Course Objectives: This course aims to develop your media literacy by providing you with a precise set of critical tools for analyzing cinematic and televisual texts. Although our primary focus will be on the formal analysis of image and sound rather than media history or social issues, we will study the interplay between artistic and social conventions and the role of ideology in shaping the meaning of media texts. We will view and critique numerous film and television clips, as well as a number of feature-length films. Panel presentations will enable students to shape course content by choosing media clips that illustrate concepts covered by readings and lectures. While not oriented toward the technical or industrial aspects of media production, the course builds skills that are beneficial to both media producers and consumers.

Required Materials:
The Film Experience, An Introduction, 2nd edition, Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White (2009)

Course Requirements and Policies:
Evaluation:
1. Group presentation and classroom participation: 10 percent
2. Midterm exam: 20 percent
3. Discussion Board Posts: 20 percent
4. Shot list and thesis: 20 percent
5. Final exam: 30 percent

Unless otherwise noted, all work must be typed, with one-inch margins. To facilitate discussion, read the assigned material before class on the date it is due.

Group Presentations: During the term you will help prepare and present a group presentation to the rest of the class on a given topic. Take advantage of this opportunity to share relevant clips from your favorite media, or to prepare a creative project that illustrates your understanding of the topic. Detailed instructions to follow.

Discussion Board Posts: During the course of the term you are required to compose four critical responses to the media we watch and the reading that we do. You will post these writings on the course Discussion Board available through Blackboard. In all cases your writing should make an informed assertion (stated as a thesis) about a specific moment, image, idea, motif, or character from the media of the week. You should strive to write thought-provoking, engaging and even controversial responses. The goal here is not only to produce insightful comments, but also to provoke thoughtful discussion and generate interest. You may include hyperlinks, images, and/or other postable materials with your response, so long as it can be easily read/downloaded by the rest of us (please, no 2hr downloads of Juno!). You should always support your claims with specific formal evidence from the media we watch in class.

Graded threads must be at least 500 words in length and must include a word count at the end of the post. Shorter comments to threads are welcome and productive (and will positively contribute to your participation grade), but will not count as one of the four required board posts.

The due date for weekly posts is 8pm Sundays (i.e., the Sunday concluding the week in question).
Exams: You will take a midterm exam in week 5. It will cover all material from weeks 1-5. The final will be at 7:00pm on Tuesday June 7. It will be cumulative, and it will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions that deal with terms and concepts from class meetings and readings, group presentations, and media viewed in class.

Attendance, late work and other policies: Success in the course relies on your attendance and active participation. You are allowed up to 2 absences for any reason, although absences will, of course, affect your participation grade. Your final total grade will be lowered by at least one step for a subsequent absence (ex: B to B- for a third absence). Four unexcused absences will result in failure for the course. I expect you to arrive on time and prepared for each day’s work. Two late appearances = one absence; arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving more than 15 minutes early = one absence. Not arriving prepared (without textbook, assignments, etcetera) will result in your being counted absent. Disrespectful behavior such as sleeping, conducting personal conversations during class, leaving cell phones turned on, or disrespecting other people’s points of view will not be tolerated. Such behavior will result in your being counted absent that day.

All work for this class is due to me at the beginning of class or at the time specified on the syllabus. I will not grade work turned in by e-mail.

Grading Scale:

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Classroom standards: Please take active responsibility for creating a respectful learning environment within the classroom. Pay full attention to whoever has the floor. Refrain from side conversations. Turn off electronic devices. If you want to use your laptop to take notes in class, please move to the back of the class and dim your screen so that you do not disturb your colleagues. Remember that games and Internet searches are disruptive. Do your best to avoid leaving and re-entering the classroom during screenings, lectures, or discussions. Controversial subjects will come up throughout the term. Think before you speak.

Communication: I only have email on campus, so while I will try to reply to your email within 48 hours, this will not always be possible. Please consult our Blackboard site or a colleague if you need a quick answer to a question regarding our course. You can also consult with me during my office hours. Please do not contact me with questions regarding assignments 24 hours or less before the assignment is due.

Disability Resources: If you have a documented disability and anticipate the need for accommodations in this course, please notify me as soon as possible. Please bring a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your approved accommodations. If you do not have a notification letter, contact Disability Services at 346-1155.

Academic Honesty: All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. For the consequences of academic dishonesty, refer to the Schedule of Classes published quarterly. Violations will be taken seriously and are noted on student disciplinary records. Please use MLA citation practices when citing work for this course. If you are in doubt regarding the requirements, please consult with the instructor before you complete any requirement of the course.
Week 1: Cinematography
3/29  Introduction and Visions of Light (AFI, 1992, 92 minutes)
3/31  Discuss Corrigan/White Chapter 1, Ch. 2 (15-38), and Ch. 4; groups assigned

Week 2: Mise-en-Scène
4/05  Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee, 1989, 120 minutes); pdf on Do… on Blackboard
4/07  Discuss C/W Ch. 3; 438-42 on ideology; 429-33 on African American cinema

Week 3: Editing
4/12  Bonnie and Clyde (Arthur Penn, 1967, 112 minutes)
4/14  Discuss C/W Ch. 5

  Group 1 on editing

Week 4: Sound
4/19  Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1967, 109 minutes)
4/21  Discuss C/W Ch. 6

  Group 2 on sound

Week 5: Exam, followed by Narrative, Genre, and Gender
4/26  ** Midterm exam; begin Clueless (Amy Heckerling, 1995, 97 minutes)
4/28  Finish Clueless and discuss C/W Ch. 7 and Ch. 10 (331-45)

Week 6: Other Cinematic Shapes: Documentary and Experimental Films
5/03  Meshes of the Afternoon (Maya Deren, 1943, 14 minutes) and other short films TBA
5/05  Con’t C/W 424-29 and 492-94 on feminist history and theory; Ch. 8

Week 7: Documentary con’t; Television—Structures, Systems and Style
5/10  Discuss C/W Ch. 9

  Group 3 on documentary/experimental film
5/12  Butler Ch. 1 Ebb and Flow in the Postmodern Era

  ** Shot list and thesis due

Week 8: TV: Narrative
5/17  Butler Ch. 2 Narrative Structures: Television Stories

  Group 4 on the sitcom or soap opera
5/19  Butler Ch. 3 Building Narratives: Character, Actor Star

  Group 5 on character/actor/star

Week 9: Non-Narrative TV; More TV Genres
5/24  Butler Ch. 12 The Television Commercial

  Group 6 on commercials
5/26  Butler Ch. 11 Animated Television: The Narrative Cartoon

  Group 7 on animation

Week 10: Conclusions
5/31  Butler Ch. 4 Reality TV

  Group 8 on Reality TV/news
6/02  Looking Back, and Looking Ahead

Week 11: Final Exam –7:00pm on Tuesday, June 7