English 260 is one of four required courses that make up the Fundamentals of the Cinema Studies major. The course will focus on helping you build the critical skills to understand, analyze, and interpret visual media texts. It will do so by highlighting the fundamental formal elements of film and television. Using this vocabulary, we will explore the complex interplay of technical design, social influence, and cultural conventions that shape our media production and consumption experiences. We will also take time to consider how the construction of a media texts invites viewers to make meaning. By the end of the class you will be able to identify and explain all of the key formal vocabulary terms used in the study of media aesthetics and write argument-based film criticism that ties those technical vocabulary terms to themes, character development, and social issues built into media texts.

Required Textbooks:

Access to Canvas for Additional Course Readings and Materials

Highly Recommended Optional Textbook:
*A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, Corrigan (Bedford/St. Martin) – Any edition

Learning Outcomes:
The Cinema Studies program’s assessment procedures are built around six desired learning outcomes:
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.

Participation:
This is a discussion-based class. As such it is absolutely vital that you complete the shared reading assignments prior to attending class. As you read, mark any passages that strike you as interesting or challenging and come to class with your texts and ready to discuss the texts and the films.

Screenings:
Watching films 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. Several films are R rated. If this will be an issue for you please discuss it with me right away.
Class Policies:

Late Work and Absences: I expect you to contact me in advance of missing class. If you need to miss class for any reason let me know in advance and you can turn the homework assignment in the next period without penalty. Any in-class work missed as a result of absence cannot be made up. First or second versions of papers will not be accepted late. Athletes should know their schedules in advance and should provide me a letter from the athletic department listing days the class will be missed. 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 course failure.

Plagiarism: All work submitted for this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) is encouraged, but must be properly documented. Please consult Rules for Writers for a definition of plagiarism and information on documentation and refer to the summary of the Code of Student Conduct definition in the Student Judicial Affairs website. In cases where plagiarism has been clearly established, an F will be awarded for the final course grade (standard practice for the composition program). Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

Access for Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability (physical, psychological, or learning) which you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term either after class or during office hours or by appointment so we can make arrangements to ensure your success.

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

10% Class Participation
15% Group Presentation
30% Annotated Keywords Project
45% Shot List and Analytical Essay

Extra Credit: 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 1/2 page single-spaced film review and a 1/2 page single space summary and reflection on your post-film discussion with your classmate(s).

Group Presentation:
Each student must sign up for a group presentation during the term. Presentations will take place according to the dates listed on the schedule. 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. 4 students. Your group will bring in one 1-3 minute 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 clip and each student should prepare a 3-4 minute presentation related to the clip and the week’s reading. Each student should prepare two slides using Prezi, Powerpoint, or Google Docs that relates to the content of the presentation. Prepare a thesis and back that thesis up with evidence from the text and film clip. Your group must collaborate outside of class to decide on presentation topics, coordinate slides, and practice your presentation. Presentations will be cut off at 25 minutes max, although they may lead to class discussion. One group member will serve as coordinator/moderator to organize and keep time for the group. 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 Canvas.
Annotated Keywords
Working in groups of two you will design a visual project incorporating eight annotated keywords that any upper-division cinema and media student should have in their scholarly toolkit. Keywords are terms that represent important concepts, theories, and movements within a particular field of study.

For each keyword annotation you will provide:

- a concise but complete definition of approximately 20 words
- a 150-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
- a 150-word analysis of how/why the visual images are useful for making sense of how the term applies to the study of film/media texts;
- Citations for the page numbers in the course textbook that inform the annotations

Shot List and Analytical Essay
Step 1: Complete a “Shot List Grid” for 8-12 shots from one of the films or shows screened this term. Your shot list should fill 3-4 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.

Step 2: Write a 4-page double-spaced paper that conducts close reading of a single audio or visual motif, camera or editing technique, element of sound design, aspect of mise en scène, or important sequence in the film or show and analyze how this element contributes to the film’s or show’s development of theme, character, or narrative. The goal of your essay is to make connections between the specific aesthetic choices made by directors, the technical means by which they achieve their desired aesthetics, and the meanings or possible meanings generated by the combination of technical skill and aesthetic vision. These essays should evidence depth of reasoning and textured writing that integrates pertinent quotations from the source material. Create an original and engaging thesis, well-reasoned claims supported by solid research, smooth transitions, varied sentence structure, fresh diction, strong voice, appropriate tone, and original thinking.
Course Schedule

Week 1: Narrative
26 June: Introduction and Screen: Spirited Away (Hayao Miyazaki, 2001)
27 June: Read Chapters 1 and 2 in Looking at Movies before class
28 June: Screen: Stagecoach (John Ford, 1939)
29 June: Read Chapter 4 in Looking at Movies before class, Group 1 Presentation

Week 2: Mise-en-scène and Cinematography
3 July: Screen: Friends (selected episodes of the tv sitcom)
         Read Chapter 5 in Looking at Movies before class, Group 2 Presentation
4 July: Independence Day Holiday (No Class Meeting)
5 June: Screen: Mad Max: Fury Road (George Miller, 2015)
6 June: Read Chapter 6 in Looking at Movies before class, Group 3 Presentation

Week 3: Editing and Sound
11 July: Read Chapter 8 in Looking at Movies before class, Group 4 Presentation
12 July: Screen: Apocalypse Now (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979)
13 July: Read Chapter 9 in Looking at Movies before class,
         Annotated Keywords Projects due to Canvas by 11:59pm

Week 4: Acting and Analysis
17 July: Screen: Breaking Bad and Dear White People (pilot episodes)
18 July: Read Chapter 7 in Looking at Movies, Group 5 Presentation
19 July: In-class peer review of shot list and analytical essay, post first draft to Canvas before class
20 July: Screen Side by Side: Digital vs. Celluloid (Christopher Keannelly, 2012)
         Shot List and Analytical Essay due by 11:59pm
Grading Guidelines for Essays and Projects

Outstanding Essay or Project (A-, A, A+) The essay or project makes a fluid, reasoned, well-supported argument. It jolts the readers, wakes them up, persuades, pleases, or delights them. It presents a clear thesis (enthymeme) and develops it logically and coherently, using vivid and concrete detail and appropriate evidence to back up the argument. In this essay, each paragraph will be coherent, beginning with a topic sentence that presents a point of your argument, that relates to your thesis, and that operates as a smooth transition from the previous paragraph. This essay goes beyond the obvious and has a clear sense of purpose and audience. This writing interests readers in what the author has to say. It invites reading. It is well-organized and features smooth transitions, varied sentence structure, fresh diction, strong voice, appropriate tone, and something memorable. The writing itself is strong; there are only insignificant grammatical and mechanical errors, if any. Meets word count, font size, MLA guidelines, and other formatting requirements.

Proficient Essay (B-, B, B+) The writing shows the author’s independent thought and gives evidence of the author’s engagement with the topic. It demonstrates a sense of audience and is shaped to the needs and objections of that audience. Proficient writing is fluent, clear, and logical; it supports a thesis with consistently pertinent detail; the structure is suitable and sufficient—i.e. each paragraph presents a coherent argument, beginning with a topic sentence that presents a point of your argument, that relates to the thesis, and that operates as a smooth transition from the previous paragraph. This essay contains no serious grammatical or mechanical problems. Meets word count and all formatting requirements.

Satisfactory Essay (C-, C, C+) The writing conveys the author’s meaning to his or her audience without distraction. The thesis is clear, and its development follows logically. Supporting details are adequate to the thesis and leave no major objections or challenges to the reasoning. There are no serious grammatical or mechanical problems. Meets word count and formatting requirements.

Unsatisfactory Essay (D-, D, D+) The writing detracts from the essay’s thesis and may make reading difficult. The essay will have a thesis that is insufficiently supported with specific detail. The thesis itself may not be suitable to the audience or the scope of the assignment, or the thesis and argument of the essay may not be in agreement. Organization may be sketchy or inadequate. There are such errors in grammar, mechanics, logic, sentence structure, or organization that the controlling idea of the essay is obscured rather than clarified, or the ideas themselves lack careful thought. The essay may not be the assigned length. May not meet word count or requirements.

Unacceptable Essay (F) This essay has no discernable thesis and thus no structure stemming from it. Serious grammatical and mechanical errors abound. There is no attempt to identify or reach an audience with the writing. Unacceptable writing also includes writing that is plagiarized in part or as a whole. May not meet word count or formatting requirements.

Borderline Essay (A-/B+; B-/C+; C-/D+) While this essay displays some important strengths of the higher grade level, it may also display too many weaknesses of the lower grade level.