

## English 380: The New Hollywood Blockbuster

Spring 2016  
TR 10-11:50 a.m.  
Fenton 105  
CRN: 36690

Dr. Jenée Wilde  
Office: PLC 263  
Hours: TR 3:30-5:30  
or by appointment

### COURSE OVERVIEW

**Description:** ENG 380 looks at the history of the American film and media industry not just as the sum of its products (i.e., films designed for mass consumption), but also as a complex cultural, economic and aesthetic system that produced complex cultural products. From early in its history, Hollywood dominated, and continues to dominate, the world in a way in which no other cultural producer has dominated an industry or art form. This course focuses on the New Hollywood blockbuster film and its relationship with the American film industry from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s. The course explores the ways in which Hollywood responded to industrial, social, technological, and aesthetic challenges during this period. In order to more fully understand the relationship between Hollywood, American culture, and its films, this course emphasizes in-class viewing, discussion, and analysis. As an upper-division English class, it is also reading and writing intensive.

**Required Texts:** Tom Shone, *Blockbuster* (2004); all other readings provided on Canvas.

#### Grading and Assignments:

Attendance	10%
Group Film Introduction	5%
Reading Synthesis Papers (3)	45%
Final Project	40%

**Attendance:** This course is organized around weekly themes and daily screenings (half of a film each day). The weekly structure is a single four-hour class spread over two days. For classroom and student success, on-time daily attendance and participation are essential. As such, attendance is mandatory and counts for as part of your final grade. Each absence, *regardless of reason and without exception*, will reduce your attendance grade by ten percent (no absences 100%, one absence 90%, two absences 80%, etc.). Any use of cell phones during class time will result in an automatic absence for the day (see cell phone policy below).

**Group Film Introductions:** On Tuesdays of Weeks 3-9, student groups will prepare and give a 10-minute Powerpoint introduction to the film being screened that week. Groups should compile slides in a single file and email it to me at least 30 minutes before class. Group grades will be based on preparedness and presentation quality. Specific criteria for the film introductions will be discussed in class during Weeks 1-2.

**Reading Synthesis Papers:** On Fridays of Weeks 3, 6, and 9, students will submit on Canvas synthesis papers that analyze and draw connections among several assigned readings for a three-week period in relation to one or two screened films. Grades will be based on synthesis of ideas, critical understanding and reflection, and accuracy. Follow written work guidelines below.

**Final Projects:** Students have the option of writing a formal research essay or developing a creative project as the final project for the term. Proposals and final presentations (see below) are also requirements of the final project. Failure to complete a proposal or a presentation for your project will result in a one-third letter deduction from the final project grade.

*Option 1, Formal Research Essay:* For this option, you will be analyzing a film or films screened during the term in relation to historical, industrial, cultural, and/or aesthetic concerns. Your argument will be supported with evidence from your reading of the film, from assigned class readings, and secondary research. Essays must be 10-12 pages in length and fully documented.

*Option 2, Creative Project:* This option allows you to explore narrative art, fan fiction, screen writing, digital media, or other creative options for your final project. Your creative project should explore one or two themes of the class in a visual and/or written narrative form. Written projects should be no longer than ten pages. Art/comic projects should be no more than eight sheets of letter-size paper (or equivalent dimensions) and submitted in a digital format (e.g. scans of a hand-drawn comic, photos of a painting). Digital media projects should be no longer than five minutes in length and playable on a Mac. In addition, you must write a four-page justification that explains how class themes, readings, and/or discussions are explored in your creative work. All source materials for creative projects must be fully documented.

**Project Proposals:** A proposal describing your final project and its purpose and audience will be submitted for approval during Week 7. Completion of the proposal is a requirement of the final project. Follow written work guidelines below.

**Final Presentations:** On the last two days of class (see schedule), you will have five minutes to present your final projects. Completion of a presentation is a requirement of the final project. This project “show-and-tell” is meant to be a fun opportunity for you to share your ideas with the class, so be creative!

## **COURSE POLICIES**

**Our Contract:** This syllabus is our contract. By enrolling in this class, you have agreed to adhere to its contents of policy, program, and material.

**Completion of Assignments:** Students are responsible for turning in all assignments on time. Assignments are due on Canvas by midnight on the day stipulated in the course calendar, or as communicated to you in class or by email. Assignment grades will drop by one-third of a letter grade for each calendar day it is late.

**Communication:** Please feel free to contact me if you need additional help with any aspect of this course. In addition to seeing me during office hours, email is the best way for students to contact me. On weekdays, I try to respond to all emails within 24 hours; on weekends, I try to check email at least once, but response is not guaranteed so don't wait until the last minute to ask important questions. I regularly post announcements, assignment updates, and other vital information by email and on Canvas, so check both daily. I do NOT recommend trying to contact me by phone, unless it is during office hours.

**Samples of Student Work:** From time to time, I will request that students send me a copy of an assignment for use as a student example. By sending me the requested work, you are giving permission for me to use the work as a student example in my classes or other professional activities. All sample work will remain anonymous.

**Cell Phones:** Cell phones are highly disruptive in a discussion-based classroom and during film screenings. The ringer must be turned off *before* the start of class, and the phone must be stowed in your bag. You may not text, answer, or make calls in the classroom at any time; step outside if necessary. Any use of cell phones in class will result in an automatic absence for the day, and the student may be asked to leave.

**Academic Honesty:** All work submitted in this course must be your own original work and must be written exclusively for this course. Any use of primary or secondary source materials for ideas, summaries, paraphrases, and quotations must be properly documented in MLA Style. *Plagiarism of any kind will receive and F for the assignment.* In cases where academic misconduct has been established, an F also may be given for the final course grade. Please see me if you have any questions about documentation and your use of sources. Consult *The MLA Handbook* 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.

**Access:** In an inclusive learning environment, the ability to access all aspects of a course is crucial for everyone—students and professors alike. The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. *Please notify me in week one if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation.* You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoac@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoac@uoregon.edu).

My own access may be affected at times due to a hearing condition that can make ordinary sounds uncomfortable. During these times, I wear acoustic filters to adjust sound levels for myself. Normal speaking volume is audible to me, but quiet speakers or those with difficulty hearing may wish to sit near the front of class as I may both speak quietly and have reduced hearing efficiency.

**Written Work:** All written work must be typed, double-spaced, spell-checked, and proofread. To meet page-length requirements, you must submit at least the minimum number of full pages required (e.g. 4-5 pages means at least four *full* pages). Format pages as follows:

- Use 12-point font in the Times Roman family.
- Use 1-inch margins (you may need to change the default settings in MS Word).
- Indicate your name, date, instructor, and assignment in the top left-hand corner of the first page. Follow with the essay title (centered), then begin your first paragraph (indented one-half inch).
- Last name and page number on all pages after the first, in the upper right-hand corner.
- Documents submitted on Canvas must be in Microsoft Word DOC, DOCX, or PDF file formats. Image files should be saved as JPG or PDF. Media files should be playable on a Mac. Pages documents **MUST** be exported in an acceptable file format before uploading.

If your assignment does not meet all of the above requirements, it will be considered incomplete and will not be graded until requirements are met. **ALL ideas and research from sources must be properly cited using MLA Style.**

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

All readings are due at the *beginning* of the week in which they are listed. All assignments are due on Canvas by midnight of the date listed. Schedule is subject to change with notice.

### **Week 1, March 29 & 31: New Hollywood I**

Screening: *Jaws* (1975)

Readings: Shone, Introduction and Ch. 1

Biskind, "Introduction" from *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*

Mann, "1975 – Movies and Conflicting Ideologies" (pages 148-153 only)

### **Week 2, April 5 & 7: New Hollywood II**

Screening: *Star Wars* (1977)

Readings: Shone, Ch. 2

Johnston, "Science Fiction and Technology"

Schatz, "The Studio System and Conglomerate Hollywood"

Friedman, "Introduction: Movies and the 1970s"

### **Week 3, April 12 & 14: Blockbusters and Visual Aesthetics**

#### **Group 1 Film Introduction**

Screening: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)

Readings: Shone, Ch. 3

Turnock, Ch. 3 "The Expanded Blockbuster"

Turnock, Ch. 6 "More Philosophical Grey Matter"

Massood, "1977 – Movies and a Nation Transformed" (pages 182-192 only)

**DUE Friday April 15: Reading Synthesis 1**

### **Week 4, April 19 & 21: Film and Gender**

#### **Group 2 Film Introduction**

Screening: *Alien* (1979)

Readings: Shone, Ch. 4-5

Kavanaugh, "Feminism, Humanism and Science in *Alien*"

Newton, "Feminism and Anxiety in *Alien*"

Lev, "1979 – Movies and the End of an Era" (pages 246-249 only)

### **Week 5, April 26 & 28: Family Blockbuster**

#### **Group 3 Film Introduction**

Screening: *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982)

Readings: Shone, Ch. 6

Buckland, "1982 – Movies and Other Worlds" (pages 63-69 only)

Beloso, "Making E.T. Perfectly Queer"

Prince, "Introduction: Movies and the 1980s"

**Week 6, May 3 & 5: Film Bodies**

**Group 4 Film Introduction**

Screening: *The Terminator* (1984)

Readings: Shone, Ch. 7

Telotte, "The Terminator, Terminator 2, and the Exposed Body"

Larson, "Machine as Messiah: Cyborgs, Morphs and the American Body Politic"

Wasser, "Ancillary Markets – Video and DVD"

**DUE Friday May 6: Reading Synthesis 2**

**Week 7, May 10 & 12: Blockbuster Comedy**

**Group 5 Film Introduction**

Screening: *Back to the Future* (1985)

Readings: Shone, Ch. 8

Gordon, "*Back to the Future*: Oedipus as Time Traveler"

Ruud, "*Back to the Future* as Quintessential Comedy"

**DUE Friday May 13: Final Project Proposal**

**Week 8, May 17 & 19: High Concept Film**

**Group 6 Film Introduction**

Screening: *Top Gun* (1986)

Readings: Shone, Ch. 9-10

Wyatt, Ch. 2 "Construction of the Image and High Concept Style"

Wyatt, Ch. 3 "High Concept and Changes in the Market for Entertainment"

Holmlund, "Introduction – Movies and the 1990s"

**Week 9, May 24 & 26: Digital Spectacle**

**Group 7 Film Introduction**

Screening: *Jurassic Park* (1993)

Readings: Shone, Ch. 11-12

Buckland, "Between Science Fact and Science Fiction: Spielberg's Digital Dinosaurs..."

Kleinhans, "1993 – Movies and the New Economics of..." (pages 91-103 only)

**DUE Friday May 27: Reading Synthesis 3**

**Week 10, May 31 & June 2**

**DUE in class: Final Project Presentations**

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE on Monday June 6**