

INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF THE MOTION PICTURE



Introduction to the Art of the Motion Picture | FILM 1390 | CRN: 21980 | Spring 2020

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

Liberal Arts Building 122

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Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday, 10:30-11:30am & 1:30-3:00pm | Worrell Hall, 114

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: Most of the films we view in class are available from Swank Digital Campus. I will post links under the 'Viewings' folder on Blackboard.

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 the beginning of each class. While attendance and participation do not constitute a percentage of your grade, multiple absences or consistent tardiness may result in a deduction from your final grade.

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. Plus, it's kind of a pet peeve of mine. Please take notes on paper unless you have a specific 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 (50 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 (30 pts.)

You will write one paper, roughly 800-1000 words, addressing the following prompt: Analyze how the visual and/or aural elements of the filmmaking [mise-en-scene, lighting, diegetic and non-diegetic sound, camera angles and focus, editing] **contribute to the film's overall effect.**

For reference, see chapter 10 of Essential Cinema.

Some questions you might want to ask:

- How does the use of lighting and/or color establish tone? Is the film monotonic (i.e. one tone throughout), or do the lighting and color palette shift the tone between scenes/acts/locations?
- How do elements of the mise-en-scene inform our understanding of the characters, milieu, and/or narrative?
- What point(s)-of-view does the use of framing, camera angles, and/or camera movements establish? Does the point of view shift from scene to scene (or within scenes)? What, if any, function does the camera's POV play in characterization and narrative?
- What thematic or narrative functions do the film's editing techniques serve (e.g. noteworthy use of match cuts, L- or J-cuts...)?
- What major motifs can you find in the film? What is their significance to the film's themes and/or to the characters and the narrative?

- Are any of the elements characteristic (or uncharacteristic) of the film's genre? Are there any signature marks of the filmmakers' (director, cinematographer, or screenwriter) personal artistic styles?

A list of eligible films will be announced later in the semester. The paper is due on Sunday, May 10, by end of day. Submit through the Assignments folder in Blackboard.

FINAL PRESENTATION (20 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.

GRADING

ASSIGNMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS
Study Guides:	50
Film Analysis:	30
Final Presentation:	20
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: What Is Film? Monday, Jan. 20 - NO CLASS (Martin Luther King Day) Wednesday, Jan. 22	Chapter 1 of <i>Essential Cinema</i>	Various	
Week 2: How Films Get Made Monday, Jan. 27 Wednesday, Jan. 29	Chapter 7 of <i>Essential Cinema</i>	Various	
Week 3: Visual and Audio Design Monday, Feb. 3 Wednesday, Feb. 5	Chapter 3 in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	
Week 4: Visual and Audio Design (cont'd) Monday, Feb. 10 Wednesday, Feb. 12	Chapter 6 in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	
Week 5: Cinematography and Editing Monday, Feb. 17 Wednesday, Feb. 19	Chapter 4 in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	
Week 6: Cinematography & Editing (cont'd) Monday, Feb. 24 Wednesday, Feb. 26	Chapter 5 in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Forrest Gump</i>	
Week 7: Character & Performance Monday, Mar. 2 Wednesday, Mar. 4	Chapter 2, Section 2-2, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Fences</i>	
Week 8: Character & Performance (cont'd) Monday, Mar. 9 Wednesday, Mar. 11	Chapter 2, Section 2-2, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Fences</i>	Study Guide 1 due Tuesday, Mar. 10, by end of day
Week 9: SPRING BREAK!		N/A	
Week 10: Screenwriting & Narrative Structure Monday, Mar. 23 Wednesday, Mar. 25 - MIDTERM	Chapter 2, Section 2-1, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Almost Famous</i>	
Week 11: Screenwriting & Narrative Structure (cont'd) Monday, Mar. 30 Wednesday, Apr. 1	Chapter 2, Section 2-3, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Almost Famous</i>	

Week Meeting	Reading	Viewing	Assignments
Week 12: The Early Days of Film Monday, Apr. 6 Wednesday, Apr. 8	Chapter 9, Section 9-1, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Singin' in the Rain</i>	Study Guide 2 due Sunday, Apr. 12, by end of day
Week 13: The Hey Day of Hollywood Monday, Apr. 13 Wednesday, Apr. 15	Chapter 9, Section 9-2, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Singin' in the Rain</i>	
Week 14: New Hollywood & American Independent Cinema Monday, Apr. 20 Wednesday, Apr. 22	Chapter 9, Sections 9-3 and 9-4, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	TBA	
Week 15: Documentary Cinema Monday, Apr. 27 Wednesday, Apr. 29	Chapter 8, Section 8-1, in <i>Essential Cinema</i>	<i>Grizzly Man</i>	Study Guide 3 due Sunday, May 3, by end of day
Week 16: The Future of Film Monday, May 4 Wednesday, May 6		TBA	Film Analysis due Sunday, May 10, by end of day
Finals Week: Presentations Wednesday, May 13 10:00am-12:45pm			Final Presentations during final exam period Study Guide 4 due Friday, May 16, by end of day