Images (clockwise from top left): Get Out (Jordan Peele, 2017), Singin’ in the Rain (Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen, 1952, Pariah (Dee Rees, 2011), Almost Famous (Cameron Crowe, 2000)

Introduction to the Art of the Motion Picture | FILM 1390 | CRN: 23953 | Spring 2023
Monday, 9:00-11:50 am | Old Main 205
Instructor: Greg Beam
Email: gbeam@utep.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 12:00-2:00 pm | Worrell Hall 114

*For the first two weeks of the semester (Jan. 17-27), I will be holding office hours by appointment only.*
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. This is a required course for Digital Media Production majors and Film minors but is also available as a core-curriculum option for students of any major and requires no previous knowledge or experience in the topic.

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.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course, we are attempting:

- 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

At the end of this course, you will possess:

- Knowledge and understanding of cinematic storytelling, design, performance, and production, demonstrated through the successful completion of a series of study guides.
- The information and skill to write an informative and compelling analysis of a selected film.
MATERIALS

Textbook:

Moving Pictures: An Introduction to Cinema, available at this link:
https://uark.pressbooks.pub/movingpictures/?fbclid=IwAR30Pymmf2XvAsjA4a3c7TiYRNntfX_JdbpsY-yeDCa9hVLdyj2goE7MLA

This is an open-source textbook, meaning it’s freely available to read on-line or to download as a PDF.

Viewings:

Almost Famous (Cameron Crowe, 2000)
Pariah (Dee Rees, 2011)
Doubt (John Patrick Shanley, 2008)
Get Out (Jordan Peele, 2017)
Never Rarely Sometimes Always (Eliza Hittman, 2020)
Singin’ in the Rain (Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen, 1952)
Grizzly Man (Werner Herzog, 2005)

All of the films we view for class are available through Swank Digital Campus. I will post links to them in the appropriate week’s content folder.
ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Your final grade will be tabulated on a simple scale of 0-100.

A: 90-100  
B: 80-89.9  
C: 70-79.9  
D: 60-69.9  
F: 0-59.9

15% - Study Guide 1  
15% - Study Guide 2  
15% - Study Guide 3  
10% - Class Check-ins  
30% - Film Essay  
15% - Final Project

All assignments are due at the end of the day (11:59 pm) on the due date unless otherwise indicated. If you think you may need extra time for an assignment, please request an extension before the due date. There is no guarantee that one will be granted, but it’s always easier to make arrangements in advance than to make them after the fact. Extension requests are unlikely to be granted for the study guides, as answers will be posted the afternoon following the due date.

If you have any kind of situation that may make it difficult for you to meet any of the deadlines or course requirements, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can discuss possible accommodations.

STUDY GUIDES (45 points total)

You will complete three study guides over the course of the semester. These will cover information covered in class and in the readings, often applying concepts to the films we are viewing. Each study guide will be available on Blackboard on Monday and due the following Sunday, giving you ample time to absorb the material and complete the assignment.

The questions will be a combination of multiple choice and true or false. While they will mostly pertain to recently covered material, there may be questions that expect a cumulative retention of information and concepts from earlier in the term.
There is no time limit or forced completion for the study guides. As long as you save your work, you can begin the study guide at any time and then leave it and return to it later in the week. It will not, however, allow multiple submissions, so make sure you are confident of your answers before submitting your work.

CLASS CHECK-INS (10 points total)
I will periodically give brief, ungraded quizzes on Blackboard during class. These will cover material from recent class sessions and will be used to monitor attendance, assess learning, and prepare students for upcoming graded assignments.

FILM ESSAY (30 points)
You will write one paper, roughly 800-1200 words, applying the information and concepts you have learned in the course to a particular viewing. A detailed prompt and list of eligible films will be provided later in the semester.

Tips:

Regardless of which option you choose, here are some “DOs" and "DON'Ts" for writing a successful film essay:

Seriously, READ THESE. They will help you.

- **DO** - Find a strong controlling idea for your analysis. Your controlling idea is the main point you want to make about the film, around which the rest of the argument is aligned. This is also known as a “thesis.” When I encounter essays that are unfocused, disorganized, confusing, or dull, it often appears to be due to the lack of a clear controlling idea. The writer doesn’t seem to know what they are trying to say, and as a result the whole argument comes out muddled. Spend some time figuring this out, and it will yield tremendous benefits.

- Avoid composing a ‘thesis’ that is simply a topic statement (e.g. “I am going to look at the song selection and audio motifs in Almost Famous.”) or a restatement of the assignment description (e.g. “This essay will examine how the audio-visual composition of Get Out contributes to its meaning and effect.”). Go further and make a *specific and meaningful claim* (e.g. “While the diegetic music in Almost Famous forms an auditory setting for the story, the non-diegetic portions of the soundtrack act as a vehicle for characterization. The lyrics constitute a series of textual motifs that illuminate the emotional arcs of the central characters, specifically William, Penny, and Russell.”).
• DO - Focus on one or two (maybe three) key components of the film's construction, which serve to illustrate your main point rather than touching briefly on numerous aspects of the film.
• DO - Compose a brief introduction that lets the reader (i.e. me) know what your principal focus is and where your analysis is headed, along with a conclusion that ties the preceding analysis together.
• DO - Substantiate your claims with clear, descriptive references to scenes from the film. (Citations and time codes are not necessary.)
• DO - Aid the reader by including logical paragraph breaks that serve to transition between thoughts and guide us through the flow of your argument.
• DO - Make your writing cohesive and readable by observing the “Known/New” paradigm, which you can read about here.
• DO - Map out your ideas in advance of writing.
• DO - Look over the rubric for the assignment.
• DO - Proofread and revise after you have written a draft. Reading your essay aloud can be particularly helpful, as your ears will pick up on errors and imprecisions that your eyes will gloss over.
• DO - Include a heading with your name and a title for your essay. A creative, informative, and captivating title is especially helpful.
• DO - Use standard academic formatting, including double spacing and a readable font. (Times New Roman is always a good choice.)
• DON’T - Try to cover every technical element we have studied.
• DON’T - Bounce around from topic to topic. Keep your essay focused, unified, and coherent.
• DON’T - Write on more than one film.
• DON’T - Analyze a film other than those listed as options.
• DON’T - Refer to the course or to other assignments you’ve turned in.
• DON’T - Cut and paste material from articles about the film you find online or use AI to generate significant portions of your essay. There are several reasons for this:
  • It deprives you of a learning experience and the opportunity to develop important skills.
  • It is a serious transgression of university policy. (See the Academic Integrity section below.)
  • It is easy to catch.
  • These sources are often not very good to begin with. You could probably do better on your own, provided you have made an effort to absorb the content of the course.
FINAL PRESENTATION

We will use the time allotted for our final exam to deliver brief group presentations on topics related to Film. You may delve deeper into a subject we’ve studied or investigate something we haven’t covered. I want you to get creative with this. Use audio and visual aids, such as video clips or slides. Do outside research. Know your topic. Share your interest and excitement about it with us. Thrill us for 10-15 minutes so that we are inspired to look further into the material you’ve shared.

You are welcome to choose your own group of 3-4 people. Otherwise, you will be assigned to a group.

DUE DATES AND LATE WORK

All assignments are due by the end of the day (11:59 pm) on the due date. They will be submitted through the appropriate assignment portal on Blackboard.

Late work:
If you expect you may need extra time to complete any assignments, please contact me in advance to discuss possible accommodations. It’s much easier for me to be flexible and work with you if you give me a heads-up in advance.

Answers for the Study Guides, however, are released the following the due date, so late submissions will not be accepted.

If you have technical problems submitting an assignment, please contact the UTEP HelpDesk and let me know ASAP. This happens from time to time. Don’t panic. Take a deep breath. These things can almost always be worked out.
POLICIES

ATTENDANCE
Attendance at class sessions is expected. If you are sick, however, please do not come to class. Instead, reach out to me to discuss what accommodations we can make.

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.

If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students.

CLASS RECORDINGS
I may make audio or video recordings of class lectures, presentations, and discussions. These are meant to enable students to have access to class lectures, group discussions, and so on in the event they miss a meeting due to illness or other extenuating circumstance. Our use of such technology is governed by the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and UTEP’s acceptable-use policy. I will not share the recordings of class activities outside of course participants, which include your fellow students, teaching assistants, or graduate assistants, and any guest faculty or community-based learning partners with whom we may engage during a class session. You may not share recordings outside of this course.

SUBJECT MATTER
Some of the films and readings used in this course touch on mature subject matters, including violence, sexual activity, and verbal obscenity. Consequently, some of the viewings may feature sensitive or difficult topics, as well as discussion of this material. I will do my best to give you a heads up about any troubling material that may come up.
If you have concerns about viewing or discussing specific subjects, please see me to discuss possible accommodations. I expect all discussions to be conducted in a respectful and sensitive manner.

**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.

**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 of mental, physical, emotional, or sensory disability 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.
# COURSE SCHEDULE for FILM 1390, Spring 2022 (Subject to Change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Viewing</th>
<th>Assignments (All assignments due by end of day, 11:59pm, unless otherwise specified)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week 1: Introduction NO CLASS - MLK DAY | Syllabus & Course Schedule | Opening Sequences:  
- *Once Upon a Time in the West*  
- *The Silence of the Lambs*  
- *Little Miss Sunshine*  
- *The Social Network*  
- *Mission: Impossible 3*  
- *Malcolm X* | |
| Week 2: Film as Art Monday, Jan. 23 | Chapter 2 of *Moving Pictures* | Opening Sequences:  
- *Once Upon a Time in the West*  
- *The Silence of the Lambs*  
- *Little Miss Sunshine*  
- *The Social Network*  
- *Mission: Impossible 3*  
- *Malcolm X*  
- *Almost Famous* | |
| Week 3: Film as Commerce | Chapter 2 of *Moving Pictures* | *Almost Famous* (Cameron Crowe, 2000) | |
| Week 4: Audio-Visual Design Monday, Feb. 6 | Chapter 3 & 7 of *Moving Pictures* | *Almost Famous, Pariah* (Dee Rees, 2011) | |
| Week 5: Cinematography Monday, Feb. 13 | Chapter 5 of *Moving Pictures* | *Pariah* | |
| Week 6: Editing Monday, Feb. 20 | Chapter 6 of *Moving Pictures* | *Pariah* | Study Guide 1 due Sunday, Feb. 26 |
| Week 7: Screen Acting Monday, Feb. 27 | Chapter 8 of *Moving Pictures* | *Doubt* (John Patrick Shanley, 2008) | |
| Week 8: Screen Acting Monday, Mar. 6 | Chapter 8 of *Moving Pictures* | *Doubt* | |
## COURSE SCHEDULE for FILM 1390, Spring 2022 (Subject to Change)

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<tr>
<td>Week 9: Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10: Screenwriting &amp; Narrative Structure Monday, Mar. 20</td>
<td>Chapter 4 of <em>Moving Pictures</em></td>
<td><em>Get Out</em> (Jordan Peele, 2017)</td>
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<td>Week 11: Genre Monday, Mar. 27</td>
<td>Chapter 4 of <em>Moving Pictures</em></td>
<td><em>Get Out</em></td>
<td><strong>Study Guide 2 due Sunday, Apr. 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11: Genre Monday, Apr. 3</td>
<td>Chapter 4 of <em>Moving Pictures</em></td>
<td><em>Never Rarely Sometimes Always</em> (Eliza Hittman, 2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12: The Early Days of Film Monday, Apr. 10</td>
<td>Chapter 1 of <em>Moving Pictures</em></td>
<td><em>Singin’ in the Rain</em> (Gene Kelly &amp; Stanley Donen, 1952)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13: The Golden Age(s) of Hollywood Monday, Apr. 17</td>
<td>Chapter 1 of <em>Moving Pictures</em></td>
<td><em>Singin’ in the Rain</em></td>
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<td>Week 14: Documentary Cinema Monday, Apr. 24</td>
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<td><em>Grizzly Man</em> (Werner Herzog, 2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15: The Future of Film Monday, May 1</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td><strong>Study Guide 3 due Sunday, Apr. 30</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Finals Week: Final Presentations Date &amp; Time TBA</td>
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<td><strong>Film Essay due Thursday, May 11, by end of day</strong></td>
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