Rome in Cinema
SPRING 2026 Syllabus
HUMN 4390 / FILM 4340

Instructor: John De Frank **-** profile

Class: Hybrid - online Tuesday and face-to-face Thursdays from 1:30 PM to 2:50 PM in Old Main 214

Class Schedule: Please see Semester Calendar on Blackboard

Conference hours: By appointment (email to schedule appointment)

Office:

Prospect Hall 325

Office Phone: 747-5835

Email: jdefrank@utep.edu (Please use this email to communicate with instructor rather than the Blackboard messages.)

Blackboard support: 747-4357 / email: helpdesk@utep.edu

Humanities Website: utep.edu/liberalarts/humanities

Course description: This course will examine the cinematic adaptations of a selected set of prominent characters and important events in the history of Roman civilization. The course will review four films that tell stories about Roman history and culture. Students will get a *behind-the-scenes* look at the production process and the vision of filmmakers to understand how to distinguish between the liberties of dramatic narrative and the details of recorded history using readings and lectures. The films and topics will explore the origins of Rome with the founding twins Romulus and Remus to the Democratic statehood of the Republic with revolts led by Spartacus to the emergence of the Roman Empire and a prophet in Judea to the *bread and circus* of the gladiators and asking, "what is the glory of Rome?" The objective of this course is to give a peek inside filmmaking process of epic, historical film productions while also providing a glimpse into Roman history to understand some of the culture, political structure and religious influence Rome had on western civilization including that of the United States.

Course readings/videos: This course will consist of required readings in which you are responsible for reading on your own time as well as other required research pertaining to your assignments. Some readings and videos will be subject to change, but an email announcement

will be sent to notify the class of such changes. Readings will consist of web links and will be posted in the "weekly folders" section on Blackboard by specific week. Weekly folders open on Tuesdays at noon.

FILMS: Films will be shown in class. If a student misses class on those days, they are responsible for rent-streaming two of the four films covered for course. Films are available online through different platforms (ex: YouTube, Amazon, Vudu). As there are no textbooks required for the course, the cost of streaming will be the fees for the course as well as Bluebooks.

**Cinema in Rome syllabus in terms of schedule, dates, readings and video and assignments are subject to change upon timely notice.*

Cell phones, laptops, tablets and other devices:
You will be required to be able to access your Blackboard and the readings from a device; phone, tablet or laptop on certain occasions in class. Please make sure to have your device and readings available when required by the instructor. Otherwise, **cell phones, laptops and other devices should be off and put away during class, film screening, and lecture.** Participation points will be deducted if you are seen using your phone or laptop during lecture or film screening.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, not doing one's own work, plagiarism, prohibited AI usage and unacceptable collusion. Not doing one's own work may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person as one's own or use if AI. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions.

Academic dishonesty is an assault upon the basic integrity and meaning of a University. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the University's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience not only for the perpetrators but also for the entire community. It is expected that UTEP students will

Understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts.

Artificial Intelligent (AI) Use Not Permitted Use of AI technologies is not permitted in this course. This policy ensures that your work demonstrates your own learning and critical thinking. **Any identified AI-generated content will be treated as plagiarism and referred to the Office of Community Standards in addition to a zero on the assignment or test in which AI was used.** If there are signs or evidence of AI being used by multiple students on tests by the instructor when grading, test will be moved from Blackboard, online to in-class, administered using Bluebooks and the test will be closed-book.

CASS students: CASS students are responsible for contacting instructor to set up an appointment to discuss any modifications for the course and workload. Please do so preferably before or on the first day of class.

ADA statement
As per Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, if a student needs an accommodation, then the Office of Disabled Student Services located at UTEP need to be contacted. If you have a condition, which may affect your ability to perform successfully in this course, you are encouraged to CASS. Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) in order to meet any accommodations, the student may need.

Monday through Friday 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m.
Phone:(915) 747-5148
Union Building East Room 106
cass@utep.edu

COURSE WORK & GRADING

Student Responsibility for Assignments: As part of their grade, students are required to complete readings, conduct research, and participate in online and/or face-to-face discussions and submit work on time.

Course Readings & Materials: All readings will be made available on Blackboard in the weekly folders.

Grade percentage breakdown:
5 points = Attendance (3 excused absences, fourth result in deduction of 5 points, fifth absence will result in drop)
10 points = Participation

5 points = Quiz over Introduction readings (Roots, Western Tradition).
10 points = In-class Blue Book essays worth 2.5 points each x 4
10 points = two Campus excursions (5 pts each)
60 points = 4 Tests (15 points each, Tests are on Fridays administered through Blackboard, no make-up tests)
Total possible points earned: 100

ATTENDANCE

Attendance (5% of grade): Attendance is required for the in-class portion of the course as it meets in-person one day a week on Thursdays from 1:30 – 2:50 PM. Students have three excused absences; the fourth absence will be a deduction of five points and on **the fifth absence the student will be dropped from the course.**

PARTICIPATION

Participation (10% of grade): Participation based on your overall performance in class that includes; attendance, assignment and test scores and participation class discussion. Participation will be based on the student's ability to partake in-class discussions by offering insight on the subject matter including research information, asking questions, reiterating or disputing another student's view with sufficient backing and sourcing. Participation DOES NOT include 'yes' or 'no' answers or repetition of another students POV or statement.

In-Class Essays (10% of grade): There will be four In-class Blue Book short essays worth 2.5 points each. These essays will be administered in-class, closed book, with essay prompts concerning the film topics.

Excursions (TBA) (10% of grade): There are two excursions planned that are dated in the semester Calander on Blackboard. Attendance is required to earn 10 points. Each excursion is worth 5 points. There are no make-up opportunities as these dates are set in the Semester Calander on Blackboard. Please plan your personal and job schedules accordingly.

QUIZ on INTRO READINGS

Initial Quiz (5% of grade): Initial Quiz on Roots of the Western Tradition readings recapping history of Rome. This will be an in-class quiz, and there are no makeup opportunities.

FILM TESTS

4 Film Tests (60% of grade): There will be four tests on readings, videos, films and lectures provided by the instructor. Test dates are marked on the Course Calendar on Blackboard.

Tests will be posted midday on Fridays, and you will have till 11:00 PM Friday night to submit the test. **Once you click "begin" you will have 130 minutes to complete the test.**

There are NO make-up tests: By enrolling in this course, you agree to the responsibilities to this class and therefore personal life issues or events, job schedules or other courses are no exceptions to scheduled tests, assignments and due dates. Therefore, there will be no make-up tests. You have the dates ahead of time and you should plan accordingly.

Grading scale:
90% - 100% = A
80%-89% = B
70 % - 79% = C
60% - 69% = D
59 – 0 % = F

Extra Information Regarding ONLINE Course, Blackboard and Discussion Posts

Technology Checklist
As you prepare to take an online course at UTEP, we want to share with you some basic information about technology to make this a successful experience. Having your computer requirements checked and all software up to date is essential to access course content. Please take some time to read through this page and ensure you have the information you need to get successfully started.
Supported Browsers
For a PC: FireFox, Internet Explorer (Do NOT use IE7), and Chrome for a Mac: Safari, Firefox, and Chrome
Browser performance hints include: Clear browser cache
Allow pop-ups Check
Your Java
1. Go to http://java.com
2. Click on "Do I Have Java?"
3. Click on "Verify Java Version."
4. Update Java if needed.

In addition to having your web browser tested. You may also need additional browser plug-ins to view some content that your instructor may share on the learning management system.
Common plug-ins include:
Adobe Reader, Flash Player, Windows Media Player, QuickTime Additional Software
When creating documents, slide presentations, spreadsheets, etc., you must use Microsoft Office or a compatible program (see 10 Free MS Word Alternatives). The UTEP Technology Support Services (3rd floor, UTEP Library) can also provide you with any applications, compatibility packs, patches, and updates you may need.

Statement of (N)etiquette

When communicating electronically, many of the feelings or impressions that are transmitted via body language in face-to-face communications are lost. Consequently, interpreting emotions and innuendos is much more difficult. Only what is written, or drawn, carries the message. Often, excitement can be misinterpreted as anger or insult. It is important that we all keep this in mind as we communicate. Words in print may seem harmless, but they could emotionally injure us when working at a distance. Hence, it is vitally important that we are conscious of how we communicate while working at a distance.

For example, avoid the use of caps in your electronic messages, as wording in caps comes across as shouting. The standard practice ("Netiquette") for participation in networked discussion requires that all participation be focused on the topic at hand, not become personalized, and be substantive in nature. (Translation: you may certainly disagree with others, but you must do so respectfully; you may express strong beliefs or emotions, but you may not get so carried away that you lose all perspective on the course itself.)

Please observe the following:

- You are required to check the Blackboard course shell daily for messages, updates and assignments.
- Respect and courtesy must be provided to fellow classmates and the instructor at all times, in all contexts. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- Be professional and careful in what you say about others.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address and focus on the ideas, not the person who posted them.
- Be careful when using sarcasm and humor. Without face-to-face communications your joke may be viewed as criticism.

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