

ENG 380: Film, Media, and History: Oregon and Pacific Northwest Film and Media

Fall 2013 T/TH 6:00-7:50pm 260 Condon CRN: 13040	Instructor: Dr. Stephen Rust Email: srust@uoregon.edu Office: 239 PLC / Phone: 346-0058 Office hours: M/W 9:15-10:45 am
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This course explores the history and culture of film and media texts set and/or produced in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. Students will analyze the unique role that motion pictures and other media texts have played in constructing popular understandings (and misunderstandings) of Northwest history and culture. This course will interrogate cinema's relationship to historical time and space by asking what films can tell us about the past and present, why certain motifs and themes are so prominent in Northwest films, and how the developing Northwest film and media industry is struggling to balance the needs of local independent filmmakers and Hollywood corporate productions. Our investigation will include such audiovisual texts as *The General* (1927), *The Goonies* (1985), and *Portlandia* (2011-) and readings on film and media production in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia and the process of writing about film and media. The course combines film criticism with cultural, historical, and economic analysis. Students will examine the aesthetics of film, television, documentary, animation, and new media texts and conduct primary and secondary research on the history of media production in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.

Required Texts:

Corrigan, Timothy, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, 8th Ed. – (Pearson, 2012)

Spaner, David, *Dreaming in the Rain: How Vancouver Became Hollywood North* – (Arsenal Pulp, 2004)

Alderman, Mick *Three Weeks With The Goonies: On Location in Astoria, OR* – (CreateSpace, 2010)

Simon, Matty, *Fat, Drunk, & Stupid: Inside the Making of Animal House* – (St. Martin's Press, 2012)

"The Day Buster Smiled" – Cottage Grove Historical Society (2008)

*Additional course readings and lists of Northwest films are available on Blackboard.

Attendance and Late Work: Attendance is required and checked daily. If you plan to be absent on a given day, you need contact me *in advance* via email or any assignments due that day will be counted late. If you are absent for illness or any other reason with the exception of documented medical or family emergencies, you must send me any assignments due that day as email attachments in order to avoid a late penalty. Late assignments are accepted for up to one week after the due date at a 40% penalty. Complete all class readings assigned each week before class on Tuesday.

Screenings: Watching films in a classroom requires different ways of seeing (and note-taking), as you will need to pay close attention to *how* the events unfold on screen and *why* each film takes its own specific form. If you are absent during a screening day you will need to make arrangements to see the movie at Knight Library or at home. R rated films are par for the course. Complete readings on time to prep for the films.

Access for Students with Disabilities: If you have a registered disability, which you believe may affect your performance in this course, please see or contact me the first week of the term so we can make the necessary arrangements for your fullest access to the course and its activities.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism: The University of Oregon values academic integrity. You are responsible for understanding and adhering to the standards of academic honesty outlined in the student handbook. Document ALL sources consulted in preparing your work, including TV shows, magazines, and, of course, anything found on the web. **At a minimum, documented plagiarism will result in course failure. See the course Blackboard site for resources and information on citation styles and practices.**

Course Work: 1000 pts Total (Grades: A+ = 97.5%; A = 93%; A- = 90%; B+ = 87.5%, B = 83%, etc.)

300 pts Reading Responses (6 Responses X 50 pts each)
100 pts Group Presentation and Participation
250 pts Midterm close-reading essay
350 pts Final Research Project

Reading Responses: You are responsible for posting six 1-2 page, single-spaced responses to the assigned readings. Type these in 12 point font and use double-sided printing to minimize paper use. Responses should both summarize and analyze the reading. I want to tell that you not only completed the reading but are thinking critically about the readings and applying them to the media texts. The goal of these responses will be to generate an ongoing discussion about media and its place in our culture and to bring these ideas into play in class discussions. Responses are due in class on Thursdays of the weeks indicated, with the exception of Response 6 which is due Tuesday of Week 9 since there is no class that Thursday due to the Thanksgiving Holiday. Late posts accepted up to one week late at a 40% penalty.

Participation: This is a discussion-based class. As such it is absolutely vital that you complete the shared reading assignment prior to attending class. As you read, mark any passages that strike you as interesting or challenging and come to class ready to discuss the texts. You are expected to attend all class meetings and participate in all discussions. Screening and discussing films in a group setting is vital to critical learning. There may also be in-class assignments, group work, etc. that cannot be made up if you miss class.

Presentation: Each student must sign up for a group presentation during the term. Presentations will take place on the day listed on the course schedule. There will be five presentation groups consisting of 8 students each. Each student will be individually responsible for a 2-3 minute presentation on a topic related to the week's film. The group should meet twice: once to divide topics and again to practice. Your group will have 16-24 minutes (MAX!) to present 16-24 slides using Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Docs or similar software. Slides should be filled primarily with images, not text. **Do not simply read from your slides!** (Your group may include a video clip but it is YOUR responsibility to make sure our classroom technology can support the media you plan to show and that you do not go over your max time limit of 24 minutes.) Each group should cover the following topics: a) Production, b) Reception, c) Cast and Crew, d) Northwest Historical/Cultural references; e) Related films/media. It is highly recommended that one group member serve as moderator to keep time for the group. Please visit the library and spend a couple hours researching your topic. Get to know your fellow presenters as you will need to be in contact with them before your presentation. Get contact information in class or via our Blackboard site. **Each student will write a 200-300 word summary of their research (plus citations) and bring this to class on the day you present.**

Midterm Essay: You may choose any of the first four films for this assignment. There are two parts to this assignment. **First**, you will locate four film reviews that were written at the time of the film's initial release and write a 2-3 page evaluation of the reviews. Be specific and quote/paraphrase the reviews as needed. (You might consider such questions as: What elements of plot, character, or theme are most often discussed? What events in the world outside the theater may have influenced their reviews? What do the reviewers agree and disagree about?, etc.). Include a bibliography in which you correctly cite each review in MLA format: library.uoregon.edu/guides/citing/mla_media.html. **Second**, you will write a 4-5-page critical essay in which you analyze a single sequence, motif (recurring visual or audio element), or aesthetic technique (editing, cinematography, etc.) used in one of the first four films. This essay should be a formal analysis of the techniques employed by the film as it reveals, masks, or exploits history. This paper may be a jumping off point for your larger research project or simply a chance to practice the skills involved in writing about cinematic texts. Your essay should be double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12pt font. See your Corrigan textbook for detailed information on writing a critical film analysis essay.

Research Information: Research Librarian Elizabeth Peterson <emp@uoregon.edu. has put together a number of resources of our course that should help you get started in your research. First, remember that we are entering relatively uncharted territory – there is no comprehensive history of northwest film and so you will have to do a lot of digging to uncover the relationships between these films and history – so think creatively when considering sources. Second, once you start talking to people about your project the recommendations will come pouring in – so get started early. Third, the Corrigan textbook has an extensive list of resources related to film and media scholarship. Fourth, the KNIGHT LIBRARY website is a key starting point. Here are links to the cinema studies resource guide designed specifically for this course: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/english/380.html> and general cinema studies database: <http://onesearch.uoregon.edu/databases/subject/film-studies>.

Research Option 1: Essay and Annotated Bibliography: Your first option for the course research project is to write a 10-12 page research paper which explores a specific aspect of Northwest film history. Your job is to identify a question that is currently at issue within the broad context of this course and endeavor to develop an original conclusion/solution to this question. Your first step will be to complete a proposal for your project as well as an annotated bibliography of 7-8 sources. You are welcome to write on any issue related to film, television, or media produced in the Northwest. The paper must feature an original and engaging thesis, well reasoned claims supported by solid research from varied and reputable sources, smooth transitions, varied sentence structure, fresh diction, strong voice, appropriate tone, and something memorable. You are also invited to discuss you project with me during office hours and/or visit the Writing Lab in 72 PLC. The essay should evidence depth of reasoning and textured writing that integrates pertinent quotations from the source material. A minimum of five direct citations from your source texts are required. Your final bibliography should include 12-15 sources from a range of primary and secondary source materials. Include page numbers and use MLA or Chicago format. Use double-sided printing to save paper. Format: Double-Spaced, Size 12 Times New Roman Font. Collaborative writing projects will be considered on an individual basis. A rough draft will be due Tuesday of week 10, a peer review due Thursday of Week 10, and the final draft will be due on Tuesday of Finals Week.

Research Option 2: Short Film and Annotated Bibliography: Your second option for the final project is to produce a 5-10 minute film that explores a particular aspect of film and/or media production in the Northwest. Your job is to identify a topic of interest, do some background research, and use the formal elements of filmmaking to organize your material and draw conclusions. You could document shooting locations of a film shot in Lane County, interview local filmmakers about the state of the industry, document a local filmmaker, or develop your own idea based on a unique aspect of life in the Northwest. Your first step will be to complete a proposal for your project as well as an annotated bibliography of 7-8 sources. You will also complete a project folder outlining your process of pre-production, production, and post-production and reflecting on your finished product. You will need to obtain proper permissions prior to shooting. Your film must feature original content, strong voice and perspective, appropriate tone, varied use of formal elements, and something memorable. All films will screen in class Tuesday of week 10. **Do not choose this option if do not have prior production experience and cannot finish the film by Tuesday of Week 10.** Although this is not a production course, some equipment may be available for checkout for cinema studies majors and you can use the open hours in the editing lab. Collaborative projects will be considered on an individual basis. Your finished film will be due Tuesday of Week 10 and (if at least two people choose this option) a peer review will be turned in on Thursday of Week 10. Your revised film and your project folder, including permissions, production notes, and a 4-5 page reflective essay will be due Tuesday of Finals Week.

Keep Oregon Green: Print assignments on recycled paper, use double-sided printing, and shrink your margins to reduce paper use. Filmmakers: use sustainable production practices whenever possible: <http://oregonfilm.org/green/>.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Situating the NW in the Global Mediascape: *Singles* (Seattle, WA, Dir. Cameron Crowe, 1992)
Read: Corrigan: Chpts. 1-3 and BB: PDF: “Travelers and Vagabonds”; *Response #1 Due

Week 2: Run-away Production: *Five Easy Pieces* (Oregon and British Columbia, Dir. Bob Rafelson, 1970)
Read: Spaner, *Dreaming*: Chpts. 1-6; *Response #2 Due; *Group 1 Presents

Week 3: West Coast Style: *Double Happiness* (Vancouver, BC, Dir. Mina Shum, 1994)
Read: Spaner, *Dreaming*: Chpts. 7-14; *Response #3 Due, *Group 2 Presents

Extra Credit Opportunity: Buster Keaton Film Night, Sat. Oct. 19, 7:30pm, in Cottage Grove, OR.
Cottage Grove Community Center located at 700 E Gibbs Avenue. \$5 Admission.

Week 4: Re-Framing NW History: *Meek’s Cutoff* (Southeast OR, Dir. Kelly Reichardt, 2010)
Read: Corrigan: Chpt. 5 and PDFs: “Oregon Trail Stories” and “Neo-neorealism”; *Group 3 Presents
*Post Midterm Essay to Blackboard Discussion Board by Saturday (Oct. 26) at 8pm

Week 5: Location, Location, Location: *The Goonies* (Astoria, OR, Dir. Richard Donner, 1985)
Read: Alderman, *Three Weeks with The Goonies*; *Response #4 Due, *Group 4 Presents

Week 6: Community Matters: *Stand by Me* (Brownsville, OR, Dir. Rob Reiner, 1986) &
Animal House of Blues (Eugene, OR, Dir. Jay Richardson, 2012)
Read: Simon, *Fat, Drunk & Stupid*; *Response #5 Due
Class Visit Thursday by local producer, location scout and casting director, Katherine Wilson

Week 7: Research NW Film & Media: *Twin Peaks: Pilot* (WA, Dir. David Lynch, 1990)
Watch before class on Tuesday for free online at: <http://www.hulu.com/watch/278238>
Read: Corrigan: Chpts 4, 6, and 7 and PDF: “Northwest Noir”; *In-class library worksheet
Class Meets on Thursday (Nov. 14) in Knight Library, Room Proctor 41: Bring a laptop if you have one.
Presentation and jigsaw activity led by Cinema Studies Research Librarian Elizabeth Peterson.

Week 8: New Directions in Film, Television, and Digital Media: *Portlandia* (Portland, OR, 2011-)
Read: PDF: “Top Ten Cities to Be a Moviemaker (2013)”
*Post Proposal and Annotated Bibliography to Blackboard before class on Thursday; *Group 5 Presents
Class Meets on Thursday (Nov. 21) from **4-6 pm** in the Ford Alumni Center: Presentation by Second Story
Interactive Studio Creative Directors, David Waingarten and Daniel Meyers

Week 9: Archives and Primary Sources: *The General* (Cottage Grove, OR, Dir. Buster Keaton, 1926)
Read: “The Day Buster Smiled”; *Response #6 Due Tuesday

Week 10: Re-situating the NW within the Future of Global Media: Animation Domination
Clips from NW Animation: Mel Blanc, Harry Smith, Will Vinton, Bill Plympton, Joanna Priestly, & more
*Research Paper Rough Drafts or Short Film DVDs due in-class on Tuesday
*Peer-Review Letters Due in-class on Thursday – Bring 2 copies
Class Visit Thursday by Laika Studio Director of Marketing and Brand Management, Mark Shapiro
Optional: Presentation by Pixar animation editors, Monday (Dec. 2) at 4:00pm in 106 Knight Library (free)

Finals Week:

*Post Research Papers or Film Production Notebooks to Blackboard by Tuesday of Finals Week at 10:00 am