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ENGL 202-01, Introduction to Cinema, Fall 2012

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Introduction to Cinema
ENGL 202, Sections 01 and 02

Professor Rashna Richards

Office: 307 Palmer

Office Hours: M 11:30-2:30 and by appt.

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Email: richardsr@rhodes.edu

Semester: Fall 2012

Class: TR 12:30-1:45 (01); TR 2:00-3:15 (02)

Room: 206 Palmer

Screening: W 7:00-9:30

Room: FJ-B

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 analysis. We will learn and practice close reading of films through an examination of various cinematic elements, such as *mise en scène*, cinematography, sound, lighting, editing, and so on. Using different interpretive approaches, we will also consider questions of film styles, genres, and industrial contexts as well as issues of ideology, race, gender, sexuality, and representation. By focusing on its formal and social contexts, we will develop an understanding of cinema as an art and an industry, an imaginary pleasure and a symbolic language. Overall, we will acquire critical tools to analyze cinema's aesthetic and cultural significance. While many of the examples will come from the familiar tradition of Hollywood narrative cinema, we will also view international films and sample avant-garde, experimental, and documentary cinema. Our ultimate goal is to learn how to perform a formal-social analysis of any film.

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 a rigorous 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 class absences and one screening absence over the course of the semester, no questions asked, for extracurricular activities or medical/personal emergencies. After the fourth 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/professionalism 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, 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/professionalism 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: The use of all electronic devices is forbidden in this class. You should turn off all electronic devices, including laptops, before class begins.

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

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, addressing grade concerns, or discussing ideas for assignments; 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.

Intellectual Honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, google or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. You are advised against posting your work on the internet, since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. You are also advised to save drafts of your work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and, if convicted, the student will receive an F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, please consult 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/Professionalism	15%	150 points
Creative Project	15%	150 points
Response Papers	10%	100 points
Scene Analysis Paper	10%	100 points
Film Analysis Paper	20%	200 points
Research Paper	30%	300 points
Total	100%	1000 points

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

Participation/Professionalism: 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. Finally, failure to follow any course policies or guidelines will hurt your professionalism grade.

Creative Project: After we have discussed various film techniques, you will participate in a hands-on group 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.

Response Papers (1 page x 4): Over the course of the semester, you will write four responses to the screenings. Prompts will be provided.

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 paper will be evaluated on the originality of your argument, the rigor of your analysis, and the quality of your research.

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

Nichols, Bill. *Engaging Cinema: An Introduction to Film Studies*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010. Print.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1: Introductions

Thurs., Aug. 23 Introduction to the course
Clips: Lumière, *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (1895); Cronenberg, *At the Suicide of the Last Jew in the World in the Last Cinema in the World* (2007)

Week 2: Formal and Social Contexts

Tues., Aug. 28 Nichols, 3-12
Introduction to Response Papers
Clips: Lynch, *Blue Velvet* (1986)

No Screening

Thurs., Aug. 30 Nichols, 12-25
Clips: Griffith, *Birth of a Nation* (1915); Spielberg, *Schindler's List* (1993)

Week 3: Film Grammar I

Tues., Sept. 4 Nichols, 50-56 and 60-64
Clips: Welles, *Citizen Kane* (1941); Coppola, *The Conversation* (1974)

Screening Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960)

Thurs., Sept. 6 **Response Paper #1 due**
Nichols, 57-59, 64-66
Clips: Wilder, *Double Indemnity* (1944)

Week 4: Film Grammar II

Tues., Sept. 11 Nichols, 38-50
Clips: Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin* (1925); Godard, *Breathless* (1960)

Screening Hitchcock, *Rear Window* (1954)

Thurs., Sept. 13 Pye, "Enter Lisa" (handout)
Introduction to Scene Analysis Paper

Week 5: Narrative Cinema

Tues., Sept. 18 Nichols, 136-153
Clips: Wiene, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920); Varda, *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962)

Screening Hazanavicius, *The Artist* (2011) [in Blount]

Thurs., Sept. 20 Nichols, 153-172
Clips: De Sica, *Bicycle Thieves* (1948); Hitchcock, *Vertigo* (1958)

Week 6: Documentary Cinema

Tues., Sept. 25 Nichols, 99-114
Clips: Flaherty, *Nanook of the North* (1922); Pennebaker, *Dont Look Back* (1967)

Screening Herzog, *Grizzly Man* (2005)

Thurs., Sept. 27 **Response Paper #2 due**
Nichols, 114-135
Clips: Capra, *Why We Fight* (1942-45); Moore, *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004)

Week 7: Avant-Garde and Experimental Cinema

Tues., Oct. 2 **Scene Analysis Paper due**
Clips: Deren, *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943)

Screening Sciamma, *Tomboy* (2011) [in Blount]

Thurs., Oct. 4 Nichols, 80-98
Clips: Buñuel, *L'Age d'Or* (1930); Brakhage, *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* (1971)

Week 8: Film Styles

Tues., Oct. 9 Nichols, 175-199
Lumière, *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1895); Méliès, *A Trip to the Moon* (1902); Resnais, *Night and Fog* (1955)

Screening Lynch, *Mulholland Drive* (2001)

Thurs., Oct. 11 Nichols, 200-208
Clips: Nolan, *Memento* (2000)

Week 9: Creative Project

Tues., Oct. 16 No classes: Fall Recess

No Screening

Thurs., Oct. 18 Introduction to Creative Project

Week 10: Film Genres

Tues., Oct. 23 Nichols, 248-267
Clips: Porter, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903); Stevens, *Shane*, (1953); Eastwood, *Unforgiven* (1992)

Screening Wilcox, *Forbidden Planet* (1956)

Thurs., Oct. 25 **Response Paper #3 due**
Nichols, 267-286
Introduction to Film Analysis Paper
Clips: Scott, *Blade Runner* (1982)

Week 11: Institutional and National Contexts

Tues., Oct. 30 Nichols, 209-228
Clips: Ulmer, *Detour* (1945); Johar, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998)

Screening Penn, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967)

Thurs., Nov. 1 Nichols, 229-247
Clips: Preminger, *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955); Hopper, *Easy Rider* (1969)

Week 12: Film and Ideology

Tues., Nov. 6 Nichols, 287-297
Clips: Capra, *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946); Kaye, *American History X* (1998)

Screening Stone, *Natural Born Killers* (1994)

Thurs., Nov. 8 **Response Paper #4 due**
Nichols, 297-324
Introduction to Research Paper
Clips: Godard, *Vivre sa Vie* (1962)

Week 13: Race and Ethnicity

Tues., Nov. 13 Nichols, 325-345
Clips: Sembene, *Black Girl* (1966); Kramer, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967)

Screening Lee, *Do the Right Thing* (1989)

Thurs., Nov. 15 **Film Analysis Paper due**
Nichols, 345-358
Clips: Cuarón, *Children of Men* (2006)

Week 14: Gender and Sexuality I

Tues., Nov. 20 Nichols, 359-394
Clips: Ray, *Rebel without a Cause* (1955); Allen, *Annie Hall* (1977); Riggs, *Tongues Untied* (1989)

No Screening

Thurs., Nov. 22 No classes: Thanksgiving Recess

Week 15: Gender and Sexuality II

Tues., Nov. 27 **Creative Project due**
Nichols, 395-412
Clips: Lewis, *Gun Crazy* (1950); Negulesco, *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953)

Screening Scott, *Thelma and Louise* (1991)

Thurs., Nov. 29 Nichols, 412-431
Clips: Dunye, *The Watermelon Woman* (1996)

Week 16: The End

Mon., Dec. 3 **Creative Project Presentation**

Tues., Dec. 4 Final discussion

No Screening

Fri., Dec. 7 **Research Paper due by noon (leave in box on office door—307 Palmer)**