hands-on project. You will be introduced to filmmaking, and your creative project will demonstrate how well you are able to apply cinematic techniques to create a short film of your own. No prior experience in filmmaking is necessary for this assignment.

Scene Analysis Paper (2-3 pages): For this short paper, you will analyze a specific scene by discussing particular aspects of individual shots, such as setting, cinematography, editing, sound, and so on, and exploring how those elements contribute to the creation of meaning.

Film Analysis Paper (4-5 pages): For this essay, you will trace an idea, theme, or motif as it develops over the course of an entire film. Your paper will make an argument about the film and analyze isolated passages to show how they illustrate your thesis.

Research Paper (9-10 pages): For the final project, you will write a research paper that makes an argument about a series of films united by genre, star, auteur, ideology, and so on. You will be given several general prompts to help you arrive at your thesis. Your research paper will be evaluated on the originality of your argument as well as the thoroughness of your analysis.

Grading Guidelines

A = 100-94; **A-** = 93-90

B+ = 89-87; **B** = 86-84; **B-** = 83-80

C+ = 79-77; **C** = 76-74; **C-** = 73-70

D+ = 69-67; **D** = 66-64; **D-** = 63-60

F < 60

A range (100-90): Excellent work; exemplary in argument and organization; professionally presented; free of mechanical errors.

B range (89-80): Good, solid work; substantive in argument and organization; meets all requirements, but needs some revisions; no more than five mechanical errors.

C range (79-70): Satisfactory work; addresses the assignment adequately, but requires some significant revisions of content and/or mechanics.

D range (69-60): Below average work; misses one or more central aspects of the assignment; inadequate focus and/or development; awkwardly written; requires extensive rewriting.

F range (< 60): Unacceptable work; fails to meet the requirements of the assignment; incomplete or irrelevant material; lack of focus or development.

Course Text

Pramaggiore, Maria and Tom Wallis. *Film: A Critical Introduction*. 2nd ed. Boston: Pearson, 2008.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1: What Is Cinema?

Wed., Jan. 14 Introduction to the Course

Thurs., Jan. 15 Screening: Hitchcock, *The Birds* (1963)

Fri., Jan. 16 Discussion

Week 2: What Is Film Analysis?

Mon., Jan. 19 No Classes: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Wed., Jan. 21 "An Approach to Film Analysis" (9-21)

Clips: Welles, *Citizen Kane* (1941); Lee, *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)

Thurs., Jan. 22 Screening: Mendes, *American Beauty* (1999)

Fri., Jan. 23 "An Approach to Film Analysis" (21-30)

Clips: Wachowski Brothers, *The Matrix* (1999)

Week 3: Form

Mon., Jan. 26 "Narrative Form" (61-67)

Clips: Tourneur, *Out of the Past* (1947)

Wed., Jan. 28 "Narrative Form" (68-76)

Clips: Benton, *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979); Nolan, *Memento* (2000)

Thurs., Jan. 29 Screening: Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960)

Fri., Jan. 30 "Narrative Form" (76-83)

Clips: Fincher, *Fight Club* (1999)

Week 4: Mise en Scène

Mon., Feb. 2 "*Mise en Scène*" (87-93) & "Writing about Film" (35-39)

Introduction to Scene Analysis Paper

Clips: Fincher, *Se7en* (1995)

Wed., Feb. 4 "*Mise en Scène*" (97-107)

Clips: Welles, *Citizen Kane* (1941); Lynch, *Mulholland Drive* (2001)

Thurs., Feb. 5 Screening: Scott, *Thelma & Louise* (1991)

Fri., Feb. 6 "Mise en Scène" (107-27)
Clips: Wiene, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920); Ray, *Rebel without a Cause* (1955)

Week 5: Cinematography

Mon., Feb. 9 "Cinematography" (134-51)
Clips: Lee, *Do the Right Thing* (1989)

Wed., Feb. 11 "Cinematography" (151-59)
Clips: Hitchcock, *Vertigo* (1958); Coppola, *The Conversation* (1974)

Thurs., Feb. 12 Screening: Spielberg, *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)

Fri., Feb. 13 "Cinematography" (164-83)
Clips: Coppola, *The Godfather* (1972)

Week 6: Editing

Mon., Feb. 16 "Editing" (191-202)
Clips: Huston, *The Maltese Falcon* (1941); Penn, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967)

Wed., Feb. 18 "Editing" (203-12)
Clips: Porter, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903); Hopper, *Easy Rider* (1969)

Thurs., Feb. 19 Screening: Lee, *Bamboozled* (2000)

Fri., Feb. 20 "Editing" (212-28)
Clips: Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin* (1925); Godard, *Breathless* (1960)

Week 7: Sound

Mon., Feb. 23 "Sound" (233-45)
Clips: Crosland, *Jazz Singer* (1927); Spielberg, *War of the Worlds* (2005)

Wed., Feb. 25 "Sound" (245-60)
Clips: Hitchcock, *North by Northwest* (1959); Allen, *Annie Hall* (1977)

Thurs., Feb. 26 Screening: Scorsese, *Taxi Driver* (1976)

Fri., Feb. 27 **Scene Analysis Paper due**
"Sound" (260-74)
Clips: Judge, *Office Space* (1999)

Week 8: Documentary and Experimental Cinema

Mon., March 2 "Alternatives to Narrative Fiction Film" (279-91)
Clips: Capra, *Why We Fight* (1943); Moore, *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004)

Wed., March 4 "Alternatives to Narrative Fiction Film" (291-302)
Clips: Buñuel, *Un Chien Andalou* (1929); Reiner, *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984)

Thurs., March 5 Screening: Altman, *The Player* (1992)

Fri., March 6 Introduction to Creative Project

Week 9: Cinema and Society

Mon., March 9 Introduction to Creative Project cont.

Wed., March 11 "Social Context and Film Style" (311-20)
Clips: Wilder, *Double Indemnity* (1944)

Thurs., March 12 Screening: De Sica, *The Bicycle Thief* (1948)

Fri., March 13 "Social Context and Film Style" (321-29) & "Writing about Film" (39-43)
Introduction to Film Analysis Paper
Clips: Nair, *The Namesake* (2006)

Week 10: No Classes: Spring Break**Week 11: Star****Mon., March 23**"Film and Ideology" (331-39)
Clips: Siegel, *Dirty Harry* (1971)**Wed., March 25**"Film and Ideology" (339-48)
Clips: Kramer, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967); Peirce, *Boys Don't Cry* (1999)**Thurs., March 26**Screening: Coppola, *Lost in Translation* (2003)**Fri., March 27**"Film Stardom as a Cultural Phenomenon" (355-72)
Clips: Fleming, *Gone with the Wind* (1939); De Palma, *Scarface* (1983)**Week 12: Genre****Mon., March 30**"Genre" (373-79)
Clips: Carpenter, *Halloween* (1978); Craven, *Scream* (1996)**Wed., April 1**"Genre" (379-91)
Clips: Fleming, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939); Eastwood, *Unforgiven* (1992)**Thurs., April 2**Screening: Polanski, *Chinatown* (1974)**Fri., April 3**"Genre" (391-95)
Clips: Scorsese, *Goodfellas* (1990)**Week 13: Auteur****Mon., April 6**"Film Authorship" (397-407)
Clips: Welles, *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947); Welles, *Touch of Evil* (1958)**Wed., April 8****Film Analysis Paper due**
Introduction to Research Paper**Thurs., April 9**

No Classes: Easter Recess

Fri., April 10

No Classes: Easter Recess

Week 14: The Box Office**Mon., April 13**"Cinema as Industry" (415-21)
Clips: Spielberg, *Jaws* (1975)**Wed., April 15**"Cinema as Industry" (421-25)
Clips: Cameron, *Titanic* (1997); Allen, *Deconstructing Harry* (1997)**Thurs., April 16**Screening: Myrick and Sánchez, *The Blair Witch Project* (1999)**Fri., April 17**"Cinema as Industry" (425-30)
Clips: Ellis and Halaby, *Snakes on a Plane* (2006)**Week 15: Research Projects****Mon., April 20**

"Writing about Film" (43-51)

Wed., April 22

Workshop for Research Paper

Thurs., April 23

No Screening

Fri., April 24**Creative Projects due****Week 16: Creative Projects****Mon., April 27****Creative Projects due****Wed., April 29****Creative Projects due****Thurs., April 30**

No Screening

Fri., May 1

Conferences for Research Paper

Mon., May 4**Research Paper due by noon**