

ART K186
Introduction to Film

Three Rivers Community College
Spring 2012

Wednesday 6:30pm – 9:15pm
Room B125

Instructor: Jason Sheldon
Jsheldon@trcc.commnet.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 6:00-6:30pm (Room B125) and by appointment

Course Description

An aesthetic and critical approach to film study, this course helps students develop a cinematic vocabulary and apply analytic skills. Classroom screenings provide texts for discussion and analysis; they are supplemented by lectures, readings, and writing assignments. Representative international films from the early years of the industry to the present will be taught.

Learning Goals

At the end of the course, students will understand, articulate, analyze, and synthesize the medium of film.

Learning Objectives

Actively engage in the learning process through demonstrated success on writing assignments:

- Identify topics
- Read, assess, summarize, and synthesize material
- Articulate themes

Actively engage in the learning process through demonstrated success on a research project:

- Employ correct research skills
- Synthesize information to demonstrate knowledge of subject matter
- Select, design, and present data which demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter

Demonstrate a knowledge of twentieth-century cinema:

- Its films, directors, actors, actresses, photographers and writers, and art and culture generally.

Demonstrate an introductory knowledge of twentieth-century achievements in visual and literary form.

Via the cultural, political, social, racial, architectural, topographical and human content of the films viewed and discussed, demonstrate a new and/or enhanced knowledge of the cultures, histories, politics, and the human experience of many other countries at various times in the last century's history.

Text

Phillips, William H. *Film: An Introduction*. 4th edition. 2009. Bedford / St. Martin's.
ISBN 9780312487256.

There may be additional readings assigned which will be announced and available on Blackboard.

Attendance

Your attendance is mandatory. Be on time. Since we only meet once a week and your grade is based on screenings and content in class, it is imperative that you be on time and attentive. I will allow for one absence, however, subsequent absences will drop your final grade. Additionally, lateness will not be tolerated and will also negatively affect your final grade.

Responsibilities

In addition to attendance, you are expected to actively participate in discussions. These will occur not only in class, but also online through Blackboard. Any student using a cell phone, laptop, or other portable device for a purpose not related to the class in progress will be asked to turn it off or leave the class.

Method of Evaluation

Homework Assignments – Questions and written work will be assigned weekly. These will be announced in class as well as posted on Blackboard. The majority of these questions will be drawn from the textbook, please be sure to procure a copy. All homework must be TYPED and submitted at the beginning of class. Homework assignments compose 20% of your final grade.

Film Journal – A film journal will be kept which logs each of the films we see in class. If entire films are not screened, I will announce which clips should be included in your discussion. These journals should reflect not only your initial reactions to the film(s), but are intended to be used as a place to think critically, analyze, or reflect on material we have discussed and that you have read in your textbook. Your journal entries can prove helpful to laying the groundwork for your final paper. Please do not compose your journals entirely of summary. Your entries should be no less than 300 words and will be collected every 3-4 weeks. When submitted these journals must be TYPED. The Film Journal composes 15% of your final grade.

Quizzes/Tests – There will be 4 tests administered throughout the semester. These will focus on vocabulary and concepts we will be discussing throughout the course and included in the reading. Your lowest grade will be dropped and your grade will be averaged from the remaining 3. Make-up tests will not be given. The quizzes will compose 30% of your final grade.

Research Paper – A paper will take the place of a traditional final exam. This research paper must have an approved topic to be submitted to me no later than April 4th. No papers will be accepted without approval of your topic. Papers will be a minimum of 6-8 typed pages. Additional information will be given in class and posted on Blackboard as the semester progresses. Your research paper will compose 35% of your final grade.

Grading

A /94-100
A-/90-93
B+/89-90
B / 84-88
B-/80-83
C+/78-79
C/74-77
C-/70-73
D+/68-69
D/64-67
D-/60-63
F/Below 60

Late Work

Any material handed in after the time it is due will be penalized. You may not receive credit on an assignment if recurrent.

Disabilities Statement

If you have a hidden or visible disability, which may require classroom or assignment modifications, you are obligated to inform me as soon as possible.

Academic Dishonesty

Any form of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the college immediately and may result in the failure of an assignment or the entire course.

N.B.

I understand other obligations (work, family, etc.) may infringe upon your ability to be present in class and to turn in assignments on time. Please contact me in advance if you anticipate problems or issues with these responsibilities (homework, tests, papers, attendance, etc.).

Schedule

This schedule is tentative. The readings, screenings, and quiz dates are subject to change. Any amendments will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard.

1/25 – Class Overview; How Films are Made: Preproduction to Exhibition

Reading:

Plato, “The Allegory of the Cave”

Screening:

Camera (Canada, 2000), Dir. David Cronenberg, 6 min.

“On Location” from *Fight Club* (USA, 1999), Dir. David Fincher, 5 min.

2/1 – Film Form: Meanings in a Film/Reading a Film; Mise en Scène

Reading:

Chapter 1 (Mise en Scène), pgs. 11-60

Screening:

Dead Ringers (Canada, 1988), Dir. David Cronenberg, 116 min.

2/8 – Cinematography

Reading:

Chapter 2 (Cinematography), pgs. 61-112

Screening:

Citizen Kane (USA, 1941), Dir. Orson Welles, 119 min.

2/15 – Editing; A Short History of Cinema

Reading:

Chapter 3 (Editing), pgs. 113-156

Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde”

Screening:

Battleship Potemkin (Russia, 1925), Dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 75 min.

Requiem for a Dream (USA, 2000), Dir. Darren Aronofsky, Clips

Films of the Lumière brothers, Georges Méliès, Thomas Edison, Charles Pathé, and Edwin Porter

2/22 – Sound

*Quiz #1, Journals Due

Reading:

Chapter 4 (Sound), pgs. 157-199

Michel Chion, “The Acousmètre”

Screening:

M (Germany, 1931), Dir. Fritz Lang, 117 min.

2/29 – The Creative Process

Reading:

Chapter 5 (Sources for Fictional Films), pgs. 200-253

Screening:

8½ (Italy, 1963), Dir. Federico Fellini, 138 min.

3/7 – Narrative

Reading:

Chapter 6 (Components of Fictional Films), pgs. 254-306

Screening:

Rashomon (Japan, 1950), Dir. Akira Kurosawa, 88 min.

3/14 – Genre (Film Noir)

*Quiz 2 / Journals Due

Reading:

Chapter 7 (Types of Fictional Films), pgs. 307-360

Thomas Schatz, “Film Genres and the Genre Film”

Screening:

Murder, My Sweet (USA, 1944), Dir. Edward Dmytryk, 95 min.

3/21

No Class – Spring Break

3/28 – Genre, Continued (Italian Neorealism)

Reading:

TBD

Screening:

The Bicycle Thief (Italy, 1948), Dir. Vittorio De Sica, 93 min.

4/4 – The Documentary

Reading:

Chapter 8 (Documentary Films), pgs. 361-398

Bill Nichols, “The Voice of Documentary”

Screening:

Standard Operating Procedure (USA, 2008), Dir. Errol Morris, 116 min.

4/11 – Alternative Forms: Avant-garde

*Quiz 3

Reading:

Chapter 9 (Experimental, Hybrid, and Animated Films), 399-436

Screening:

Un Chien Andalou (France, 1929), Dir. Luis Buñuel, 16 min.

Meshe of the Afternoon (USA, 1943), Dir. Maya Deren & Alexander Hammid, 14 min.

Fantasmagorie (France, 1908), Dir. Émile Cohl, 2 min.

Films of Stan Brakhage, Assorted Clips

Films of Jean Painlevé, Assorted Clips

4/18 – Gender, Race, Ideology

* Journals Due

Reading:

Chapter 10 (Understanding Films through Contexts), pgs. 437-502

Screening:

The Shining (USA, 1980), Dir. Stanley Kubrick, 142 min.

4/25 – Race, Politics, New Media

Reading: Chapter 11 (Thinking about Films) / Chapter 12 (Reading and Writing about Films), pgs. 503-578

Robert Stam & Louise Spence, “Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction”

Screening:

Caché (France/Austria, 2005), Dir. Michael Haneke, 117 min.

5/2 – A Complete Analysis

Reading:

Chapter 13 (A Sample Description and Analysis: *The Player*), pgs. 579-603

Screening:

The Player (USA, 1992), Dir. Robert Altman, 124 min.

5/9 – Introducing Film Theory (Focus on Auteurism); Genre Revisionism; Conclusions

*Quiz 4 / Journals Due

Reading:

Peter Wollen, “The Auteur Theory”

Screening:

The Seachers (USA, 1956), Dir. John Ford, 119 min.

5/14 – Papers Due

Research Papers Due