

ENGLISH 260: "Media Aesthetics"  
CRN: 22233, TR, at 10 am  
Mck 214  
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### **What is Aesthetics**

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that deals with art, or more generally what the *Oxford English Dictionary* calls that of "taste, or of the perception of the beautiful." **The discipline in its modern form is primarily concerned with issues surrounding the creation, interpretation, and ultimate appreciation of works of art, and so it involves how the experience of such material is mediated through the individual sensitivity of the beholder, and the way the experience of it is shaped through presentation by cultural conventions** such as the museum exhibition.

### **What is Media**

The main means of mass communication regarded collectively including broadcasting, television, cinema, the internet etc

### **Scope of this course**

This course will build on our abilities to watch, analyze and write about media objects, particularly film. We will learn to recognize, define and elaborate on various kinds of cinema (fiction, documentary etc), genres (musical, western, horror etc), elements of narrative (script, plot, point of view); we will develop an understanding of and gain familiarity with technical vocabulary used to analyze film form; we will examine in details aspects of film aesthetics including mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, sound, and effects and learn to use terminologies relevant to each aspect of filmmaking as well as identify and analyze these elements in particular films. Finally, the course will situate its exploration of aesthetic concepts in a historical and cultural frame.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Recognize, identify, and define the main elements through which film is analyzed including light, color, space, time, motion and sound.

Explain the significance of different aesthetic elements that comprise the film experience

Learn to analyze how these elements individually and collectively contribute to the perception and appreciation of cinema

Use terminologies specific to film aesthetics

Gain some knowledge of the historical and cultural contexts through which cinema has evolved as an art form

### **Class Materials**

The required textbook for the class is Looking at Movies (Fourth edition) by Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan.

I will screen films and clips in class and post readings, notes and links on Canvas course site on an ongoing basis. **Please check Canvas before each and every class meeting for updates.**

Additional Readings – if any - will become available **a week before they are due** to be read. The reading will mention the due date by which it needs to be read.

Please allow a minimum of two weeks for midterm to be graded and returned and a week for shorter assignments and quizzes.

### **Class Meetings & Procedures**

1. The class meets 2 times a week and attendance is mandatory. There are **written assignments** that will be based on the viewings/readings for the day as well as other forms of assessment that require attendance. I will only allow work to be made-up in the case of **documented** absences or absences that have been **pre-authorized** by the instructor in advance.
2. Typically – though not always – class will comprise film screenings and readings. I will expect you to have completed the readings before class. **Please remember to bring your text book to class and have access to supplementary materials on CANVAS**
3. Some of the films in the course are **subtitled** --- this means you have to pay special attention during screenings to both reading the subtitles and watching what is onscreen. This can prove challenging, so I strongly recommend that you **review** these films at home. They are all available for purchase at various online retailers but they may also be accessible free online. If you have difficulty procuring a film, please get in touch with me and I can guide you to some sources.
4. Please be respectful towards your classmates and your instructor and refrain from talking, texting and browsing in class. Studies have shown that texting or browsing can prove disruptive and distracting to the people sitting around you and it can negatively impact their learning and overall class experience. So, please let us all be sensitive to this issue.

5. I do not allow other screens to be open during screenings since the light from these screens (phone/computer/ipad) really distract and disrupt the screening experience.
6. While open and engaged dialogue and discussion and a plurality of views is encouraged in this class, we will attempt, at all times, to keep our speech respectful and civil towards individuals and groups.

**Academic Honesty & Plagiarism:** 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.**

**Access For Students With Disabilities:** If you have a disability, which you believe may affect your performance in this course, please contact me the first week of the term so we can make the necessary arrangements for your full access to the course and its activities.

**Please Note: This is a college level course and so some of the viewings contain materials of a violent or sexual nature. If this is something you need to discuss, please see me as soon as possible.**

**Evaluation:** Grades will be based on:

Midterm Exam	25%
Essay Assignment	25%
Writing assignments including quizzes	25%
Group Work	25%

**Midterm Exam:** Will consist of objective-type questions as well as short responses. These may include multiple choice, fill in the blanks, true or false as well as short prompts where you write in responses. In order to do well, you need to come to class regularly, take notes and study your textbook well. I will post keywords that you need to review especially well. **It will be closed book and you will not have access to any study materials.**

**Essay Assignment:** This will consist of two typed essays that are 3-4 pages each based on prompts that are distributed two weeks in advance of when the essays fall due. They will be critical and analytical in nature demonstrating your skills of argument and interpretations. You will have access to your books and notes.

**In class Writing Assignments/Quizzes:** May be based on screenings/readings or a combination of the two. It may or may not be open book. The best way to prepare for these is to do the reading for the day and pay attention to and take good notes during the screening.

**Group work:** I will assign you to a group and you will discuss a prompt and write a response to it. The entire group will receive the same grade. All the work will be in

class. You will prepare by doing readings and paying close attention during the screening.

### **Schedule (Tentative and subject to change with notice)**

Week 1 (1/10 and 1/12)

“What is Media Aesthetics?”

“Preparing Viewers and Views: Distribution, Promotion and Exhibition”

Week 2 (1/17 and 1/19)

**(There will be a graded written assignment during either class meeting this week)**

“Elements of Film Form” (Read pp 36-49)

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Week 3 (1/24 and 1/26)

**(There will be a graded group assignment during either class meeting this week)**

“Film Typologies and Genre” (Read pp 66-105)

Screening: *Mother* (Bong Joon Ho, 2009)

Week 4 (1/31 and 2/2)

**(There will be a graded written assignment during either class meeting this week)**

“What is Film Narrative?” (Read pp 122-166)

Screening: *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939)

Week 5 (2/7 and 2/9)

“Defining Mise-en-Scene” (Read pp 172- 209)

Assorted Clips

**Midterm Review**

Week 6 (2/14 and 2/16)

**On Tuesday 2/14 we will have the midterm**

“Regarding Cinematography” (Read pp 226-244)

Screening: *Citizen Kane*

(This film screening will run into Week 7)

Week 7 (2/21 and 2/23)

**(There will be a graded group assignment during either class meeting this week)**

“Regarding Cinematography” (244-286)

Shot analysis

Week 8 (2/28 and 3/2)

**(There will be a graded written assignment during either class meeting this week)**

“Types of Editing” (pp 340 – 375)

Assorted Clips

Week 9 (3/7 and no class on 3/9)

**(There will be a graded group assignment during this week)**

“Elements of Film Sound” (pp 388-413)

Week 10 (3/14 and 3/16)

“Elements of Film Sound” (pp 414-428)