People respond to movies in different ways, and there are many reasons for this. We have all stood in the lobby of a theater 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. If we explore these assumptions, we can ask questions about how sound they are. 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 knowledge of the movies as art and culture.

Required Text: *Thinking About Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying*, Third Edition. Peter Lehman & William Luhr (New York: Blackwell Publishing). You must bring this text to class every day (even on screening days). If you don’t bring the text (including PDFs) to class, your participation grade will suffer. Access to Blackboard is also required and [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) is highly recommended.

Attendance and Classroom Policies: We will meet twice each week, on Mondays and Wednesdays. Attendance is required and checked 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. 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 such as sleeping, conducting personal conversations during class, leaving cell phones turned on, or disrespecting other people’s opinions will not be tolerated. Such behavior will result in your being counted absent.

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

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 a few 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.

Contact hours and workload: Film and media courses are scheduled for 4 hours of classroom time each week to enable the professor 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.

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 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:
- Film analysis essays (2x) 30%
- Midterm Exam 30%
- Final exam 30%
- Participation & Presentation 10%

Total 100%

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

**Film Analysis Essays:** You will be required to write two critical film analysis essays during the term. Each essay should be 4-6 pages in length. Specific prompts and guidelines for each will be posted on Blackboard. *Your writing should make an informed assertion about a specific moment, image, idea, or character from the film.* Do not attempt to write about everything all at once. The goal of these postings is to generate an ongoing discussion about film and its place in our culture. At the same time your writing will help provide me with a sense of how closely you are watching the films and how well you are able to apply material from lecture, text, and our discussions toward an understanding of the films.

**Some Basics for the Essays:**
1. **Title & Formatting:** Format your essay with your name and the date of your entry. Include an interesting title that clues the reader in to your argument and the film you’re writing about. Make sure to underline film titles, quote when needed, and check your spelling.
2. **Thesis:** Your introductory paragraph should include a thesis (a “critical insight”) that clearly and directly states your main claim. A thesis must be an argument, not a statement of fact.
3. **Paragraphs:** Use paragraph organization to divide your essay into a logical sequence that explains and defends your thesis. Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that relates to your thesis. Use transitions to ensure that your essay sticks to ONE main point and articulates it.
4. **Evidence:** You cannot make claims in a paper unless you provide compelling evidence to back them up. Do not just summarize the film; you must use specific examples from the film(s) to prove your thesis — analyze the evidence. This is a key aspect of the postings and a critical writing skill you will carry on to other courses. **One** correctly cited quotation from the textbook or weekly PDFs (other than visual grammar PDF) is **required** for each posting.
5. **Voice:** Essays should be written in clear academic prose and avoid sarcasm. Essays are analytical and should not be focused on opinion or whether you liked or disliked a film.
6. **Grammar & Fluency:** Make sure to **use present tense** when describing the ongoing action in the film(s). **Proofread** the essay to ensure the nouns, pronouns, and verbs of each sentence agree in tense and number (singular/plural) and that the essay uses clear and precise language, as well as varied diction and sentence structure.

**Guidelines for Presentations:**
Each student must sign up for **1 presentation** during the term. Your presentation must relate to the reading and terms assigned that week. If you are unable to attend your presentation and your absence is **excused** you may write a 2-page essay on the week’s reading to make up the points.

Presentation groups will include approx. **5 students**. You **MUST** know the names of 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. (Hit the Communications tab to link to email).

Each group will bring in a 1-3 minute media clip that relates to the reading/film that is our focus for the week. (This clip could be from a film, TV series, YouTube, etc. It is **YOUR** responsibility to make sure our classroom technology can support the media you plan to show.) The group will introduce and screen the chosen clip and each
student should prepare a 2 minute presentation/argument about the clip that relates to the topics/formal techniques of the week. Feel free to write this up and use it if it makes you more comfortable presenting in front of a class. Do not overlap other presenters, and try not to repeat terms used in previous weeks unless you think it vital.

Presentations will be cut off at **10 minutes max**, although they may lead to class discussion. It is highly recommended that one group member serve as moderator to keep time for the group.

**Expectations for presentation:**
1. All members must be present and arrive prepared to begin as soon as class starts.
2. Everyone in the group should participate equally. Groups MUST discuss who will do what before the presentation to ensure a smooth presentation and avoid overlap.
3. Groups should have questions (at least 2) ready to ask the class, and they should be ready to have questions asked of them. Questions to and from the presenters should close the presentation and bridge us into discussion for that day.
4. Audience members should give presentations their full attention and be prepared to ask questions and provide insights that will aid in the day’s discussion. Group clips and issues discussed may be included on exams if relevant.
5. Groups often have “issues.” Contact me only if a problem in the group is serious.

**Basic Visual Grammar and Rhetoric**

**shot**: a single, continuous, uninterrupted run of the camera

**sequence**: the spliced shots making up a single significant dramatic unit [aka scene]

**montage**: the French term for editing, referring to any extraordinary or exceptionally artful sequence of shots; the art or editing of such a sequence

**mise en scène**: everything in the frame, including sets, props, costumes, lighting, and actors’ postures and proximities; that which makes up the film’s visible universe and generates much of its mood and meaning

**camera angle**: a high-angle shot is made with the camera looking down, as if superior to what it sees; a low-angle shot is made with the camera looking up, as if the viewer were awed or cowed by what is seen

**camera distance**: the long shot shows at least a human form fully visible within the frame but sometimes shows a wide panorama seen by a camera even further away (aka extreme long shot); the medium shot is made with the camera seemingly near what it sees but not close to it, familiar but not intimate, showing a human figure from the waist up; the close-up fills the screen with the image of any object the size of a human face or smaller, generating strong viewer attentiveness and feelings of intimacy

**camera movement**: the pan is a camera’s horizontal pivot across a panorama or wide scene while otherwise immobile on a tripod, creating the impression of a head turning deliberately to inspect a field of vision; the tilt involves pivoting a camera vertically from a fixed position and height, as if someone were looking up or down; and the tracking shot is when the camera moves smoothly on tracks, trucks, or dollies toward or alongside whatever it sees

**diegesis**: the narrative “world” of the film, including all the diegetic elements such as actions and sounds that happen within the film’s make-believe setting; this term is often used to distinguish between such effects and those that are non-diegetic.
Schedule:

Week One: What is Film?
M Course overview; key terms; Screen: various clips and “The Kid” (Charlie Chaplin, 1921).
W Read: Chapter 1 and Visual Grammar (bring to class)

Week Two: Narrative Structures and Industrial Filmmaking
M Read: Chapter 2; Screen: Rashomon (Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1950, 88 minutes)
W Group 1 Presentation.

Week Three: Formal Analysis
M Screen: Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, US, 1941, 119 minutes)
W Read: Chapter 3 and Chapter 15; Screen: Citizen Kane; Group 2 Presentation

Week Four: Authorship
M Read: Chapter 4; Screen: Notorious (Alfred Hitchcock, US, 1946, 101 minutes)
W Group 3 Presentation

Week Five: Genres
M Read Chapter 5 and “The Woman’s Film” by Molly Haskell (Blackboard); Screen: Now Voyager.
W Group 4 Presentation; Midterm Exam

Week Six: Representations of Class
M Read Chapter 14; Screen: Moulin Rouge (Baz Luhrmann, Australia, 2001 127 minutes)
W Group 5 Presentation (Film Analysis #1 due)

Week Seven: Actors and Stars
M Read: Chapter 7; Screen: Pirates of the Caribbean
W Group 6 Presentation

Week Eight: Gender and Sexuality
M Read: Chapter 12 and Angela McRobbie, “Post-Feminism” (Blackboard); Screen: Miss Congeniality
W Group 7 Presentation

Week Nine: Race and Spectatorship
M Read: Chapter 13 and “Black Women’s Response to the Color Purple” by Jacqueline Bobo (Blackboard); Screen: The Color Purple
W Group 8 Presentation

Week Ten: Consumer as Producer: Vids and Political Remix
M Read “Women, Star Trek, and the early development of fannish vidding” by Francesca Coppa and “DIY Video 2010: Political Remix” (Parts 1,2, and 3) by: Henry Jenkins (both on Blackboard)
W Final exam review session. (Film Analysis #2 due) Group 9 Presentation

Week Eleven: The Final Exam will be held during our scheduled final exam period (see schedule of classes for day/time) The last exam will be comprehensive.