Media Aesthetics
ENG/CINE 260, Spring 2013

Course Description: English 260 is one of four required courses that make up the fundamentals of the Cinema Studies major. The course will focus on helping you build the critical skills to understand, analyze, and interpret visual media texts. It will do so by highlighting the fundamental formal elements of film and television (& the web) and using this vocabulary, we will explore the complex interplay of technical design, social influence, and cultural conventions that shape our media production and consumption experiences. We will also take time to consider how the construction of a media text makes meaning.

Goals for ENG/CINE 260:
• Gain a basic understanding of film & television aesthetics
• Learn Film & TV Studies vocabulary
• Develop skills to write and talk critically about film & television

Required Materials:
• Subscription to the course blog ([https://signup.wordpress.com/signup/?user=1](https://signup.wordpress.com/signup/?user=1))
• Access to Blackboard

Attendance: Attendance is REQUIRED. You may miss 2 classes (I take attendance every class, but please keep track of your absences!) without a grade penalty. A third absence will lower your final course grade by 1/3 of a letter grade (from a B+ to a B, for instance). If you miss a 4th class you automatically FAIL the course without notice. No exceptions. Frequent tardiness will also be counted as an absence. You are responsible for what you miss in that class. If you want to discuss what you missed, please come to office hours or consult a classmate’s notes, but do not send me an e-mail asking me about what you missed. You are responsible for finding the viewing material on your own (everything we watch will be on reserve in Knight Library after we watch it).

Emails: While I strive to maintain a relaxed attitude in class to help facilitate discussion, I request that your email correspondence with me maintain a *professional etiquette*. Please refrain from emailing with questions already explained in the syllabus, use proper spelling and
punctuation, and include a greeting and salutation. *Emails that fail to do so will not receive a response.*

**Classroom Standards:**
- Our class will be a space of productive thought and inquiry. Please feel free to express any thoughts or comments about our subject matter in a respectful way. Listen to others when they are talking, do not engage in side conversations, and be courteous even when disagreements arise. *Those who choose not to discuss the films in a respectful way will be asked to leave the class, and possibly the course.*

- Active participation is required. To facilitate discussion, carefully read the assigned material before class and take notes while watching the films and television programs. Although you may use laptops to take notes, there should be no cell phones, no texting, no Internet use. It is vital that students respect the classroom and each other. *Consistently disrupting the class (falling asleep, talking while others are trying to talk, checking Facebook or e-mail during class, arriving late or leaving early, etc.) will result in an absence.* You may bring quiet and non-messy food and/or drinks to class so long as you take care of all trash and leave the classroom clean.

**Access for Students with Disabilities:** If you have a disability (physical or learning), which you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities.

**Grade Evaluation:**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes, Discussion Questions, Activities &amp; Assign.</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Blog Entries &amp; DQ Threads</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shot List &amp; Analysis</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam (take-home)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam (take-home)</td>
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**Grading Scale:**

- A     94-100%
- A-    90-93.99%
- B+    87-89.99%
- B     84-86.99%
- B-    80-83.99%
- C+    77-79.99%
- C     74-76.99%
- C-    70-73.99%
- D+    67-69.99%
- D     64-66.99%
- D-    60-63.99%
- F     0-59.99%

**Extra Credit:** Throughout the term I will present opportunities for extra credit in various forms. Some will be on-campus events, which you may attend and then turn in a 1-page write-up that briefly summarizes the event and responds to your experience. I will also announce if extra points are available on assignments for completing extra work on assignments. In either case, extra credit in this course is not a last-minute option, so keep track of your grade on blackboard throughout the term and plan ahead.
Participation: Your participation grade in this course will be determined by your grades on unannounced quizzes over the readings (5%), effort on class activities and assignments (10%), and posting one week’s discussion questions (coordinated in groups) on our blog (TBA) (5%). During Week 1, students will be assigned a group and a particular week for which they will be responsible for generating discussion questions, one per student, on the week’s topics from the readings. These will be turned in class on Monday of the assigned week, and I will post them on the class blog on Monday afternoon. The class will respond to these questions by adding comments during the week. You will still be responsible for posting comments on the week you submit discussion questions.

Weekly Blog Entries & Weekly DQ Comment Threads: Both of these assignments will require you to subscribe to our class blog. You can do by setting up a wordpress account at the following link: https://signup.wordpress.com/signup/?user=1. This blog is a public, so if you wish to protect your privacy, you may create an account using your initials (first, middle, and last). Blog entries are an opportunity to practice writing about the aesthetic components of media, and to learn from each others’ insights. The discussion question threads will serve to extend our class conversations and help students engaging with one another’s ideas. All writing on the class blog should adhere to the expectations laid out in ‘Classroom Standards.’ Both blog entries and comments are due by the end of the day every Friday.

• Every week, each student will post one blog entry describing and summarizing his/her reflections and observations about the readings and screenings on our class blog (minimum 300 words per post). I would encourage you to read one another’s posts and reflect on your classmates’ ideas and writing styles.

• Additionally, each week students will contribute one response to a new set of discussion questions posted on the blog by adding comments (minimum 1 comment, 100 words per comment). These weekly comment threads are intended to be thoughtful extensions of class discussion. This means that your comments should be conversational. Each comment should respond to at least one discussion question and/or to a comment that has already been posted. Unless you are the first person to post a comment, you should respond to any ongoing discussions in the thread that pertain to the ideas you wish to contribute.

Writing & Formatting: This is an English Department course and as such your writing on all assignments will meet the highest standards. I will pay attention not only to your ideas but how those ideas are presented. This means that I will grade your written work on its content and organization, as well as its use of grammar, punctuation and sentence structure. Please type all written work, using Times New Roman 12pt. font and 1” margins.

Academic Honesty: All assignments must adhere to standards of academic honesty outlined in the Student Handbook. Do not turn in work prepared for other classes. Document all sources consulted in preparing your work, including movies, websites and other material obtained on the Internet. If in doubt, document. Plagiarism will result in failure for the course and additional
sanctions determined by the director of Student Judicial Affairs. Please consult Rules for Writers for a definition of plagiarism and information on documentation, and refer to the Student Conduct Code on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website: http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx.

**Late Work & Extensions:** I do not except late work. The only exceptions to my late work policy are documented emergencies. However, if you need an extension please come talk to me at least 24 hours before the assignment is due. I will require you to document your need for an extension and set a new due date (usually via e-mail).

**WARNING:** This class will screen media that contains explicit depictions of sex, violence, adult themes, coarse language, and material that some might find offensive. If you think that this might be a problem for you, please come talk to me about whether we can find a solution, or if this is the best class for you.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1: Studying Film & Narrative**

**Screening:** Annie Hall (Allen 1977), Clips: A Trip to the Moon (Melies), The Lonedale Operator (Griffith 1911), Actualities (Lumiere, Edison)

**M 4/1:** Introductions

**W 4/3:** Introduce Zoetrope Assignment, Readings Due: TFE Introduction: Studying Film: Culture, Practice, Experience (p. 5), TFE Ch. 6 Telling Stories: Narrative Films (p. 215), TFE p. 327-8

(F 4/5): Week 1 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

**Week 2: Mise-en-Scene, Cinematography**

**Screening:** Ali, Fear East the Soul (Fassbinder 1974), Clips: Rear Window (Hitchcock 1954)

**M 4/8:** Zoetrope Assignment Due, Readings Due: TFE Ch. 2 Exploring A Material World: Mise-en-Scene (p. 63), TFE Ch. 3 Framing What We See: Cinematography (p. 95), TFE: p. 361-2 & 364-8

**W 4/10:** Readings Due: TFE Ch. 1 Encountering Film: From Preproduction to Exhibition (p. 19)

(F 4/12): Week 2 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

**Week 3: Editing & Sound**

**Screening:** Memories of Underdevelopment (Gutierrez Alea 1968), Clips: Breathless (Godard 1960)

**M 4/15:** Shot List, Outline & Thesis Statement Due, Readings Due: TFE Ch. 12 Writing a Film Essay: Observations, Arguments, Research, & Analysis (p. 435)

**W 4/17:** Readings Due: TFE Ch. 4 Relating Images: Editing (p. 133), TFE Ch. 5 Listening to the Cinema: Film Sound (p. 177), TFE p. 368-9

(F 4/19): Week 3 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due
Week 4: Documentary & Experimental Film

M 4/22: Readings Due: *TFE* Ch. 8: Challenging Form: Experimental Film & New Media (p. 285)
W 4/24: Readings Due: *TFE* Ch. 7 Representing the Real: Documentary Film (p. 255)
(F 4/26): Week 4 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 5: Genres
Screening: *Shaun of the Dead* (Wright 2004), Clips: *Fargo* (Coen 1996)

M 4/29: Draft 1 of Analysis Due
W 5/1: Readings Due: *TFE* Ch. 9: Rituals, Conventions, Archetypes & Formulas: Movie Genres (p. 315), (Recommended: *TFE* Ch. 11: Reading About Film: Critical Theories and Methods p. 399)
(F 5/3): Week 5 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 6: TV Studies & Narrative
Postnetwork Era (p. 3)
M 5/6: Midterm Exam
W 5/8: Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch. 11 An Introduction to Television Studies (p. 359), *TCMA* Ch.1 An Introduction to Television Structures and Systems: The Ebb and Flow of the Postnetwork Era (p. 3)
(F 5/10): Week 6 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 7: Narrative & Stars
M 5/13: Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch. 2 Narrative Structure: Television Stories (p. 21)
W 5/15: Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch. 3 Building Narrative: Character, Actor, Star (p. 55)
(F 5/17): Week 7 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 8: TV & The Real
M 5/20: Final Shot List & Analysis Due
W 5/22: Introduce Commercial Assignment, Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch. 4 Beyond and Beside Narrative Structure (p. 97)
(F 5/24): Week 8 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due
Week 9: Commercials & Modes of Production
Screening: I Love Lucy (1951-1957), Clips: The Simpsons (1989-), I Love Lucy & Philip Morris, Sports TV, Students’ Clips
M 5/27: No Class (Memorial Day Weekend)
W 5/29: Commercial Assignment Due, Readings Due: TCMA Ch. 5 The Television Commercial (p. 149), TCMA Ch. 6 An Introduction to Television Style: Modes of Production (p. 211)
(F 5/31): Week 9 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 10: Style, Setting & Sound
M 6/3: Readings Due: TCMA Ch. 9 Style and Setting: Mise-en-Scene (p. 227)
W 6/5: Readings Due: TCMA Ch. 10 Style and Sound: Videography & Cinematography (p. 253)
(F 6/7): Week 10 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 11: Final Exam (TBA)