English 202: Introduction to Cinema
Fall 2014
Class Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30pm-1:45pm
Screenings: Tuesday, 7:00pm-9:30pm
Room: Palmer 205 (class meetings), Barrett 034 (screenings)
Instructor: Dr. Keith Corson
Email: corsonk@rhodes.edu
Office: Palmer 309A
Office hours: Wednesdays noon-2:00pm 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:
4. Your choice of an individual title from the British Film Institute’s Film Classics series. For author information please see:

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

“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% BFI Paper 1…………………………15%
Quizzes ……………………………….15% BFI Paper 2………………………20%
Midterm Exam………………………10% Final Exam………………………20%
Presentation ……………………..10%
Attendance/Participation (10%)
Attendance and participation are required elements of this course. Students are expected to arrive on time, stay for the entire class period, complete assigned readings/screenings beforehand, and actively engage in discussions, workshops, and other class activities. All absences that are not properly documented or approved by the instructor in advance 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. Keep in mind, simply showing up to class will not result in an automatic “A” for this portion of the grade. Participation is graded based on the quality and consistency of your contributions to class discussions.

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, screenings, 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 from the semester.

Midterm Exam (10%)
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 depth of analysis, attention to detail, and proper use of terminology, as well as the clarity of logic and writing. Students must provide a bluebook for the exam. Each answer should be between 500-750 words in length.

BFI Paper 1 (15%)
6-7 page paper responding to the film Heat and Nick James’ BFI book. See appendix for details.

BFI Paper 2 (20%)
7-8 page analysis based around an entry from the BFI Film Classics series of your choosing. See appendix for details.

Presentation (10%)
Working in groups of three or four, students will make a 15-minute presentation on a national cinema. Pay special attention in your preparation to make sure that you adhere to this time limit. Choosing any country aside from the US or India, the presentations will provide an overview the nation’s cinematic tradition as well as a critical framework to guide our understanding (political, cultural, historical context). You may organize the presentation (one speaker, multiple people taking turns talking, etc.) and divvy up research however you see fit, but keep in mind that there is an expectation that everyone makes an equal contribution to the overall project. Students are required to use
PowerPoint as a component of their presentation and must send the professor their .ppt files via email by 4pm on Wednesday, November 5\textsuperscript{th}. Along with the presentation each group must submit an annotated bibliography of their research. The final grade will be calculated using the following criteria: 1) instructor’s score sheet of presentation, 2) student score sheets of presentation, 3) group surveys of each member’s contributions, and 4) quality of research as evidenced in the annotated bibliography.

**Final Exam (20\%)**
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 lectures. The format will exclusively consist of short answer questions (no multiple choice, true/false, etc.). 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.

**Late Paper Policy**
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 with a subtraction of 20\% from the assignment (for example, an “B” paper receiving an 85\% grade will only count as 65\% if handed in during the next class). 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.

**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: Course Overview**
1. Thursday 8/28

**Week 2: Basic Concepts**
2. Tuesday 9/2
   Reading due: Monaco, 24-73
   Screening: *Sunrise* (1927, FW Murnau)

3. Thursday 9/4
   Reading due: Nichols, 3-25

**Week 3: Aesthetics, Image**
4. Tuesday 9/9
   Reading due: Monaco, 76-137
   Screening: *Citizen Kane* (1941, Orson Welles)
5. Thursday 9/11
Reading due: Nichols, 50-69

**Week 4: Aesthetics, Editing/Sound**
6. Tuesday 9/16
Reading due: Monaco, 137-167
Screening: Rear Window (1954, Alfred Hitchcock)

7. Thursday 9/18
Reading due: Nichols, 36-50
*****Quiz 1*****

**Week 5: Narrative Structure**
8. Tuesday 9/23
Reading due: Nichols, 136-145
Screening: Jackie Brown (1997, Quentin Tarantino)

9. Thursday 9/25
Reading due: Monaco, 170-191

**Week 6: Signs/Syntax**
10. Tuesday 9/30
Reading due: 191-249
Screening: Rules of the Game (1939, Jean Renoir)

11. Thursday 10/2
*****Midterm Exam*****

**Week 7: Writing About Film**
12. Tuesday 10/7
Reading due: Nichols, 435-476
Screening: In the Company of Men (1997, Neil LaBute)

13. Thursday 10/9
No reading

**Week 8: Genre**
14. Tuesday 10/14
Reading due: Nichols, 248-264
Screening: L.A. Takedown (1989, Michael Mann)

15. Thursday 10/16
Reading due: Nichols, 264-286
*****Quiz 2*****
Week 9: BFI and Focused Analysis
Tuesday 10/21
NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

16. Thursday 10/23
Reading due: Nick James. *Heat* (full book)
Screening due: *Heat* (1995, Michael Mann)
*****BFI Paper 1 Due*****

Week 10: Film Theory
17. Tuesday 10/28
Readings due: Monaco, 434-456
Screening: *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her* (1967, Jean-Luc Godard)

18. Thursday 10/30
Reading: Monaco, 456-477

Week 11: National Cinemas
19. Tuesday 11/4
No readings

20. Thursday 11/6
No readings
*****Presentations*****

Week 12: Race and Ideology
21. Tuesday 11/11
Readings due: Nichols, 287-324
Screening: *Super Fly* (1972, Gordon Parks, Jr.)

22. Thursday 11/13
Readings due: Nichols, 325-358
*****Quiz 3*****

Week 13: Gender and Sexuality
23. Tuesday 11/18
Readings due: 359-394
Screenings: *Safe* (1995, Todd Haynes)

Thursday 11/20
Reading due: Nichols, 395-431
Week 14: Alternatives: avant-garde, and animation
24. Tuesday 11/25
Readings due: Nichols, 70-98
*****BFI Paper 2 Due*****
No screening

Thursday 11/27
NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15: Documentary
25. Tuesday 12/2
Reading, Nichols, 99-135
*****Quiz 4*****

26. Thursday 12/4
NO CLASS

Week 16: What is the Future of Film Studies?
27. Tuesday 12/9
No readings
Optional screening: TBD

28. Wednesday 12/17 at 1pm
*****Final Exam*****
APPENDIX

BFI Paper 1
Due: Thursday, October 23rd
In the introduction to his British Film Institute monograph, Nick James uses the framework of fellow critics to discuss the difficulty in approaching analysis of Michael Mann’s 1995 film Heat. One critic reports that, “viewers were uncertain as to what the film was about,” while another claim’s that Heat, “gives off a blankness, an indeterminacy, that frustrates interpretation.” Providing a brief overview of James’ attempt to explain meaning in the film, write an analysis that critically engages the BFI book, the TV-movie LA Takedown, and Heat itself. What are the key ways in which James supports his assertion that Heat should be considered a modern classic? Does he ever reconcile the ambivalence presented by other critics by finding concrete meaning(s) in Mann’s film? Can you find meaning in the film that is unexplored in the BFI reader or at least expands and extends one of James’ observations? How do the differences between the TV-movie and the feature film impact the story’s meaning?

Papers must be between 1,200 and 1,500 words, using the formatting guidelines presented in the syllabus. Papers will be due in hard copy form at the beginning of class on Thursday, October 23rd. You will be responsible for screening Heat outside of class, so be sure to secure a copy to buy, rent, or stream well in advance to the paper’s due date, allowing yourself time for reflection and analysis. We will be screening LA Takedown on Tuesday, October 14th.

BFI Paper 2
Due: Tuesday, November 25th
Students will write a brief paper 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 for you to use the book and the film as a springboard for your own thoughts and analysis. You may choose any film/book from the BFI Classics series (either Film Classics or Modern Classics), with the exception of titles we will be screening in the course. Along with the final draft you will be required to provide the instructor with a physical copy of the BFI 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. Papers must be between 1,500 and 1,8000 words, using the formatting guidelines presented in the syllabus. Papers will be due in hard copy form at the beginning of class on Tuesday, November 25th.