

ENG 260: Media Aesthetics

University of Oregon
Fall 2016
Tuesday/Thursday 10:00 – 11:50 a.m.
Location: Library 36 (Studio A)
Instructor: Zach Cheney

Office Hours: Tues/Thu 1:00 – 2:30
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Course Overview

English 260 is one of the four required courses that make up the Fundamentals of the Cinema Studies major. This course will focus on helping you build the critical skills and technical knowledge to understand, analyze, and interpret film and visual media. It will do so by highlighting the fundamental formal elements of film, television, and video. Using this vocabulary, we will explore the complex interplay of technical design, craft practices, industrial conventions, and aesthetic effects that shape our media production and experiences. We will also take time to consider how the construction of film and media help produce meaning(s) for a viewer. By the end of this class, you will be able to use this knowledge to complete technical concept matrices of motion-picture art and critically examine motion-picture narratives by ascertaining how their various parts contribute to cohesive wholes.

The Department's assessment procedure is based around six desired learning outcomes:

1. Read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. Draw on relevant historical and/or cultural information to situate texts within their social, political, and cultural contexts;
3. Perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
4. Write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
5. Employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
6. Employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis.

Required Texts:

Film Art: An Introduction; Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith; 11th Edition; 2016.

All films are considered "required texts," though they will be made available in-class as well as via library reserve.

Course Grading Breakdown:

In-Class Assignments:	25%
Midterm Exam:	25%
Midterm Assignment:	20%
Final Assignment	20%
Participation:	10%

This class will screen media that contain explicit depictions of sexuality, violence, adult themes, coarse language, racism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and other material you may find offensive. If this is an issue, reconsider whether taking this course is right for you.

Your course grade will be determined by the following percentages:

A+	97-100	B+	87-89.9	C+	77-79.9	D+	67-69.9
A	93-96.9	B	83-86.9	C	73-76.9	D	63-66.9
A-	90-92.9	B-	80-82.9	C	70-72.9	D-	60-62.9
Below 60 = F							

A Note on “Course Workload”

This class is scheduled for about 4 hours of classroom time each week. In addition to watching films, students must complete fairly significant reading and creative assignments outside of class. The amount of work and its evaluation is comparable to what is assigned in other major courses at similar instructional levels. In other words, we are not just “watching movies” for ten weeks.

Assignment Descriptions

(All assignments are required in order to pass the class.)

In-Class Assignments (25%): Generally, these assignments are group activities that will consist of “concept matrices.” Each “concept matrix” will focus on a particular element or aspect of media aesthetics. Not simply a “worksheet,” the concept matrix is a breakdown of the many categorical possibilities of a given aesthetic element and the space for you to locate those possibilities in the film under analysis. You will be required to collaborate in small groups following each Thursday’s short screening to exercise your analytical skills with a unique aesthetic object.

Midterm Exam (25%): The midterm exam will be administered via Canvas and completed outside of the classroom during Week 5. I will open the timed exam on the afternoon of Thursday 10/27 following our class meeting and close the exam at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday 10/30. The exam will consist of multiple choice, matching, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. More information will follow.

Midterm Assignment (20%): You will have two options from which to choose. Option #1 invites you to write 2 pages cross-referencing one of the textbook chapters with a moment (or moments) from one of our Tuesday films, *but the two should not match up on the syllabus*. For example, you may choose to apply the textbook’s chapter on editing (Week 5) to particular edits from *Back to the Future* (Week 6). Not simply observing the presence of a particular technique, you will also need to expound on how it functions aesthetically, producing meanings and/or effects. It will, of course, be important that you avoid making connections already explicitly made during our class meetings.

Option #2 invites you to produce a Vine (or other short video) showcasing a particular concept discussed in class or the textbook. The Vine/video should be interesting and innovative, also accompanied by a paragraph (250-400 words) explaining how your Vine/video makes use of the concept and produces an effect or meaning. If you choose this option, please submit it via web link. As such, the video will be public, and I may ask for your permission to show it to the class.

Final Assignment (20%): Collaborating in groups, you will produce a “Pop-Up Video.” You will be assigned a (more-or-less) narrative music video and asked to perform an analytical annotation of the video using Storygami, VideoAnt, YouTube, or another format. This will be your cumulative opportunity to employ the critical tools of media aesthetics analysis on a single, entire aesthetic object. Some time will be given in-class to develop your analysis, but you will need to coordinate times outside of class to complete the project as a group. Class time during Week 10 will be largely reserved for groups to present their work to the class. More information will come.

Participation (10%): I measure your participation by quality and quantity. I expect you to express yourself freely, but always with tolerance, patience, respect, and thoughtfulness. Your regular, engaged presence in the classroom is an asset to everyone’s learning experience and a key criterion of your own participation, as is the evidence that you have pondered the week’s reading and screenings. Grades are based on the rubrics below.

	A (100 or 90/100)	B (80/100)	C (70/100)	D/F (60 or 50/100)
Group Discussion	You frequently participate voluntarily. Your contributions are thoughtful and respectful. You listen well and make space for other classmates to speak.	You occasionally participate voluntarily. You listen thoughtfully and are willing to participate if called on.	You rarely participate voluntarily, but you will if called on.	You are often distracting, inappropriate, or disrespectful during large group discussion (sleeping, intentional rudeness, using your phone, etc.).
Preparedness	You are always punctual and well prepared. You always bring your textbook and have completed the required reading and assignments.	You are frequently punctual and prepared. You usually bring the textbook and have done the reading and assignments.	You are occasionally late or unprepared. You occasionally don’t bring the textbook or complete readings.	You are frequently late or unprepared. You rarely bring the textbook or complete the reading or assignments.

Grades: Grades will be updated periodically on Canvas. Please allow 1-2 weeks for grades to be updated after turning in an assignment. If you become concerned about your progress in the course, it is your responsibility to visit me during office hours to discuss your grade and any other class matters. Please do not wait until Week 10 to take interest in your academic progress.

About Screenings: We will watch required films, TV episodes, and videos in class. If you miss a screening for any reason, you are responsible for watching it on your own. Most films and TV episodes are available through Hulu, Netflix, YouTube, Amazon

Prime, and other online platforms. Additionally, all non-web-based screenings will be made available for checkout at the reserve desk at Knight Library. If you are unable to attend an in-class screening and cannot access the item at the reserve desk, you will need to find an alternative mode of accessing the film such as online rental (YouTube, Amazon, etc.).

Attendance:

0-2 absences: no penalty
3 absences: 5% final grade deduction
4 absences: 10% final grade deduction
5 absences: automatic final grade of “F”

Late Work: All work is due by the denoted date/time on Canvas or at the beginning of class. If you miss a deadline due to a bona fide emergency, contact me directly. If you know of a conflict ahead of time that will result in missing a deadline, make arrangements with me in advance. Otherwise, late work incurs a penalty of -5% per day late.

Email Communication: I will respond to all student email that demands an answer within 24 hours of receipt, except when this 24-hour period overlaps with a weekend. I encourage you to maintain professional email etiquette when initiating a dialogue regarding class affairs, whether with the instructor or a fellow student.

Academic Honesty: All assignments must adhere to standards of academic honesty outlined in the Student Handbook. Do not turn in work for ENG 260 that was assigned for other classes. This is not a research class. As such, there is no requirement to find outside sources to support or supplement your work. However, should you present any idea in print that is not your own, you must cite it properly. Plagiarism will result in failure for the course and additional sanctions determined by the director of Student Judicial Affairs. Please do not risk your grade or your academic career for the perceived benefit of claiming an idea that is not yours. I promise it is not worth it.

Registration: The only way to add or drop this course is through DuckWeb. I am powerless to with regard to this.

Access: The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me in Week 1 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 Disability Services in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or disabsrv@uoregon.edu.

Technology Use: To be respectful of others, cell phones must be turned off, have ringers silenced, or set to “vibrate” mode *before* the start of class. You may use laptops or tablets to take notes or follow along during lectures; make sure notifications are silenced on these devices as well. However, if you are not paying attention because of a technological device, I reserve the right to ask you to put it away.

Class Schedule

Week 1

Introduction: "Film" as Creativity, Technology, & Business

Tue 9/27: Welcome, Course Overview

Screening: *Lemonade* (Beyoncé, 2016, 46 min.)

For Thu: Read B/T Ch. 1 (2-48)

Thu 9/29: Film & Media Basics

Form & Style

Screening: *The Knick*, S1E1, "Method and Madness" (Cinemax, Soderbergh, 2014, 56 min.)

Week 2

Narrative

Tue 10/4: Screening: *His Girl Friday* (Hawks, 1940, 92 min.)

Overview of Narrative Terms & Principles

For Thu: Read B/T Ch. 3 (72-99) + 401-404

Thu 10/6: Narrative: Plot, Story, & Narration

Screening: *The Knick*, S1E2, "Mr. Paris Shoes" (Cinemax, Soderbergh, 2014, 49 min.)

Clip: *North By Northwest* (Hitchcock, 1959)

Week 3

Mise-en-Scène

Tue 10/11: Screening: *Magic Mike XXL* (Jacobs, 2015, 115 min.)

For Thu: Read B/T Ch. 4 (112-154)

Thu 10/13: Components of Mise-en-Scène

Screening: *Veep*, S2E3, "Alicia" (HBO, Morris, 2014, 27 min.)

Clips: "You Can't Put Blue Lights on Black Girls" (VMA b-t-s, 2006)
"Freedom" (Beyoncé at BET Awards, 2016)

Week 4

Cinematography

Tue 10/18: Screening: *Dressed to Kill* (De Palma, 1980, 105 min.)

For Thu: Read B/T Ch. 5 (159-215)

Thu 10/20: Space, Perspective, & Movement

Screening: *Hotel Chevalier* (Anderson, 2007, 13 min.)

Midterm Assignment Overview

Clips: Various

Week 5

Editing

Tue 10/25: Screening: *Le Bonheur* (Varda, 1964, 79 min.)

For Thu: Read B/T Ch. 6 (216-262)

Thu 10/27: Cutting for Relation, Continuity, & Rhythm

Screening: *Archer*, S4E3, "Legs" (Fordney/Reed, 2013, 21 min.)

Clips: *The Birds* (Hitchcock, 1963)
Arrested Development, S3E7, "Prison Break-In" (Berlinger/
Hurwitz, 2005, 22 min.)

Due Sun. 10/30: Online Midterm Exam (Canvas)

Week 6

Sound

Tue 11/1: Screening: *Back to the Future* (Zemeckis, 1985, 111 min.)

For Thu: Read B/T Ch. 7 (263-302)

Thu 11/3: Sound: "The most exciting moment"?

Screening: *The Act* (Kraker/Ware, 2004, 8 min.)

Clip: *The Conversation* (Coppola, 1974)

Week 7

Tue 11/8: Catch-Up/Recoup (Screenings/Clips TBA)

For Thu: TBA

Thu 11/10: Lecture, Discussion, Final Assignment Overview

Screening/Clips TBA

Week 8

Integration 1: Classical & Alternative Narrative

Tue 11/15: Screening: *Chungking Express* (Wong, 1994, 102 min.)

For Thu: Read T/B 428-432

Thu 11/17: From Hawks to Wong: Hollywood Goes Global

Week 9

Integration 2:

Tue 11/22: Screening: *Three Colors: Blue* (Kieslowski, 1993, 98 min.)

For Next Week: Read B/T 303-309

Thu: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

Week 10

Tue 11/29: Lecture & Discussion on *Blue*

Final Project Presentations

Thu 12/1: Final Project Presentations

Course Wrap-Up

Note: The instructor reserves the right to update the course syllabus pragmatically, especially regarding screening choices and class activities. In the event of changes, ample notice will be given to students, who will be given a chance to offer feedback.