

ENG 110: Introduction to Film & Media – “Survey of US Cinema”

University of Oregon
Winter 2017
Tuesday/Thursday 2:00 – 3:50 p.m.
Location: 185 Lillis
Instructor: Zach Cheney

Office Hours: Tues 10:30 – 1:30
Office: PLC 214
zcheney@uoregon.edu
@zacheney
541-346-0053

Course Overview

English 110 is a lower-division elective that satisfies the Arts & Letters group requirement by critically examining film and media objects. This incarnation of the course is titled, “Survey of US Cinema.” We will screen a sampling of films associated with US/American cinema throughout its relatively short history since the sound era—beginning with important “genres,” progressing into cinematic “modes,” and ultimately examining how movies in our national context reflect ideological dispositions rooted in their own histories. Far from being exhaustive, this entry point into the world of film and media will launch an introductory yet substantial investigation of an important and identifiable sector of film and media. The sampling of American film before us will allow us to develop our analytical understanding of cinematic techniques, film history, production background, and visual culture.

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:

All assigned readings are posted to Canvas. Since you are required to bring **hard copies** of all readings to class on assigned days, I have also posted a single document of all the readings that you may choose to print out in its entirety. No electronic reading devices are allowed in class.

All films are considered “required texts.” When possible, I will place DVD copies of our screened films on reserve at Knight Library. However, you should be able to stream (purchase/rent) anything on the syllabus. Suggestions for streaming: Netflix, Hulu, FilmStruck, Amazon, Kanopy, Crackle, iTunes, and YouTube.

Course Grading Breakdown:

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|-----------------------|-----|
| In-Class Assignments: | 25% |
| Midterm Exam: | 25% |
| Midterm Assignment: | 15% |
| Final Essay: | 25% |
| Quizzes: | 10% |

Note on Film Content:

Films screened in this course may contain content objectionable to some viewers. Within the context of intellectual engagement, we will treat everything as worthy of analysis. If this troubles you, consider whether the course is right for you.

Your course grade will be determined by the following percentages:

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---------|----|--------------|----|---------|----|---------|
| A | 93-100 | B+ | 87-89.9 | C+ | 77-79.9 | D+ | 67-69.9 |
| A- | 90-92.9 | B | 83-86.9 | C | 73-76.9 | D | 63-66.9 |
| | | 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.)

Quizzes (10%): In-class quizzes covering the week’s reading(s) and screening(s) will be regularly given, incentivizing students’ completion of each and encouraging critical thinking about them. Quizzes will tend to be lighter in the course’s first half (on account of a midterm exam to cover the material) and heavier in the second half (in lieu of a final exam). *In the event of lateness or absences, there will be no make-up quizzes, but I will drop each student’s (one) lowest quiz grade at the end of the term. This effectively erases up to one “zero” (or otherwise lowest) grade from the record.*

In-Class Assignments (25%): A series of in-class assignments—often collaborative—will allow you to discuss ideas and produce writing together. Groups will be graded on these assignments based on the quality of the written component as well as their participation during assignment sessions, including an oral component (when applicable). (The Week 1 Canvas discussion is included in this portion.)

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 2/9 following our class meeting and close the exam at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday 2/12. The exam will consist of multiple choice, matching, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. More information will follow.

Midterm Assignment (15%): Produce a video annotation (using Storygami or VideoAnt) of a 1-5-minute clip from some film or media (your “primary text”) not screened in this course that connects ideas from course content (readings, web resources, lectures) with that primary text. The clip itself may exceed 5 minutes, but the section of your analysis should not. In order to achieve an “A” grade, a minimum of 10 annotations should be present, but each of these should be substantive in its quality of thought and application of knowledge. The assignment will be due by 11:59 p.m. Sun. 2/5.

Final Essay (25%): As this is (technically) an English course, there is a basic requirement that students produce substantial written work. In-class writing assignments

as well as the midterm assignment apply toward this, but the final essay gives you a chance to create an argument that exploits your now-blossomed understanding of film and media. This 5-6-page essay challenges you to take an inspired position about some aspect of US film and/or media. The essay is intended to be neither comprehensive in its coverage of US cinema nor a report/research paper. Rather, you should think outside the primary texts of this course into other arenas, extending your grip on the subject of American film and TV by locating one of the countless other avenues that might have been the subject of “Week 11.” A list of possible topics for the final essay is forthcoming, along with technical requirements. Due 12:30 p.m. Wed. 3/22 via Canvas.

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.

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 48 hours of receipt (usually sooner), except when this 48-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

(US) Cinema: An Introduction

Tuesday: Introductions, syllabus, terms, shorts? Episode?

Reading: “It’s Just A Movie,” Greg Smith

Thursday: Screen *Hail, Caesar!* (Coen Brothers, 2016)

Assignment due by 11:59 p.m. Sun. 1/15: Post a >200-word entry and/or response to Canvas (under “Discussions”) triangulating Smith’s essay with *Hail, Caesar!* See details on Canvas.

Week 2

Classical Hollywood: Screwball Comedy

Tuesday: Screen *Bringing Up Baby* (Howard Hawks, 1938)

Reading: “*Something’s Gotta Give* and the Classical Screwball Comedy,” Kelli Marshall

Thursday: Lecture & Discussion

Concept: Genre & Mise-en-scène

Week 3

Classical Hollywood: The Western

Tuesday: Screen *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956)

Reading: ““They Ain’t White Anymore, They’re Comanch’: Race, Racism and Fear of Miscegenation in *The Searchers*,” Brenton Priestley

Thursday: Lecture & Discussion

Concept: Cinematography

Week 4

Classical Hollywood: Cold War US Cinema

Tuesday: Screen *North By Northwest* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959)

Reading: “*North By Northwest* and Hitchcockian Romance,” Lesley Brill

Thursday: Lecture & Discussion

Concept: Editing

MIDTERM ASSIGNMENT: DUE SUNDAY 2/5 11:59 P.M. VIA CANVAS

Week 5

New Hollywood: High Concept & Blockbuster Cinema

Tuesday: Screen *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1980)

Reading: “Beyond the Blockbuster,” David Bordwell

Thursday: Lecture & Discussion

Concept: Narrative

MIDTERM EXAM: DUE SUNDAY 2/12 11:59 P.M. VIA CANVASWeek 6

New Hollywood: Art Cinema & Auteurs

Tuesday: Screen *Days of Heaven* (Terrence Malick, 1978)**Reading: “The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice,” David Bordwell**

Thursday: Lecture & Discussion

Concept: Sound

Week 7

Contemporary US Cinema: Romantic Comedy

Tuesday: Screen *Waitress* (Adrienne Shelley, 2007)**Reading: “What Have Clothes Got To Do With It?: Romantic Comedy and the Female Gaze,” Paula Marantz Cohen**

Thursday: Lecture & Discussion

Concept: Point of View

Week 8

Contemporary US Cinema: Remix, Pastiche, & Mashup

Tuesday: Screen *Kill Bill, Vol. 1* (Quentin Tarantino, 2005)**Reading: “Cinema 3.0: The Interactive-Image,” Kristen Daly**

Thursday: Lecture & Discussion

Concept: Interactivity

Week 9

Contemporary US Cinema: Ideology & Culture

Tuesday: Screen *They Live* (John Carpenter, 1988)**Reading: *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*, Michael Freeden (excerpt)**

Thursday: Lecture & Discussion

Concept: Ideology

Week 10

Contemporary US Cinema: Going Global

Tuesday: Screen *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006)**Watch Video Essays: “*Children of Men: Don’t Ignore the Background*,” & Slavoj Zizek on *Children of Men* (Canvas)**

Thursday: Lecture & Discussion

Concept: Intertextuality

FINAL ESSAY: DUE BY 12:30 P.M. WED. 3/22 VIA CANVAS**THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM FOR THIS CLASS.**