



# *Film Theory & Criticism*

FILM 4390  
CRN: 13571

T / Th, 10:30 – 11:50 am

EDUC. Bldg #203

## Fall semester – 2016

Instructor: Roberto Avant-Mier, Ph.D.  
Office: Quinn Hall #201  
Phone: (915) 747.6588  
Office Hours: Tues. & Thur., 8:00 am – 10:30 am (or by appointment)  
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### Required Texts:

- “FTA” Book: *Film & Television Analysis: An Intro. To Methods, Theories, and Approaches* (2016, Routledge), by Harry B. Benshoff.
- Other articles to be assigned by your instructor as needed. (available online on Blackboard system)

### Course Description:

This course will provide an overview of the major theoretical and critical approaches to the study of film, and introduce students to ideas and concepts related to film theory and analysis. This course will also introduce you to background/historical information about film history, and will help you apply this knowledge in understanding cinema as meaning-making cultural practice. Another major focus of the course is the emphasis on applying theories and concepts to one’s own writing and intellectual interests. Students will be required to write their own film or movie criticisms in an effort to apply tools and concepts as well as to further understanding of film/cinema. The course will also focus on social, societal, cultural, structural and historical dimensions of film production, and therefore includes racial, ethnic, class, and gender analyses of film/cinema.

### Course Objectives: After taking this course, you should be able to:

- Know and use basic film terminology.
- Understand and discuss major trends in film analysis, and develop a working vocabulary of terms and concepts that relate to film studies theory and criticism – in addition to communication/media studies.
- Have an understanding of film’s role as technical artifacts, as cultural and ideological productions, as works of collaborative art, and as products usually of multinational corporations, and possibly, as agents of cultural change.
- Analyze films using different critical and theoretical approaches.
- Express (write) your own ideas about film in relation to dramatic quality, production values, and artistic merit, as well as in relation to various types of criticism.
- Become more reflexive and critical about cinema, and knowledgeable about films as mediated communication.

## **Course Policies:**

### 1. ATTENDANCE:

In accordance with the Dept. of Communication Attendance Policy, **ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED** as a condition of successful completion of all courses in the department. After missing any class session, a student is responsible for finding out about assignments, due dates, announcements, handouts, and so forth that were covered during the missed session, and for making up any missed work. The student is also responsible for obtaining class notes from a classmate for the session, and for learning the material from that session for any relevant exams or quizzes.

The equivalent of 1 week of absence from any course will reduce a student's course grade by percentage points on their eventual "Attendance & Participation" grade. However, absence from a combined total of 3 weeks of class meetings will result in automatic failure of the course. Thus, if the class meets once a week, 3 missed sessions equals automatic failure. If a course meets twice a week, 8 missed sessions will result in failure of the course, and a combined total of 9 missed class sessions will result in automatic failure of a course that meets 3 times per week. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Absences for any reason, including illness, personal crises, athletics or other extra-curricular activities are included in this total. If a student is involved in any activity that might require that student to miss 3 or more weeks of a particular course, then that student should not enroll in the course. If a student is involved in any activity that might require that student to miss an exam or quiz, then that student should not enroll in the course.

### 2. DEADLINES:

All assignments and exams/quizzes will be scheduled far in advance, and due dates for exams and assignments are announced in this syllabus. Therefore, you must plan your work and personal schedule far in advance to accommodate these deadlines and policies. Because the attendance policy dictates that you will (for the most part) be present in class, make-ups and late work are therefore largely irrelevant. Otherwise, for a few special cases at the discretion of your instructor, late work will be docked one letter grade for each day late (each calendar day, not each day of class).

### 3. EXAMS:

Make-up tests will not be given, except for emergencies. If a student misses an exam or quiz because of a documented emergency or situation, he/she will be required to fulfill an alternative assignment. Only in extreme circumstances will your instructor make arrangements with you to complete your coursework through alternative assignments.

### 4. ADA STATEMENT (Americans with Disabilities Act):

The University of Texas at El Paso seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Accommodations & Support Services (CASS) to make arrangements for accommodations in advance.

### 5. CASS POLICY (Center for Accommodations & Support Services):

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations & Support Services (CASS) at (915) 747.5148, or by email to [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu). Or visit their office located in the UTEP Union – East, Room #106. For additional information, please visit the

CASS website at [www.sa.utep.edu/cass](http://www.sa.utep.edu/cass). CASS staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

#### 6. PHONES / ELECTRONIC DEVICES:

Cell phones or other personal electronic communication devices are NOT permitted during class, so phones should be turned off AND put away during class. Laptops for note-taking are permitted, only with (a.) instructor permission and (b.) as long as the student sits in the front rows of the classroom. [Students cannot sit in the back rows when they are using laptops.]

#### 7. 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 gives or attempts to give unfair advantage.

#### 8. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING SCALES

##### Assignments

* Attendance & Participation	20 %
Mid-Term Exam:	20 %
Movie Reviews (2 total / 20% each):	40 %
Final Exam:	20 %

##### \* Attendance & Participation Points Earned

0-1 absences =	90-100% for attendance grade
2-3 absences =	80-89% for attendance grade
4-5 absences =	70-79% for attendance grade
6-7 absences =	automatic "D" for final grade
8 or more =	automatic failure of course / "F" or "W"

<p><b>NOTE:</b> 2 Tardies = 1 Absence</p>
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##### Numeric Scale – Letter Grade Achieved

90 – 100 = A      80 – 89 = B      70 – 79 = C      60 – 69 = D      below 60 = F

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**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE – Fall 2016**


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<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Be ready to discuss:</u>
1	T 8/23	a. Introductions, Syllabus & Course Overview b. Critical Thinking Questions about Film	(Get the books/ materials!)
	Th 8/25	a. <i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011) b. Movie/cinema history	[1895-1918: A New Art Form] Lecture
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2	T 8/30	a. Movie/Cinema History (cont'd) b. Basics Terms of Film Theory & Analysis	Lecture
	Th 9/1	a. Movie Reviews: - Thinking about the movie review - Thinking about writing-about-movies b. <i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011)	Lecture  [1918-1928: Triumph of Film]
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3	T 9/6	a. Movies and Stereotypes b. Writing about Film (format and details)	* C. Cortés
	Th 9/8	<i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011)	[1918-32: Rebel Filmmakers]
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4	T 9/13	The Auteur Theory	FTA (textbook), Ch. 4
	Th 9/15	Movie Reviews: - Discuss Movie Reviews - Movie Review details	* Movie Reviews (Blackboard)
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5	T 9/20	a. <b><u>DUE: Movie Review #1</u></b> b. <i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011)	[1930s: Great Movie Genres]
	Th 9/22	a. Genre Theory... Film & Television Genres b. <i>Mise en scène</i> , etc.	FTA (textbook), Ch. 5
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6	T 9/27	<i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011)	[1953-1957: World Cinema]
	Th 9/29	Feminist Film Theory & Criticism	FTA (textbook), Ch. 8
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7	T 10/4	a. Diegetic and Non-Diegetic Film Music b. Narrative Music, Visuals & Meaning in Film	* Wingstedt/ Brandstrom/Berg
	Th 10/6	<i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011)	[1957-64: New, Modern Film]
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8	T 10/11	<b><u>MID-TERM EXAM</u></b>	
	Th 10/13	<i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011)	[1965-1969: New Waves]
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9	T 10/18	<i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011)	[1967-79: New Am. Cinema]
	Th 10/20	"A Punk Called Pedro"	* N.T. Toribio
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10	T 10/25	<i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011)	[1970s: Innovation in Culture]
	Th 10/27	Function & Effect of Popular Music in Cinema	* H. Lapedis
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11	T 11/ 1	Movies and Gender: - "Rebel Girls & Singing Boys"/ Romantic Comedies	* T. Cateforis
	Th 11/ 3	"New Hollywood, New Millennium"	* T. Schatz
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12	T 11/8	a. <b><u>DUE: Movie Review #2</u></b> b. "Stylistics of American Movies"	* B. Salt
	Th 11/10	Cinema and Queer Theory: - "(Broke) Back to the Mainstream"	* H. Benschoff
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13	T 11/15	<i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011)	[1990s: First Days of Digital]
	Th 11/17	Film, Television, & the Postmodern	FTA (textbook), Ch. 9
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14	T 11/22	a. Popular Songs & Comic Allusion b. <i>The Story of Film: An Odyssey</i> (2011)	* J. Smith [2000 Onwards]
	Th 11/24	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY <b>[no classes]</b>	
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15	T 11/29	" <i>Makers: Women in Hollywood</i> " (2014)	
	Th 12/ 1	The Hollywood War Machine	* Boggs & Pollard
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16	Thurs. Dec. 8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>FINAL EXAM 10:00 am to 12:45 pm</b>	(as per university schedule)
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\*\*\* 12/14 GRADES DUE !

**[ \* = available as electronic .pdf file on Blackboard]**