

Instructor: Caroline Claiborn

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Office: PLC #530

Office Hours: M 2:30-4:30pm, W 3:30-4:30pm

M&W 5-6:50 pm

Location: CON 360

CRN: 13024

Media Aesthetics

ENG/CINE 260, Fall 2013

Class Blog: <http://mediaaestheticsfall2013.wordpress.com/>

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 (& to a lesser extent, video games & 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:

- The Film Experience, An Introduction*, 3rd ed. Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, (2009). (TFE)
- Television: Critical Methods and Applications*, 4th ed. Jeremy Butler, (2006). (TCMA)
- Subscription to the course blog (<https://signup.wordpress.com/signup/?user=1>)
- Access to Blackboard

Attendance: Attendance is REQUIRED. You may miss 2 classes without a grade penalty (I take attendance every class, but please keep track of your absences!). 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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| Participation: | 15% |
| Quizzes, Discussion Questions, Activities & Assign. | |
| Weekly Blog Entries & DQ Threads | 15% |
| Film Pitch | 25% |
| TV Show Pitch | 25% |
| Final Exam (take home) | 20% |

Grading Scale:

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| A 94-100% | B- 80-83.99% | D+ 67-69.99% |
| A- 90-93.99% | C+ 77-79.99% | D 64-66.99% |
| B+ 87-89.99% | C 74-76.99% | D- 60-63.99% |
| B 84-86.99% | C- 70-73.99% | 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, 2X spaced write-up that briefly summarizes the event and describes your thoughts about the experience. I will also announce if extra points for additional effort are available for specific assignments. Each student is eligible for a maximum 3 extra credit points per term.

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 (5%), 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 **public**, so if you wish to protect your privacy, you may create an account using some other version of your name/initials. (1) Blog entries are an opportunity to practice writing about the aesthetic components of media, and to learn from each others' insights. (2) 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 **every Friday**.

- (1) 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.
- (2) Additionally, each week students will contribute **one response to a new set of discussion questions** (added every Monday after class) by **adding comments to the thread** (minimum 1 comment, 200 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: Except in the case of documented emergencies, late work will receive a 10% penalty for each day past due. 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 9/30: Introductions

W 10/2: Readings Due: *TFE* Introduction: Studying Film: Culture, Practice, Experience (p. 5), *TFE* Ch. 6 Telling Stories: Narrative Films (p. 215), *TFE* “Slapstick, Screwball, and Romantic Comedies” (p. 327-8)

(F 10/4): Week 1 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 2: Mise-en-Scene, Cinematography

Screening: *Rear Window* (Hitchcock 1954)

M 10/7: 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

W 10/9: Readings Due: *TFE* Ch. 1 Encountering Film: From Preproduction to Exhibition (p. 19)

(F 10/11): 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 10/14: Practice Shot List Due, Readings Due: *TFE* section on writing about film (p. 439-447), *TFE* Ch. 4 Relating Images: Editing (p. 133)

W 10/16: Readings Due: *TFE* Ch. 5 Listening to the Cinema: Film Sound (p. 177), *TFE* “Third Cinema” (p. 368-9)

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

Week 4: Documentary & Experimental Film

Screening: *Un Chien Andalou* (Bunuel 1929), *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Deren 1943), *La Jetee* (Marker 1962), and *Man With A Movie Camera* (Vertov 1929)

M 10/21: Readings Due: *TFE* Ch. 8: Challenging Form: Experimental Film & New Media (p. 285)

W 10/23: Readings Due: *TFE* Ch. 7 Representing the Real: Documentary Film (p. 255)

(F 10/25): Week 4 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 5: Genres

Screening: *Shaun of the Dead* (Wright 2004)

M 10/28: Readings Due: *TFE* Ch. 9: Rituals, Conventions, Archetypes & Formulas: Movie Genres (p. 315)

W 10/30: Readings Due: *TFE* Ch. 11: Reading About Film: Critical Theories and Methods p. 399)

(F 11/1): Week 5 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 6: TV Studies & Narrative

Screening: *General Hospital* (1963-), Sports Clips, *E.R.* (1994-2009)

M 11/4: Film Pitch Due

W 11/6: Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch.1 An Introduction to Television Structures and Systems: The Ebb and Flow of the Postnetwork Era (p. 3)

(F 11/8): Week 6 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 7: Narrative & Stars

Screening: James Franco in *Freaks & Geeks* (1999-2000), *30 Rock* (2006-2013), Interviews, and hosting The 2013 Oscars

M 11/11: Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch. 2 Narrative Structure: Television Stories (p. 21)

W 11/13: Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch. 3 Building Narrative: Character, Actor, Star (p. 55)

(F 11/15): Week 7 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 8: TV & The Real

Screening: *Media Hype* Documentary on TV News, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (1999-), *Survivor* (2000-)/*What Not to Wear* (2003-2013)

M 11/18: Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch. 4 Beyond and Beside Narrative Structure (p. 97)

W 11/20: Reading Due: *TCMA* Ch. 12 Textual Analysis (p. 367), (Recommended: *TCMA* Ch. 13 Discourse and Identity, p. 395)

(F 11/22): Week 8 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 9: Commercials & Modes of Production

Screening: *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957), *I Love Lucy & Philip Morris*, Commercials

M 11/25: Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch. 5 The Television Commercial (p. 149), *TCMA* Ch. 6 An Introduction to Television Style: Modes of Production (p. 211)

W 11/27: **TV Show Pitch Due (via email)**

(F 11/29): Week 9 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 10: Style & Sound; Style & Editing

Screening: MTV 1st Broadcast, *The Real World* Ep. 1:1 (1992)

M 12/2: Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch. 9 Style and Editing: Mise-en-Scene (p. 293)

W 12/4: Readings Due: *TCMA* Ch. 10 Style and Sound (p. 325)

(F 12/6): Week 10 Blog Entries and Comments on DQs Due

Week 11: Final Exam (TBA)