

BC/ENG 290 – INTRODUCTION TO FILM (FALL 2016)

Instructor: Richard Ness

Screenings: Tuesday, 7-9 p.m., Sallee 101

Lecture: W, F 12:00-12:50 p.m. Simpkins 220

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Office Hours: M 3:15-4:14 p.m.; Tu 3:30-4:30 p.m.; W 2-4:15 p.m.

COURSE TEXTS: Film: An Introduction by William H. Phillips and A Short Guide to Writing About Film by Timothy Corrigan

Films and videos screened as part of the class also are considered primary texts, and students are responsible for all material assigned for screening in the course.

OFFICIAL CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

**BC/ENG 290 Introduction to Film. (3) (General Education/Humanities)** Screening and discussion of films from around the world, introducing students to selected traditions, questions of social justice, and methods of interpretation (with laboratory).

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To examine basic elements of film and media construction, such as cinematography, editing, sound, music, mise-en-scene and production design.
- To explore various types of film structures, including narrative and non-narrative forms for both fiction and non-fiction productions
- To identify significant technological and aesthetic achievements in the development of film and media as art forms
- To demonstrate the application of various critical methods to the analysis of film, such as genre studies, auteurism, psychoanalysis, and ideological approaches
- To examine the manner in which films are a product of the social and cultural conditions which produce them
- To draw comparisons among film and various other arts

**NOTE: THIS IS NOT AN EASY COURSE.** This is not a course in which you just watch movies. You also are expected to analyze these films in detail and apply appropriate terminology when writing about and discussing them. Learning the terminology of film is like learning a foreign language and requires a good deal of study and concentration to master. Students will be expected to be able to identify and discuss specific shots, scenes, lines of dialogue and other aesthetic aspects of films screened for the class, so they should get in the habit of taking notes during film screenings. Note also that this class places a great deal of emphasis on writing, and students are expected to demonstrate appropriate writing skills.

GROUND RULES:

**LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY** – Assignments submitted after the specified due date **WILL NOT BE GRADED**. Comments and feedback may be provided, but the score will be recorded as a zero. Students anticipating a problem meeting a deadline or attending a class session when an assignment is due must contact the instructor **IN ADVANCE** to make arrangements. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

**NOTE:** Completed assignments **WILL NOT** be accepted if submitted via email, unless specific arrangements have been made with the instructor prior to the due date (also note that if permission is given for an email submission it must be sent in Microsoft Word format).

**SCREENINGS** – Films are considered to be a primary text for the course and students are responsible for **ALL** films screened during the semester. Do not assume that if you have already seen a film or are seeing it in another class this excuses you from a screening. There are specific things you will be asked to look

for and tested on in each film. Whenever possible films screened in class also will be available on reserve in the library, and students are encouraged to look at films more than once to prepare for exams and papers. However, viewing a film outside of class should be regarded as a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, a classroom screening.

**READINGS** – Students are expected to have done the assigned reading from the Phillips text in advance of each class lecture. Class lectures are designed to expand on the material in the course texts or provide additional information not found in the texts. It will be assumed that students already have done the readings and are prepared to discuss them. The Corrigan text is designed to serve as a handbook for students when preparing their writing assignments for this class. Although specific readings from this text are not listed on the schedule, the instructor will identify sections of this book throughout the semester that students should be studying. Students should also consult Chapter 12 of the Phillips text for guidelines in researching and writing their assignments.

**ATTENDANCE** – Attendance for all class sessions is mandatory. Lectures and screenings are considered to be major elements of the course content and exams will be designed to test understanding of all material covered during the semester, including all films screened. Missing a class period will seriously undermine a student's ability to pass the class. If you must miss a class period or screening, please notify the instructor in advance. Online Absence Reporting System (O.A.R.S.) is a system that allows you to self-report your absences. This course requires you to use it anytime you will be missing class, regardless of the reason. You will need to submit one form for each day you will miss. Your submission will generate an automatic email to your instructor. The link to O.A.R.S. is <http://wiu.edu/oars> . The attendance policy for this course is the same as stated on the Online Absence Reporting system form: "Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled. Each faculty member determines his or her own policy dealing with class attendance. Therefore, if a student misses a class or classes, the student is expected to discuss the matter with the instructor, and it is up to the discretion of the instructor whether to allow a student to make up any missed assignments, exams, or projects."

Students with prolonged or repeated absences should also contact the Student Development Office at [http://www.wiu.edu/student\\_services/student\\_development\\_office](http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/student_development_office)  
For more information visit the full policy at <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/stuabsc.php>

**NOTE THAT THIS CLASS IS DESIGNATED A NO CELLPHONE ZONE.** If you must bring cell phones, iPods, iPads, MP3 players or other electronic devices into the classroom they **NEED TO BE TURNED OFF AND PUT AWAY DURING ALL CLASS SESSIONS, INCLUDING ALL FILM SCREENINGS.** Do not assume that just turning off the sound is sufficient. The blue glow created by cellphone use is extremely irritating and distracting to others around you who are trying to concentrate on the film screening and is not acceptable in this course. Use of electronic devices during class periods (such as text messaging, answering email, game playing, etc.) **WILL BE GROUNDS FOR STUDENTS RECEIVING A FAILING GRADE FOR THE COURSE.**

**PAPERS** – Papers must be typed/computer-printed and should reflect accepted standards for university research papers. Assignments should demonstrate a degree of research on the part of the student, combined with careful consideration of the student's own ideas. These assignments often will require that students support their conclusions with specific evidence from the assigned readings as well as from works viewed for the course, so students should get in the habit of taking notes during screenings.

Research and material drawn from outside sources must be properly credited. **PLAGIARISM IS AN INEXCUSABLE OFFENSE AND WILL BE GROUNDS FOR AUTOMATIC FAILURE IN THIS COURSE.** If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, consult the university's policy statement or the instructor prior to submitting an assignment. Any time you quote or paraphrase someone

else's work, you must give her/him credit. This includes material from print, audio/video and computer-mediated/Internet sources. The instructor reserves the right to fail any student who does not meet the requirements of the assignments, so any deviations from the guidelines should be discussed well in advance. Also note that even if you share information or discuss the readings with other students in the class, you need to make sure that you each submit your own individual work for the assignments. Duplication of writing in work submitted by two or more students will be considered grounds for charges of plagiarism. <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, [disability@wiu.edu](mailto:disability@wiu.edu) or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at:

[http://www.wiu.edu/equal\\_opportunity\\_and\\_access/request\\_form/index.php](http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php). If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>. Web address for student rights and responsibilities: <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>

#### A FEW TIPS FOR SURVIVAL IN BC/ENG 290:

**ATTENDANCE IS ESSENTIAL** – The Tuesday night screenings are a significant part of this course, so if you are involved in extra-curricular activities that have events on Tuesday evenings you should consider taking a different section or taking the course during another semester when you do not have these conflicts. Also, there is a lecture session on Fridays, so if you like to leave early for the weekend or are the sort of person who enjoys celebrating a bit too much on Thursday nights and has trouble getting to class on Fridays, again you might want to consider not taking the course. Since much of the Wednesday session usually is taken up with discussions of the Tuesday screenings, the Friday sessions are used for tests and lecture material (much of which is information that expends on or is not found in the course textbooks).

**GET THE TEXTBOOKS, READ THE TEXTBOOKS** -- Since there is a limited amount of lecture time for the course, the textbooks provide additional information and examples of concepts discussed in class. Students should do the reading in advance and come to class prepared to ask about concepts in the texts they want to discuss or do not understand. It is also strongly recommended that students form study groups to prepare for the exams, so they can exchange information about key concepts and examples of them from the films.

**KEEP TRACK OF DEADLINES, DO THE REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS, AND TURN THEM IN ON TIME** – One of the major reasons for students not passing or doing well in this class is that they do not turn in work or fail to turn it in on time. Success or failure in this class comes down to the amount of points a student has earned during the semester and I can't grade what I do not have. Deadlines will always be indicated on the assignment sheets, so make a note of them and plan accordingly. Also, make sure to allow extra time for printing or other computer problems for written assignments so you have a hard copy ready to turn in by the deadline.

**DO NOT EVEN THINK ABOUT USING YOUR ELECTRONIC DEVICES** – This is especially true during screenings. The light and/or sound from electronic devices is extremely distracting to other students and use of these devices will be grounds for failing the class.

GRADING -- Assignments will be graded on a point system, with grades determined by a straight percentage. The following is the breakdown for assignments:

Viewing Report	-- 50 points
Tests (two @ 25 points, two @ 50 points)	-- 150 points
Shot breakdown/scene analysis paper	-- 100 points
Research and critical analysis paper	-- 100 points
Final Exam	-- 100 points

This course will make use of the plus-minus grading system required by the university. The following is the scale that will be used to determine final grades in the class, based on the percentage of total points earned:

100-93 = A
92-90 = A-
89-87 = B+
86-83 = B
82-80 = B-
79-77 = C+
76-73 = C
72-70 = C-
69-67 = D+
66-63 = D
62-60 = D-
59 and below = F

Specific descriptions of the major assignments and in-class exercises will be provided separately. In order to receive a passing grade for this class, students must complete all major assignments and tests. All assignments are evaluated carefully before a grade is given and every effort is made to provide appropriate feedback for the student. Occasionally a student will have an objection to a grade. In such cases, the instructor will reevaluate the assignment and determine if there is justification for a grade change. NOTE: If a student asks for a reconsideration of a grade, the instructor reserves the right to assign a lower, as well as a higher, grade. **ALL DISCUSSION OF GRADES MUST BE DONE WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF THE GRADE BEING RECEIVED. THIS INCLUDES THE FINAL GRADE FOR THE COURSE. REEVALUATION OF GRADES WILL NOT BE DONE AFTER THAT TIME.**

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic/Screenings/Readings</u>
8/23, 24, 26	Introduction to analyzing and evaluating films; mise-en-scene SCREENING: HAROLD AND MAUDE (Hal Ashby, 1971)
8/30, 31, 9/2	Elements of mise-en-scene – settings and subjects SCREENING: HOUSE OF GAMES (David Mamet, 1987) READING: Phillips, pp. 1-37
9/6, 7, 9	Elements of mise-en-scene – composition, framing, aspect ratio SCREENING: THE GRADUATE (Mike Nichols, 1967) READING: Phillips, pp. 37-60
9/13, 14, 16	Photographic properties of film; lighting, shots, angles, movement SCREENING: THE TENANT (Roman Polanski, 1976) READING: Phillips, Chapter 2
9/20, 21, 23	Photographic properties of film continued; review of visual aspects of cinema SCREENING: PSYCHO (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) TEST #1
9/27, 28, 30	Editing – temporal and spatial relationships; principles of montage SCREENING: RUN. LOLA, RUN (Tom Tykwer, 1998) READING: Phillips, Chapter 3
10/4, 5, 7	Film Sound – voice, sound effects and music SCREENING: BLOW OUT (Brian De Palma, 1981) READING: Phillips, Chapter 4
10/11, 12	Summary of aesthetic properties of film; classic Hollywood cinema SCREENING: CITIZEN KANE (Orson Welles, 1941) VIEWING REPORT DUE
10/18, 19, 21	Introduction to critical methods; self-reflexive cinema; intertextuality SCREENING: THE PLAYER (Robert Altman, 1992) READING: Phillips, Chapters 12 and 13
10/25, 26, 28	Sources of feature films; film and other arts; auteurism SCREENING: ROPE (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948) READING: Phillips, Chapters 5 and 6 TEST #2
11/1, 2, 4	Narrative construction; manipulation of time/space; story and discourse; alternatives to traditional narrative construction SCREENING: MEMENTO (Christopher Nolan, 2001)
11/8, 9, 11	Critical approaches – genre studies; genre conventions and formulas SCREENING: HIGH NOON (Fred Zinnemann, 1952) READING: Phillips, Chapter 7 SHOT BREAKDOWN/ANALYSIS PAPER DUE

- 11/15, 16, 18 Genre and auteurism continued; revisionist genre films; semiotics  
SCREENING: MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER (Robert Altman, 1971)
- 11/22, 23, 25 Critical approaches – ideology; race, class, gender; independent and marginalized cinema  
SCREENING: FRESH (Boaz Yakin, 1994)  
READING: Phillips, Chapter 10  
TEST #3
- 11/29, 30, 12/2 Psychoanalysis and cinema; experimental and hybrid cinema; explicit and implicit meanings  
SCREENING: UN CHIEN ANDALOU (Luis Bunuel, Salvador Dali, 1929); PERSONA (Ingmar Bergman, 1966)  
READING: Phillips, Chapters 9 and 11
- 12/6, 7, 9 Summary of aesthetic and critical aspects of film analysis; new directions in cinema and emerging modes of presentation and production; emerging markets and national cinemas  
SCREENING: INTO THE MIRROR (Sung-ho Kim, 2003)
- 12/13 FINAL EXAM (6 p.m.)