FILM 1390: Introduction to the Art of the Motion Picture (Online)
Fall 2023
CRN: CRN 14889

Instructor: Greg Beam
gbeam@utep.edu
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday, 10:00am-12:00pm

I will be actively monitoring my email and Blackboard at these times; any message you send during these windows should receive a prompt reply. I will also be available to communicate by phone or video-conferencing during these times. Email me if you would like to set up a meeting.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to a variety of topics in the study of cinema, including cinematography, editing, visual and audio design, narrative structure, cinematic genres, and film history. 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 should possess:

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

READING:

_Moving Pictures: An Introduction to Cinema_, available at this link:
https://uark.pressbooks.pub/movingpictures/?fbclid=IwAR30Pymmf2XvAsiA4a3c7TiYRNntfXJdbpsY-veDCa9hVLdyi2goE7MLA

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

VIEWING:

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 0-100% scale.

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

35% - Film Essay
10% - Study Guide 1
10% - Study Guide 2
10% - Study Guide 3
35% - Viewing Responses (5 out of 7; 7 points each)

All assignments are due at the end of the day (11:59pm) on the due date unless otherwise indicated. If you think you may need extra time for an assignment, please request an extension in advance of 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 — scheduling, personal, medical — 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 (30 points)
You will complete 3 study guides covering information in the readings, lessons, and viewings. Each study guide will be posted on Blackboard a few days before they are due, giving you ample time to absorb the material and complete the assignment.

Each study guide will contain between 15 and 35 questions. The questions will be a combination of multiple choice and true or false. While they will generally pertain to that week’s reading and presentations, 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.

VIEWING RESPONSES (35 points)
For each viewing, you will write a brief reflection (roughly 400-600 words). Your reflection should respond to the particular prompt provided that week, though this is also an opportunity for you to begin a more free-ranging discussion about the films.

You are responsible for completing 5 out of the 7 assigned responses. It does not matter which 5 you complete, and you will not receive extra credit for completing more than 5. If you choose to complete more than 5, your top 5 scores will count toward your final grade.

The Viewing Responses are intended to be informal but thoughtful reflections on the material, not polished essays. They will be graded on a scale of 0-7 and will be assessed in terms of completeness, thoughtfulness, and evidence of effort, not for accuracy or mechanics (i.e., you won’t be marked down for typos or grammar errors or for not fully understanding a concept that we’re studying).

Here’s the grading breakdown for the viewing responses:

- 7 — The response is of an appropriate length and feels complete and fully developed (though, again, written informally). It addresses the prompt critically and creatively, weaving relevant references to the viewing into a richly conceived reflection. It is clear that the student has thought in some depth and detail about the film, connecting its content with the topics we are studying in robust and exploratory ways. The student is using the response as a way to deepen and enrich their understanding of the material.

- 5-6 — The response is technically of an appropriate length, though the author perhaps could have included more. The response addresses the prompt and contains relevant references to the viewings. It is clear that the student watched the film and has put some thought into connecting the film’s content with that week’s course materials.

- 3-4 — The response is a bit short and/or insubstantial. It comes close to addressing the prompt and contains some relevant references to the viewings, but it appears the student may have only “half-watched” or skimmed the film, or that they haven’t put enough thought into the film or how its content connects with that week’s course materials.

- 1-2 — The submission is incomplete, insubstantial, or irrelevant to the week’s viewings or to the prompt.

- 0 — No submission was made.
FILM ESSAY (35 points)
You will write a short essay, roughly 800-1200 words, addressing the following prompt:

Discuss a film that has had significant personal meaning or value to you. Explain how you connect with the film. How does it speak to you? Has it had a profound effect on your thinking or worldview? Is it tied to major events in your life? Analyze how the visual and/or audio elements of the filmmaking [mise-en-scene, lighting, diegetic and non-diegetic sound, camera angles and focus, editing] contribute to the film’s meaning or effect — that is, how does the film’s composition help to achieve what it does for you?

A full assignment description and detailed rubric will be available in the assignment portal.
ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION
Because this is an asynchronous on-line course, there is no specific attendance requirement. (We won’t be having any synchronous sessions.) Instead, your participation is evidenced through successful completion of the viewing responses.

SUBJECT MATTER
Some of the viewings and readings used in this course may touch on mature subject matters, including violence, physical and emotional 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 any discourse that may occur to be conducted in a respectful and sensitive manner. If you have any questions about what constitutes proper on-line etiquette, please refer to this guide.

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.

Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (AI-generated content) without proper attribution or authorization is another form of plagiarism. If I suspect you have generated work using a chatbot, I may ask you to schedule a Zoom meeting in which you will be responsible for elaborating verbally on what was included in your assignment. This is extra time that I don’t want to spend and don’t want you to spend.

TECHNOLOGY
Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system (LMS). Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome are the most supported browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications with the LMS. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

You will need to have or have access to a computer/laptop, and if you wish to participate in the optional synchronous learning sessions, you will also need a webcam and microphone.

An Internet connection sufficient to stream feature films is particularly critical for this course.

You may need to download or update the following software in order for all content to display properly: Adobe, Flashplayer, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.
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.

**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—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/](https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/) or consult the Student Handbook.

The university also provides a number of other resources that may be helpful to you in your students and/or your personal life as you navigate your university experience. Here are some links to student resources that you may want to take advantage of:

- **UTEP Library**: Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.

- **Technology Support**: Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

- **University Writing Center (UWC)**: Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help, and explore other writing resources.

- **Military Student Success Center**: UTEP welcomes military-affiliated students to its degree programs, and the Military Student Success Center and its dedicated staff (many of whom are veterans and students themselves) are here to help personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.

The University Writing Center may be particularly helpful in completing your final assignments (Film Analysis and Movie Review) for this course.
CONCLUSION

I look forward to working with you all this semester. I know there is a lot of information in this syllabus, but you don’t need to digest it all at once or commit it to memory. The syllabus will remain on Blackboard for reference throughout the term. In fact, it’s often the first place you should check if you’re unclear about any course requirements.

Bottom line: As long as you keep working through the materials on Blackboard each week, study the textbook, and stay on top of the assignments, you should be fine. And please, please, please, do not hesitate to contact me if you’re confused about anything. I would much rather respond to an avalanche of questions than see a bunch of incomplete or poorly completed assignments.

It truly is a privilege to share this material with you!
### Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Presentations</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Viewing</th>
<th>Assignments - due at end of day (11:59pm) on the date listed</th>
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| **Week 1: August 28 - September 3**  
**Topic: Film as Art and Commerce**  
**Presentation: “Understanding Film as an Art Form”** | • Textbook: Chapter 2  
• Article: “How Hollywood Accounting Works”  
• Article: “How Hollywood Producers Work” | Opening sequences:  
• *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968)  
• *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)  
• *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006) | • Viewing Response 1 due Friday, September 1 |
| **Week 2: September 5-10**  
**Topic: The Technical Elements of Film, Part 1**  
**Learning Module: “Sight & Sound”** | • Textbook: Chapters 3 and 7  
• Case Study: An interview with Emmanuel Lubezki  
• Case Study: Kym Barrett’s costume design for *Us* | • *Almost Famous* (2000) | |
| **Week 3: Sept. 11-17**  
**Topic: The Technical Elements of Film, Part 2**  
**Learning Modules: “Cinematography” and “Editing”** | • Textbook: Chapters 5-6  
• Case Study: An interview with Emmanuel Lubezki | • *Pariah* (2011) | • Viewing Response 2 due Friday, September 15  
• Study Guide 1 due Sunday, September 17 |
| **Week 4: Sept. 18-24**  
**Topic: Acting**  
**Presentation: “Screen Acting”** | • Textbook: Chapter 8  
• Article: “The Bomb Exercise”  
• Article: “How Hollywood Ruined Method Acting”  
• Case Study: Meryl Streep in *Kramer vs. Kramer* | • *Doubt* (2007) | • Viewing Response 3 due Friday, Sept. 22 |
| Week 5: Sept. 25 - October 1 | Topic: Screenwriting & Genre  
Presentations: “Screenwriting & Narrative Structure”, “Narrative Analysis of Almost Famous”, and “Genre and Style” | Textbook: Chapter 4  
Get Out (2017)  
Never Rarely Sometimes Always (2002)  
Bonus Case Study: Jordan Peele on plotting Get Out | Viewing Response 4 due Friday, Sept. 29  
Study Guide 2 due Sunday, Oct. 1 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Week 6: October 2-8 | Topic: Film History & Documentary  
Note: There’s a lot of material for this week, but I scheduled it this way knowing that it will spill over into next week. | Textbook: Chapter 1  
Case Study: A retrospective on The Thin Blue Line | Singin’ in the Rain (1952)  
Grizzly Man (2006) | Viewing Response 5 due Friday, Oct. 6 |
| Week 7: October 9-15 | Topic: The Future of Film  
Learning Module: “The Future of Film” | Textbook: Chapter 1 | Viewing Response 6 due Tuesday, Oct. 10  
Study Guide 3 due Thursday, Oct. 12  
Film Essay due Sunday, Oct. 15  
Viewing Response 7 due Monday, Oct. 16 |