

INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF THE MOTION PICTURE



Introduction to the Art of the Motion Picture | FILM 1390 | CRN: 28313 | Spring, 2019

Monday/Wednesday, 9:00am-10:20am

Old Main 214

Instructor: Greg Beam

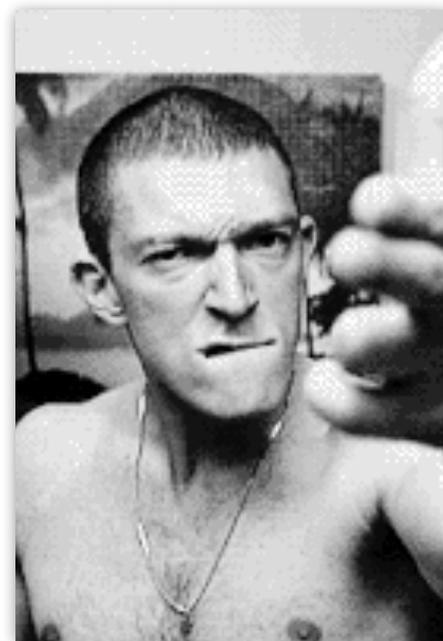
Email: gbeam@utep.edu

Office Hours: Monday, 10:30-11:50am & 1:30-3:30pm; Wednesday, 10:30-11:50am - Worrell Hall, 114 (or by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to a variety of topics in the study of cinema, including narrative structure, camera work and editing, visual and audio design, and the development of cinematic genres and styles. You will learn the components of film craft and production, how to view films with a critical eye and articulate your observations clearly, and how to consider motion pictures in their social and historical contexts.

Essentially, you will learn how to view, discuss, and write about films as an informed observer—and hopefully develop a better appreciation and enjoyment of the medium along the way. While this is not a filmmaking course, you will learn the basics of film production (and the roles of the various artists and technicians who collaborate on a film) to give you better insight into the medium.



For the most part, the course will be arranged topically and thematically rather than chronologically. Each week will feature a lecture, viewing, and discussion focused on a different aspect of filmmaking or topic in film scholarship.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To build an understanding of the core elements of cinematic art, the history of cinema, and a variety of theatrical genres and styles.
- To learn how to view films with a sensitive and penetrating eye.
- To develop critical thinking and communication skills, both written and spoken, relating to the arts in general and film in particular.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Knowledge and understanding of cinematic storytelling, design, performance, and production, demonstrated through the successful completion of a series of study guides.
- The knowledge and skill to write an informative and compelling analysis of a selected film.
- The ability to prepare and deliver, with clarity and confidence, a spoken presentation on a topic related to the cinema.

MATERIALS

Textbook: Lewis, Jon. *Essential Cinema: An Introduction to Film Analysis*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2013. ISBN: 978-1439083680

Viewings: I will post titles available from Swank Digital Campus under the 'Viewings' folder on Blackboard. In addition, you should register for an account at kanopy.com, a streaming service that is available for free with your UTEP library credentials. Kanopy has an array of independent, foreign, arthouse, and documentary films that may be difficult to find through popular channels. It also features instructional series on a variety of topics related to film studies. It is an invaluable resource.

On-line Communication: You must have an active UTEP email address and check it regularly. You should also have regular access to Blackboard. These will be my primary means of communicating with you outside of class. Any announcements that pertain to the whole class will be sent via Blackboard and email. If I need to reach you individually, I will do so via email. Please note that I will not respond to emails sent from personal email accounts. If you want to contact me, use your UTEP email address.

SUBJECT MATTER

Some of the viewings and readings used in this course may touch on mature subject matters, including violence, abuse, sexual activity, and verbal obscenity. Consequently, much of the discussion in class will involve references to adult subject matter and strong language. I will do my best to give you a heads up about any troubling material that may appear in our weekly viewings, and I will endeavor to address difficult subjects with an appropriate degree of sensitivity.

If you have concerns about viewing or discussing specific subjects, please see me to discuss possible accommodations. I expect all discussions, including any that may occur outside of class, to be conducted in a respectful and professional manner.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected at all class sessions. I will be passing around a sign-in sheet at each class session. While attendance and participation do not constitute a percentage of your final grade, multiple absences or consistent tardiness will hurt your final grade. Conversely, exceptional attendance and enthusiastic participation may result in extra credit.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any incident of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of zero on the assignment and possible disciplinary action. This includes cheating and plagiarism. Please check the UTEP Student Handbook for more information on academic dishonesty, and if you're in doubt about whether your use of a source is acceptable, don't hesitate to check with me.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The use of phones, tablets, or lap tops is distracting for you, me, and your classmates and is therefore forbidden under most circumstances. Please take notes on paper unless you have a documented need to do otherwise.

ACCOMMODATIONS STATEMENT

The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at UTEP provides students who require them with accommodations and support services to help them pursue their academic, graduation, and career goals. If you are dealing with any kind mental, physical, emotional, or sensory disability—whether permanent or temporary—you are encouraged to contact them for a confidential consultation. For more information, visit <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/> or consult the Student Handbook.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

STUDY GUIDES (40 pts.)

You will complete 4 study guides during the semester, covering information in the readings and in-class presentations. Each study guide will be available on Blackboard one week before the due date.

FILM ANALYSIS (35 pts.)

You will write one paper, roughly 800-1200 words, addressing one of the following prompts:

- a.) Analyze how the visual and aural elements of the filmmaking [mise-en-scene, lighting, diegetic and non-diegetic sound, camera angles and focus, editing] contribute to the film's intention and effect. For reference, check out the "Anatomy of a Scene" feature in the Film section of the New York Times website, as well as chapter 10 of *Essential Cinema*.
- b.) Discuss the film's intent and/or effect from a broader social perspective, examining its historical, cultural, political, religious, economic, and/or philosophical contexts. Formulate a clear thesis and defend it with evidence from the film as well as other primary and secondary sources. You will need to provide proper citation and a works-cited list [see Chapter 10 of *Essential Cinema*].

The paper is due on Sunday, Apr. 21, by end of day.

Please write about one of the following films, all of which are available either in the 'Viewings' folder on Blackboard or on Kanopy.com:

Moonlight

The Florida Project

Precious

Do the Right Thing

The Silence of the Lambs

Taxi Driver

Blue Velvet

Children of Men

Pariah

The Shawshank Redemption

FINAL PRESENTATION (25 pts.)

We will use the time allotted for our final exam to deliver 10-minute group presentations on a topic in film that interests you, either digging deeper into a subject we've studied or looking

beyond the scope of the course. I want you to get creative with this. Use audio and visual aids, including but not limited to scenes from the film(s) you have studied. Do outside research. Know your topic. Share your interest and excitement about it with us. Thrill us for 10 minutes so that we are inspired to look further into the material you've shared.

You are welcome to choose your own group. Otherwise, you will be assigned to a group.

Possible subjects for your final presentation: a.) Pick a controversial film (e.g. *Kids*, *Boyz N tha Hood*, *The Birth of a Nation*, *Last Tango in Paris*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*) and tell us about the different reactions people had to it and what, if any, lasting cultural impact it has had. b.) Select a specific sub-genre of film (e.g. biopics, courtroom dramas, disaster films, teen comedy, gross-out horror, LGBTQ romance) and tell us all about its history, defining characteristics, and best examples. c.) Pick a film artist (director, cinematographer, actor, screenwriter, etc.) and share an overview of their life and work, perhaps drawing our attention to how their personal experiences/views/values influenced what they put on the screen.

GRADING	
ASSIGNMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS
Study Guides:	40
Film Analysis:	35
Final Presentation:	25
TOTAL:	100

A = 90-100 points

B = 80-90 points

C = 70-80 points

D = 60-70 points

F = 0-60 points

COURSE SCHEDULE for FILM 1390 (Subject to Change)

Week Meeting	Reading	Viewing	Assignments
Week 1: Defining Film as an Artistic Medium Monday, Jan. 21 - NO CLASS (Martin Luther King Day) Wednesday, Jan. 23	Chapter 1 of <i>Essential Cinema</i>	Various	
Week 2: How Films Get Made Monday, Jan. 28 Wednesday, Jan. 30	Chapter 7 of <i>Essential Cinema</i>	Various	
Week 3: Visual and Audio Design Monday, Feb. 4 Wednesday, Feb. 6	Chapter 3 in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	
Week 4: Visual and Audio Design (cont'd) Monday, Feb. 11 Wednesday, Feb. 13	Chapter 6 in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	
Week 5: Cinematography and Editing Monday, Feb. 18 Wednesday, Feb. 20	Chapter 4 in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	
Week 6: Cinematography & Editing (cont'd) Monday, Feb. 25 Wednesday, Feb. 27	Chapter 5 in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	
Week 7: Character & Performance Monday, Mar. 4 Wednesday, Mar. 6	Chapter 2, Section 2-2, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Doubt</i>	Study Guide 1 due Sunday, Mar. 10, by end of day
Week 8: Character & Performance (cont'd) Monday, Mar. 11 Wednesday, Mar. 13	Chapter 2, Section 2-2, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Doubt</i>	
Week 9: SPRING BREAK!		Go to the movies	Review of film currently playing in theaters due Sunday, Mar. 24, by end of day for up to 5 extra credit points
Week 10: Screenwriting & Narrative Structure Monday, Mar. 25 Wednesday, Mar. 27	Chapter 2, Section 2-1, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Almost Famous</i>	

Week Meeting	Reading	Viewing	Assignments
Week 11: Screenwriting & Narrative Structure (cont'd) Monday, Apr. 1 Wednesday, Apr. 3	Chapter 2, Section 2-3, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Almost Famous</i>	Study Guide 2 due Sunday, Mar. 31, by end of day
Week 12: The Early Days of Film Monday, Apr. 8 Wednesday, Apr. 10	Chapter 9, Section 9-1, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Singin' in the Rain</i>	
Week 13: The Hey Day of Hollywood Monday, Apr. 15 Wednesday, Apr. 17	Chapter 9, Section 9-2, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Singin' in the Rain</i>	Film Analysis due Sunday, Apr. 21, by end of day
Week 14: New Hollywood & American Independent Cinema Monday, Apr. 22 Wednesday, Apr. 24	Chapter 9, Sections 9-3 and 9-4, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Taxi Driver, Blue Velvet</i>	
Week 15: Documentary Cinema Monday, Apr. 29 Wednesday, May 1	Chapter 8, Section 8-1, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Bowling for Columbine</i>	Study Guide 3 due Sunday, May 6, by end of day
Week 16: The Future of Film Monday, May 6 Wednesday, May 8		<i>Black Mirror</i>	
Finals Week: Presentations Monday, May 13 10:00am-12:45pm			Final Presentations during final exam period Study Guide 4 due Friday, May 17, by end of day