Introduction to Film and Media

Winter 2011
CRN: 22293
MW 4-5:50 p.m.
MCK 214

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-4

People respond to movies in a myriad of ways, and there are many reasons for this. We have all stood in the lobby of a theater (or read multiple reviews online or elsewhere) and heard conflicting opinions from people who have just seen the same film. Disagreements can reveal a great deal about the assumptions underlying these various responses. Questioning our own assumptions and those of others is a good way to start considering movies. In this course, we will see that there are many productive ways of thinking about movies and many approaches that we can use to analyze them. Overall, the goal of this course is to introduce you to the basic skills necessary for a critical understanding of the movies as art, culture, and commerce.


**Attendance and Classroom Policies:** We will meet twice a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays. Attendance is required and taken daily. You must attend all class meetings and participate in all discussions. Screening and discussing films in a group setting is vital to critical learning. If you plan to be absent on a given day, you must contact me in advance to arrange make-up work/exams. The following attendance policy is straightforward and non-negotiable:

First and second absence excused, no questions asked. However, you are still responsible for any missed screenings, notes, or assignments due that day. Obtain these through a classmate or Blackboard; do not email me and ask what you missed. A THIRD absence, for any reason, will result in the automatic deduction of one-third a letter grade from your final grade (e.g., from an A to an A-), and the FOURTH will result in a full letter grade deduction (e.g., from an A to a B). On the FIFTH absence, the student will automatically receive a failing grade for the course.

Please note that arriving late, leaving early, and engaging in discourteous behavior (sleeping, conducting personal conversations during class, leaving cell phones turned on, or disrespecting others) will not be tolerated. Such behavior will result in your being counted absent without further notice.

**Reading Assignments:** Be sure to read the assigned text carefully, marking any passages that strike you as interesting or challenging. Reading assignments for the week must be completed before Monday’s class.

**Screenings:** You are required to attend the screenings each week and take notes on the films. If you are absent during a screening day, you must make arrangements to see the movie outside of class. 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. Note that many of these films are R-rated, as this course is developed with a mature viewing audience in mind. Please see me in advance if this will be an issue for you, as some of these films contain controversial images, language, and subject matter.

**Contact hours and workload:** Film and media courses are scheduled for four hours of classroom time each week to enable the instructor and students to screen films together as a group. In addition to watching films, students must complete significant reading and writing assignments, to be completed outside of class time. The amount of writing and its evaluation is comparable to what is assigned in literature courses at similar instructional levels. In other words, we aren’t just “watching movies” for ten weeks.

**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, your friends, parents, 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.

**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 in the first week of the term so we can make the necessary arrangements for your fullest access to the course and its activities.

**Evaluation:** Course grades will be based on the following:

- Midterm exam: 30%
- Reading quizzes: 10%
- Shot list: 20%
- Final paper: 30%
- Participation in class: 10%

= **100%**

Reading quizzes will cover the readings in the textbook as well as any supplementary readings made available on Blackboard, and may include multiple choice, t/f, matching, and short answer.

**Blackboard:** The Blackboard site for this course contains important course-related materials. Please check the site on a regular basis.

**Course Schedule**

**Week One: Visual Grammar/Photography**

- **1/3** Course overview; key terms (available on Blackboard)
  
  Screening: *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001, 147 minutes)

- **1/5** Read Chapter 1 (1-48)
Finish Mulholland Drive

Week Two: Mise-en-scène

1/10 Read Chapter 2 (49-101) and “Hollywood as Industry” (Blackboard)

1/12 Screening: Carrie (Brian De Palma, 1976, 98 minutes)

Week Three: Editing

1/17 No classes, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

1/19 Read Chapter 4 (147-224)
Screening: Jaws (Steven Spielberg, 1975, 124 minutes)

Week Four: Sound

1/24 Read Chapter 5 (225-263)
Finish Jaws

1/26 Screening: Carnival of Souls (Herk Harvey, 1962, 78 minutes)

Week Five: Drama

1/31 Midterm exam

2/2 Read Chapter 7 (319-363)
Screening: Double Indemnity (Billy Wilder, 1944, 107 minutes)
Topics for final paper due via email by 4 pm

Week Six: Story

2/7 Read Chapter 8 (365-405)

2/9 Screening: Nashville (Robert Altman, 1975, 159 minutes)

Week Seven: Writing

2/14 Read Chapter 9 (407-445)
Finish Nashville

2/16 Screening: Donnie Darko (Richard Kelly, 2001, 113 minutes)
Shot list assignment due

Week Eight: Ideology

2/21 Read Chapter 10 (447-493) and “Feminism and Film” (Blackboard)
2/23  Screening: *Working Girl* (Mike Nichols, 1988, 113 minutes)

**Week Nine: Critique**

2/28  Read Chapter 11 (495-534)

3/2  Screening: *Pee Wee’s Big Adventure* (Tim Burton, 1985, 90 minutes)

**Week Ten: Acting, or, “A Mouse, a Dog, and One Angry Duck: Unca Walt’s Star System”**

3/7  Read Chapter 6 (265-317)
Screening: Various Disney shorts from 1930s and 1940s
Final paper due

3/9  No class