

ENG 260: Media Aesthetics (Winter 2019)

CRN 22788, 4 Credits
Class Time: MW 10-11:50am
PLC 239 Location: MCK 214

Instructor: Stephen Rust, PhD
Office Hours: M-W 9-9:50am
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This course explores the fundamentals of film and media aesthetics, including narrative, mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and sound. By learning how to analyze film and utilize proper cinematic language, students will begin to critically understand film as an art form and a product of culture. By the end of the course, students will see all aesthetic elements in a film as a series of choices made through the complex collaboration of artists and craftspeople. Students will also gain the key tools and concepts that they will implement in their own creative work in subsequent courses in the cinema studies major.

Required Materials:

Film Studies: An Introduction by Ed Sikov. Columbia University Press. Available as a free eBook through the UO Library website or for purchase in paperback at the Duckstore.

Access to Canvas for Additional Course Readings and Materials
Access to Kanopy on the UO Library Website

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Understand how to analyze the aesthetics of film and media in class discussions, group projects, writing assignments, and exams.
2. Develop a strong grasp of the concepts and analytical frameworks that will help you succeed in future cinema and media studies classes.
3. Obtain technical language and concepts that can be applied to your own filmmaking and creative work.
4. Deepen your knowledge and appreciation of a range of cinematic traditions, eras, filmmakers, genres, and styles.

Department Learning Outcomes:

Students that successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Read media and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension with an understanding of their conventions;
2. Draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
3. Perform critical, formal analysis of cinematic and other media 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 acknowledgement and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis.

Screenings

Watching films and television shows in a classroom requires you pay close attention to and take detailed notes on *how* the events unfold on screen and *why* each film takes its own specific form. If you are absent during a screening day you will need to make arrangements to see the film on your own. Films for this course may contain content that is difficult for some viewers; if this will be an issue for you please discuss it with me right away.

Late Work and Attendance

Any in-class work missed as a result of absence cannot be made up. Group presentations or projects turned in late will be penalized 10% per day. **Two** absences for whatever reason are excused. **Three, four, or five** absences each drop final course grade by 1/3 letter grade (A- to B+, etc). **Six absences** will result in automatic course failure.

Student Resources

Students with Disabilities

The university strives to create inclusive learning environments. Notify me if there are aspects of the course that result in disability related barriers to your participation. You are encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at (541) 346-1155 or uoac@uoregon.edu.

Academic Support

The University Teaching and Learning Center provides resources to help students succeed, including workshops, courses, tutors, and mentors. For a list of services, please visit: tlc.uoregon.edu

Discrimination and Harassment

Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, including sex or gender based violence, may seek information on safe.uoregon.edu, respect.uoregon.edu, titleix.uoregon.edu, or aaeo.uoregon.edu or contact the non-confidential Title IX office (541-346-8136), AAEO office (541-346-3123), or Dean of Students offices (541-346-3216), or call the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE for help.

Class Climate

Open inquiry, freedom of expression, and respect for differences are fundamental to a comprehensive and dynamic education. This course's learning environment is committed to upholding these ideals by encouraging exploration, engagement, and expression of divergent perspectives and diverse identities.

Academic Misconduct

The University Student Conduct Code defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g., quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the question with the instructor.

****Note that buying or selling class notes, study guides, exams, and papers from other individuals or services violates this course's policy. Students found in violation of this policy risk failing the course.**

Assignments/Grading: A+ = 100-97%, A = 93-96%, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 89-87, etc)

10% Daily Participation in class Activities

15% Group Reading Presentation

20% Group Keywords Project

20% Group Shot List and Video Essay

35% Final Exam

Participation

This is a participation-based class. You will be working together with your classmates on a series of assignments and will be relying on each other for the quality of your work and your grades in the course. Working in cinema and media careers required teamwork and engaged effort, qualities this course will cultivate through the three group assignments and daily discussions and activities in class sessions

Group Reading Presentation (Groups of 6-7)

Your presentation will relate to the textbook reading and terms assigned that week but will not simply repeat the information in the textbook. Presentation groups will include approx. 6-7 students. Two students will volunteer as coordinators to document group meetings and decisions about what each person in the group will present. The coordinators will introduce the group and take no more than 1 minute to introduce the presenters.

Your group will show a 1-4 minute media clip that relates to the reading that is our focus for the week. (This clip could be from a film, TV series, YouTube, etc. I). The group will introduce and screen the clip and each student should prepare a 3- minute presentation related to the clip or the week's reading. The group can divide sections of the textbook and elements of the clip analysis so that each person has an assigned topic to work on at home to complete their portion of the

Each student should prepare 4-6 slides using Prezi, Powerpoint, or Google Docs that relate to the content of the presentation. There must be NO – Zero, Nada, Zilch – TEXT on any of the slides. Images and graphics only. This means spend no more than 30 seconds of your presentation discussing how the images on the screen connect to the reading or analyze the aesthetic elements of the clip that you showed. Group moderators will also create an introduction slide.

Your group must collaborate outside of class to decide on presentation topics, coordinate slides, and practice your presentation. Presentations will be cut off at 20 minutes max, although they may lead to class discussion. Get to know 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 Canvas.

Group Keywords Project (Groups of 4)

Working in groups of 4 you will design a visual project incorporating approximately sixty annotated keywords that any student preparing for upper division coursework in cinema studies or a related field should have in their scholarly toolkit. Keywords are terms that represent important concepts, theories, and movements within a particular field of study. I will provide a list to get you started.

For each keyword annotation you will provide:

- a concise but complete definition from the textbook a related source
- a 200-300 word description providing important background information about the term and/or how the term applies to the study of film/media texts;
- Visual examples and representations of the keyword
- Citations for the any sources cited (such as the textbook)

You will create a design template using Google slides, powerpoint, or other shared software.

Group Shot List and Analytical Essay (Groups of 4)

Step 1: Choose a 2-3 minute scene or sequence from any film available on the UO Library Kanopy service and complete a Shot List for 15-20 shots from the film using the template provided by the [Yale University Film Analysis Website](#). Go above and beyond what they describe as a “rudimentary” example of academic film analysis notetaking. Your shot list should fill roughly 4 pages of a Microsoft Word document using a standard size 12 font. You will use this grid to take detailed notes on elements of editing, mise-en-scène, cinematography, and sound design. You will use these notes to complete the next step in this assignment. You will work in groups of 4 to complete the assignment.

Step 2: Each person in your group will compose a 600-700 word paper analyzing one specific technical aspect of the scene: mise-en-scene, cinematography, sound, and editing. The group will then meet to compose a 300 word introduction and 400 word conclusion and create your video essay.

Step 3: Using Screencasting software such as Screencast-o-matic your group will compose a video essay combining sound and images from the scene with your written essays. You will produce and edit the video as a group. See Canvas for tutorial videos and more information.

Final Exam (Solo)

Your final exam will be a multiple-choice, true/false, matching style exam focusing on questions from the course textbook, lectures, and screenings. Short answer questions and essay questions will included. We will review in class during Week 10. The exam will take place in McK 214 at 10:15am on Tuesday, March 19. No early exams.

Extra Credit (Solo or Groups of 2+)

Attend a screening of any film at the *Bijou* or *Bijou Metro* theaters with one or more classmates and the meet afterwards to discuss the film; write a ½ page single-spaced film review and a 1 page single space summary and reflection on your post-film discussion with your classmate(s) for a 3% boost to your final course grade. **OR** Attend any Cinema Studies or English Department sponsored event this term with a classmate and write a ½ page single-spaced summary and ½ page reflection on the event for a 3% boost to your final course grade. 2% if you do either activity solo.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Historical Development of Narrative Cinema

M, 7 Jan. Screen Edison, the Lumieres, Melies, Porter, Griffith, and Disney

W, 9 Jan. Read before class: *Film Studies* Introduction; Watch: “Birth of the Cinema” on Kanopy
Screen in class: *The Kid* (Chaplin, 1921) and *Un Chien Andalou* (Bunuel, 1927)

Week 2: Mise-en-scène

M, 14 Jan. Read before class: *Film Studies*: Chapter 1 and [Wall-e: The Shot Tells the Story](#)

Screen in class: Select Scenes from *The Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson 2001-03)

W, 16 Jan. Screen in class: The Making of the Lord of the Rings bonus features
Class activity – Create a media aesthetics production tree - Bring a laptop to class

Week 3: Cinematography

M, 21 Jan. MLK Holiday – No class meeting

W, 23 Jan. Read before class: *Film Studies*: Chapters 2 and 3 and watch: “Creating the Magic of Film – Cinematography” on Kanopy
Class activity – Finding cinematography tutorials – Bring a laptop to class
Chapter 2 & Chapter 3 Reading Groups Present

Week 4: Editing and Sound

M, 28 Jan. Read before class: *Film Studies* Chapters 4 and 5

Screen in class: *Gran Torino* (Clint Eastwood, 2008)

W, 30 Jan. In-class activity on film, photography, comics and still vs. sequential editing
Chapter 4 & Chapter 5 Reading Groups Present

*Students are invited to meet visiting artists Ann Le and Thi Bui at events coordinated through the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art in the afternoon and evening.

Week 5: Narrative

M, 4 Feb. Screen in class: *Daughters of the Dust* (Julie Dash, 1991)
Keywords projects due before class today

W, 6 Feb. Read before class: *Film Studies* Chapter 6 and 7
Begin work on Group Shot list (bring a laptop to class)

Week 6: Directors and Actors

M, 11 Feb. Read before class: *Film Studies* Chapters 8 and 9

Screen in class *Chungking Express* (Wong Kar-Wai, 1994)

W, 13 Feb. In-class activity on auteur theory & star theory (bring a laptop to class)
Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 Reading Groups Present

Week 7: Genre and Special Effects

M, 18 Feb. Read before class: *Film Studies* Chapters 10 and 11

Screen in class: *Westworld* (Michael Crichton, 1973)

W, 20 Feb. Screen and Discuss: *Westworld* (Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy, 2016-)

Week 8: Writing about Film

M, 25 Feb. Read before class: *Film Studies* Chapter 12

In-class peer review of group shot lists and essay drafts

W, 27 Feb. **Group meetings with Dr. Rust to review essay drafts and shot lists**

Week 9: Documentary Aesthetics and Residual Media

M, 4 Mar. Read before class: “Screens” in *Greening the Media* by Maxwell and Miller (Oxford UP, 2015). PDF on Canvas, full eBook access via UO library website

Screen in class: “Ghana: Digital Dumping Ground” (Peter Klein, 2010)

W, 6 Mar. **Group Presentations of Video Essays; Final drafts of all project items due**

Week 10: The Digital Future

M, 11 Mar. Watch before class: “New American Cinema and the Digital Revolution” on Kanopy

Screen in class: *Who Killed Captain Alex?* (I.G.G. Nabwana and VJ Emmie, 2010)

W, 13 Mar. Final Exam Review

Finals Week

T, 19 Mar. **Final exam from 10:15-11:50 in McK 214.**