

ENGLISH 260: "Media Aesthetics"

CRN 32074

Instructor: Sangita Gopal

Meets: M and W, 10-11:50 @ CON 104

Office Hours: 12:15 to 2: 15 on Mondays and by appointment

Email: sgopal@uoregon.edu

Phone: 6-3978

What is Aesthetics

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that deals with art, or more generally what the *Oxford English Dictionary* calls that of "taste, or of the perception of the beautiful." **The discipline in its modern form is primarily concerned with issues surrounding the creation, interpretation, and ultimate appreciation of works of art, and so it involves how the experience of such material is mediated through the individual sensitivity of the beholder, and the way the experience of it is shaped through presentation by cultural conventions** such as the museum exhibition.

What is Media

The main means of mass communication regarded collectively including broadcasting, television, cinema, the internet etc

Scope of this course

This course will build on our abilities to watch, analyze and write about media objects, particularly film. We will learn to recognize, define and elaborate on various kinds of cinema (fiction, documentary etc), genres (musical, western, horror etc), elements of narrative (script, plot, point of view); we will develop an understanding of and gain familiarity with technical vocabulary used to analyze film form; we will examine in details aspects of film aesthetics including mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, sound, and effects and learn to use terminologies relevant to each aspect of filmmaking as well as identify and analyze these elements in particular films. Finally, the course will situate its exploration of aesthetic concepts in a historical and cultural frame.

Learning Outcomes

Recognize, identify, and define the main elements through which film is analyzed including light, color, space, time, motion and sound.

Explain the significance of different aesthetic elements that comprise the film experience

Learn to analyze how these elements individually and collectively contribute to the perception and appreciation of cinema

Use terminologies specific to film aesthetics

Gain some knowledge of the historical and cultural contexts through which cinema has evolved as an art form

Class Materials

The required textbook for the class is Looking at Movies (Fourth edition) by Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan.

I will screen films and clips in class and post readings, notes and links on Canvas course site on an ongoing basis. **Please check Canvas before each and every class meeting for updates.**

Additional Readings – if any - will become available **a week before they are due** to be read. The reading will mention the due date by which it needs to be read.

Take Home Assignments will be posted TWO WEEKS in advance. Please let me know if this is not the case.

Please allow a minimum of two weeks for longer assignments to be graded and returned and a week for shorter assignments and quizzes.

Class Meetings & Procedures

1. The class meets 2 times a week and attendance is mandatory. There are **in class writing assignments and group assignments** that will be based on the screenings/readings for the day as well as other forms of assessment that require attendance. I will only allow work to be made-up in the case of **documented** absences or absences that have been **pre-authorized** by the instructor in advance.
2. Typically – though not always – class will comprise film screenings and readings. I will expect you to have completed the readings before class. **Please remember to bring your text book to class and have access to supplementary materials (if any) on CANVAS**
3. Some of the films in the course are **subtitled** --- this means you have to pay special attention during screenings to both reading the subtitles and watching what is onscreen. This can prove challenging, so I strongly recommend that you **review** these films at home, if possible. They are all available for purchase at various online retailers but they may also be accessible free online. If you have difficulty procuring a film, please get in touch with me and I can guide you to some sources.
4. Please be respectful towards your classmates and your instructor and refrain from talking, texting and browsing in class. Studies have shown that texting or browsing can prove disruptive and distracting to the people sitting around you and it can negatively impact their learning and overall class experience. So, please let us all be sensitive to this issue.
5. I do not allow other screens to be open during screenings since the light from these screens (phone/computer/ipad) really distract and disrupt the screening experience.
6. While open and engaged dialogue and discussion and a plurality of views is encouraged in this class, we will attempt, at all times, to keep our speech respectful and civil towards individuals and groups.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism: 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, your friends, parents, and, of course, anything found on the web. **At a minimum, documented plagiarism will result in course failure.**

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

Please Note: This is a college level course and so some of the films contain explicit materials of a violent or sexual nature. If this is something you need to discuss, please see me as soon as possible.

Evaluation: Grades will be based on:

Midterm Exam (In class)	30%
Week 10 Project	30%
Writing assignments including quizzes	20%
Group Work	20%

Schedule (Tentative and subject to change with notice)

(Weeks marked in red include group assignment, weeks marked in green include in-class writing assignments, week marked in blue is the midterm. Assignments (group or written) can be during either class meeting for the week)

(Screenings will frequently straddle two class meetings)

Week 1 (Mar 28)

"What is Media Aesthetics?"

"Preparing Viewers and Views: Distribution, Promotion and Exhibition"

There is no class on Wednesday. Instructor at a Conference

Week 2 (4/4 and 4/6)

"Elements of Film Form" (Read pp 36-49)

"Elements of Film Form" (Read pp 49-51)

In-class Writing Assignment 1

Week 3 (4/11 and 4/13)

"Film Typologies and Genre" (Read pp 66-105)

Screening: *Mother* (Bong Joon Ho, 128 minutes, 2009)

Group Assignment 1

Week 4 (4/18-4/20)

"What is Film Narrative?" (Read pp 122-166)

Screening: *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 96 minutes, 1939)

In class writing assignment 2

Week 5 (4/25-4/27)

"Defining Mise-en-Scene" (Read pp 172- 209)

Assorted Clips

Midterm review

Group Assignment 2

Week 6 (5/2 and 5/4)

On MONDAY (5/2) we will have the MIDTERM followed by partial screening of *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 119 min. 1941)

Screening of *Citizen Kane*

Week 7 (5/9 and 5/11)

"Regarding Cinematography" (pp 226-244)

"Regarding Cinematography" (pp 244-286)

Group Assignment 3

Week 8 (5/16 and 5/18)

"Types of Editing" (pp 340 – 375)

Assorted Clips

In class writing assignment 3

Week 9 (5/23 and 5/25)

Reading for Monday: "Elements of Film Sound" (pp 388-413)

Reading for Wednesday: "Elements of Film Sound" (pp 414-428)

Group Assignment 4

Week 10 (6/1)

Wrap-up

In class writing assignment 4

Final Projects due on June 10 by 5 pm under my office door