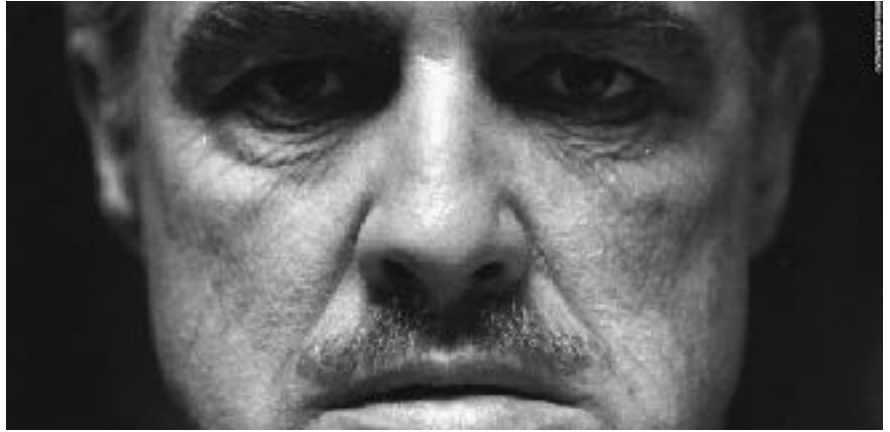


Performance Analysis

Fall, 2018 | Friday, 1:30-4:20PM | FILM 4340; THEA 4331



COURSE INFORMATION

Performance Analysis | FILM 4340-01; THEA 4331-01 | CRN: 19062; 19502 | Fall, 2018

Hudspeth Hall, Room 100

Friday, 1:30-4:20pm

Instructor: Greg Beam

Email: gbeam@utep.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 12:00-2:00pm, location TBA, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will address the art and craft of film performance. We will take a deep and detailed look at the techniques used by actors (and their collaborators) to draw out a captivating performance and consider performance from theoretical and critical perspectives. Beginning with an overview of the history and practice of Western acting training, in particular the methods adapted by the great American acting teachers from the teachings of Constantin Stanislavski, we will review the basic tenets of modern acting technique and examine how these principles manifest in a number of great film performances.

We will also give some thought to a handful of special topics in acting theory and practice, including the relationship between actors and directors/editors/scene partners, the use of non-professional actors in film, and the ethical and artistic questions involved in casting.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To learn the history of 20th-Century Western acting pedagogy and to understand how the work of key figures in acting training have influenced film performance.
- To understand how performance fits into the multi-faceted craft of filmmaking.
- To develop a keener sense of the connection between actor and audience and the place of the performer in popular culture.
- To explore the social and ethical ramifications of various types of character portrayal.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of this semester, students should be able to:

- 1.) Discuss key concepts in acting, including circumstances, objectives & super-objectives, actions, subtext, the spine of a story, and character arc.
- 2.) Identify how these concepts and techniques manifest themselves in individual film performances.
- 3.) Write a publishable review focusing on the performances in a contemporary film.

MATERIALS

The primary 'texts' for the course will be the films and excerpts we watch. I will supplement our viewings with essays, articles, and reviews related to each week's viewing. These will be posted in the 'Readings' folder on Blackboard. I also expect you to make a regular habit of viewing films outside of class. To make sure that you have access to a sufficient number of independent films, please register for an account at Kanopy.com, which is available for free with your UTEP library credentials. Kanopy has an array of foreign, arthouse, and documentary films that may be difficult to find

through popular channels. It is an invaluable resource. You should also pay a visit to the media center on the first floor of the library. They have a respectable collection of DVDs available for checkout.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

The Center for Students with Disabilities at UTEP provides students with disabilities accommodations and support services to help them pursue their academic, graduation, and career goals. If you are dealing with a mental, physical, emotional, or sensory disability—whether permanent or temporary—you are encouraged to contact them for a confidential consultation. For more information, visit <http://www.UTEP.edu/CSD/Pages/default.aspx> or see pages 5-12 of the Student Handbook.

SUBJECT MATTER

Some of the films and readings used in this course touch on mature subject matters, including violence, abuse, sexual activity, and verbal obscenity. Consequently, some of the discussion in class will involve references to adult subject matter and, potentially, the mention of 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.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The use of cell phones/smart phones/tablets is forbidden. Take handwritten notes. If you need to have access to your phone for a specific reason, please discuss this with me before class. Seriously, phones and computers distract me. Don't make me ask you to put them away—it will be super uncomfortable for everyone involved.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence, and students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting work for credit that is attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act that give or attempts to give unfair advantage.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (20% of final grade)

Please attend and be fully present at all class sessions (see electronic device policy). Be ready to discuss any readings/viewings that have been assigned for that week and to apply the information and concepts we have covered in class. Along with multiple absences, persistent tardiness, early departures, or clear evidence of distraction will have a significant impact on your grade.

FIRST PAPER (25% of final grade)

Write a 1000-1500 word paper that qualifies as ONE of the following:

- 1.) A review, intended for publication in an entertainment trade journal (e.g. *Variety*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *Onion A.V. Club*) or film-studies journal (e.g. *Cineaste*, *Sight & Sound*, *Film Comment*), of a film that is in theaters or has recently been released on video. While you may discuss the story, themes, and design/style of the film, your review should have a strong emphasis on character and performance.
- 2.) A retrospective, intended for publication in an entertainment trade journal or film-studies journal, on a film that was initially released at least five years ago. Your retrospective should reconsider the work from a perspective informed by the intervening years and shed significant new light on our perceptions of the film (that is, you should say some about the movie that hasn't been said before). While you may discuss the story, themes, and design/style of the film, your retrospective should have a strong emphasis on character and performance.

Since your review or retrospective will rely primarily on your original observations about the film, citations are not required, though in-text citations should be given for any quotations or references to other work.

A complete grading rubric will be provided in the Assignments folder on Blackboard. You will be graded on the conceptual strength of your thesis (concept), the strength of the content offered in support of that thesis (content), the structural cogency and rhetorical effectiveness of your argument (structure), and the quality of your writing (style).

Submit your essay through the Assignments folder on Blackboard by 5:00pm on Saturday, October 13.

SECOND PAPER (25% of final grade)

Write a 1200-1800 word essay on one of the following prompts:

- 1.) Profile a noteworthy actor whom we have not discussed in class. Along with delving into their background, career, style, and approach to performance, your essay should provide an interesting and original interpretation of the actor's artistic and/or cultural significance.
- 2.) Examine a school/style/technique of acting training, relevant to the work of film actors. Explore the style's origins and development, key teachers, and noteworthy students, making sure to emphasize what distinguishes it from other approaches, including advantages and potential pitfalls.
- 3.) Discuss a larger topic related to film performance and/or casting, such as diversity in Hollywood (or the lack thereof), sexual exploitation and abuse in the film industry, the prevalence of substance abuse in the film industry, the fate of childhood stars, the historical shift in the power and position of Hollywood stars, or public obsession with celebrity (tabloid culture).

Since any of these options will require significant research, please give complete citations using a standard formatting style (e.g. MLA or Chicago).

A complete grading rubric will be provided in the Assignments folder on Blackboard. You will be graded on the conceptual strength of your thesis (concept), the strength of the content offered in support of that thesis (content), the structural cogency and rhetorical effectiveness of your argument (structure), and the quality of your writing (style).

Submit your essay through the Assignments folder on Blackboard by 5:00pm on Saturday, December 1.

FINAL PROJECT (30% of final grade)

In groups of 3-4, prepare and deliver a 10-20 minute presentation, following one of these options:

- 1.) Develop a detailed character breakdown for each of the principal characters in a film of your choosing (probably one character for each member of the group). The

breakdown should include the character's backstory and present circumstances (both given and implied); overarching motivation (super-objective); physical, vocal, and behavioral traits; psychological profile; and trajectory over the course of the plot (how the character changes in response to the events of the film).

2.) Record a scene in the style of a noteworthy actor(s), with two partners performing the scene and a third directing. The idea here is not to impersonate the actors but to apply the techniques they are known to use to a short scene of your choosing. For instance, if I were emulating Daniel Day-Lewis, I would focus on deep immersion in the character and physical/vocal transformation; if I were emulating Bill Murray, I might rely heavily on improvisation.

You will present your project during the final examination period on Friday, Dec. 14.

GRADING	
ASSIGNMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS
Attendance/Participation:	20
Paper #1:	25
Paper #2:	25
Final Presentation:	30
TOTAL:	100

GRADING SCALE:

F = 0-59 points

D = 60-69 points

C = 70-79 points

B = 80-89 points

A = 90-100 points

COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

Class Meeting	Reading	Viewing	Assignments
Week 1: An Overview of Acting Concepts, Principles, and Techniques (No small parts) Friday, Aug. 31	None	<i>East of Eden, A Streetcar Named Desire; Julius Caesar; Romeo + Juliet; Macbeth</i>	
Week 2: Overview, cont'd (Stage vs. screen; movie stars vs. character actors) Friday, Sept. 7	Cavell, "Audience, Actor, and Star"; Bogdanovich, "Introduction"	<i>Wayne's World 2; Mulholland Drive; Shakespeare in Love</i>	
Week 3: Casting Friday, Sept. 14	Zimmer, "Casting Couch"; Soloski, "Actors with Disabilities"; Vhalakis, press release; Tierney, "From Breakfast at Tiffany's to Hellboy"; Levin, "Third-Class Citizens"	<i>Kids; The Florida Project; 8 Mile; That Guy Who Was in That Thing; Aloha; Breakfast at Tiffany's; The Danish Girl</i>	
Week 4: Acting Under the Circumstances Friday, Sept. 21	<i>You Can Count on Me</i> scenes	<i>You Can Count on Me; Marathon Man;</i>	
Week 5: Circumstances, cont'd Friday, Sept. 28	Barr, "Preparing a Role"	<i>Doubt</i>	
Week 6: Getting Personal Friday, Oct. 5	Schulman, "How Meryl Streep Battled Dustin Hoffman..."; <i>Fresh Air</i> , "Ryan Gosling"	<i>Interstellar, A Woman Under the Influence, Kramer Vs. Kramer, As Good As It Gets, Birth, Blue Valentine, Precious, Secrets and Lies</i>	
Week 7: Getting Personal, cont'd Friday, Oct. 12	Sayre, "A Woman Under the Influence"; Fossen, "A Woman Under the Influence"	<i>A Woman Under the Influence</i>	First Paper due Saturday, Oct. 13, by 5:00pm
Week 8: Getting Into Character Friday, Oct. 19	Hirschberg, "The New Frontier's Man"	<i>Raging Bull, Sling Blade, The Machinist, Monster, My Left Foot, Gangs of New York, Gandhi, Malcolm X, Pan's Labyrinth; The Godfather & The Godfather, Part II</i>	
Week 9: Character, cont'd Friday, Oct. 26	Brody, "Is Method Acting Destroying Actors?"	TBA	

Class Meeting	Reading	Viewing	Assignments
Week 10: Playing the Text Friday, Nov. 2	Scene from <i>His Girl Friday</i>	<i>His Girl Friday</i> , <i>Reservoir Dogs</i> , <i>Pulp Fiction</i> , <i>Good Will Hunting</i> , <i>The Social Network</i> , <i>Steve Jobs</i> ; <i>M.A.S.H.</i>	
Week 11: Playing with Others	Scott, "Nine Years Later, Once More"	<i>Before Sunset</i> , <i>Before Midnight</i> , <i>The Master</i>	
Week 12: Playing with Others, con't (the role of improvisation) Friday, Nov. 16	Wexman, "The Rhetoric of Cinematic Improvisation"	<i>Best in Show</i> ; <i>Training Day</i> ; <i>Jaws</i> ;	
Week 13: No class, Thanksgiving Holiday	TBA		
Week 14: The Actor and the Director Friday, Nov. 30	TBA	TBA	Second Paper Due Saturday, Dec. 1, by 5:00pm
Week 15: No class, Dead Day	TBA		
Finals Week: Presentations Final: Friday, Dec. 14, Time TBA			*PRESENTATION OF FINAL PROJECTS DURING EXAM PERIOD*