

BC/ENG 496 – TOPICS IN FILM: JOURNALISM IN CINEMA (SPRING 2017)

Tuesday 7-9 p.m., Sallee 101: W, F 12:00-12:50 p.m., Simpkins 220

Instructor: Richard Ness

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Office Hours: Tu 3:30-4:30 p.m., W 1:00-3:00 p.m., F Noon-1:00-2:00 p.m.

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

**496 Topics in Film. (3)** Study of major subjects and themes in film. Topics vary but may include intensive study of directors such as Alfred Hitchcock and Federico Fellini, or artistic movements such as Italian Neorealism, French New-Wave, Contemporary Spanish Cinema, or Russian Formalism. Not open to students with credit in ENG 496. Prerequisites: ENG/BC 290, ENG/BC 390, and 6 s.h. in approved film minor electives, or permission of instructor.

**COURSE TEXTS:** JOURNALISM IN THE MOVIES by Matthew C. Ehrlich; JOURNALISTS IN FILM: HEROES AND VILLAINS by Brian McNair

Additional readings may be assigned and placed on E-reserve through the Malpass Library

Students may also find it helpful to access materials on the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture website ([www.ijpc.org](http://www.ijpc.org))

#### COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To provide an overview of the history of the journalist in films, to evaluate the depiction of the journalism profession, and to examine changes in the portrayal of the press in films in relation to actual historical and social developments
- To analyze the characteristics, iconography, and narrative patterns for a genre of journalism films
- To identify key works and filmmakers in the history and development of the journalism film
- To stimulate debate about ethical issues raised by significant films that are relevant to the public's perception of the press, and to provide students with opportunities to take positions on these issues both in class discussion and written work
- To examine the role of the journalist character in various genres, including screwball comedies, film noir, political films, horror, and science fiction films
- To address how the depiction of the journalist in film and popular culture reflects, influences, and in some cases anticipates how the public perceives the profession
- To provide students with an opportunity to explore in-depth some aspect of the presentation of journalism in films by preparing and writing a final research paper

#### GROUND RULES:

**LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY** – Given that this is a course involving journalism, deadlines will be strictly observed. 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, so students should be prepared to take notes during screenings. 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 Ehrlich text and any assigned outside readings 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. Although specific readings from the McNair book have not been indicated on the syllabus, this text is designed to provide students with ideas for additional films to view for their Film Report assignments and specific chapters from this text may be assigned during the semester in relation to particular topics scheduled for class discussion.

**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 as noted above 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>

#### MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING SYSTEM

Assignments will be graded on a 500-point system, with grades determined by a straight percentage. The following is the breakdown for assignments:

Film Reports (4 @ 25 pts. each)	-- 100 points
Ethical Issue Paper	-- 100 points
Midterm	-- 50 points
Final Exam	-- 100 points
Final Research Paper (including bibliography)	-- 150 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.

PLEASE NOTE: The yelling of "STOP THE PRESSES!" during class sessions will not be permitted.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1/17, 18, 20	Introduction; overview of the journalism genre; the journalist in the silent era READING: Ehrlich, Chapter 1 SCREENING: POWER OF THE PRESS (1928); selected shorts
1/24, 25, 27	Hecht, MacArthur, and the prototypical Hollywood reporter READING: Ehrlich, Chapter 2 SCREENING: THE FRONT PAGE (1931)
1/31, 2/1, 2/3	Class, the Code, and Depression-era journalism films; Frank Capra and the reporter as populist hero READING: Ehrlich, Chapter 3 SCREENING: PLATINUM BLONDE (1931) DUE: FILM REPORT #1
2/7, 8, 10	The journalist in screwball comedy; Torchy Blane and the female reporter in the 1930s READING: Ehrlich, Chapter 8 SCREENING: NOTHING SACRED (1937)
2/14, 15, 17	Politics, national security, censorship, and the challenge to objectivity – the journalist in WWII READING: Ehrlich, Chapter 4 SCREENING: FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT (1940)
2/21, 22, 24	From crusading to corrupt -- the journalist in post-war Hollywood; film noir and semi-documentary READING: Ehrlich, Chapter 5 SCREENING: ACE IN THE HOLE (1951) DUE: FILM REPORT #2
2/28, 3/1, 3/3	Journalism, organized crime, and the Kefauver commission; corporate ownership of the media SCREENING: DEADLINE, U.S.A. (1952)
3/7, 8, 10	Broadcast journalism, the rise of radio and television news, and the manipulation of truth SCREENING: THE GREAT MAN (1956) DUE: ETHICAL ISSUES PAPER
3/21, 22, 24	Journalism in/and other genres; the journalist as cross-genre hero SCREENING: THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE (1962) MIDTERM
3/28, 29, 31	“The Whole World’s Watching”: Mass media and social responsibility READING: Ehrlich, Chapter 6 SCREENING: MEDIUM COOL (1969) DUE: FILM REPORT #3
4/4, 5, 7	Journalism and/as entertainment; capitalism, conglomerates and control of the media SCREENING: NETWORK (1976)
4/11, 12, 14	Political conspiracy, paranoia, and Pakula SCREENING: ALL THE PRESIDENT’S MEN (1976)

- 4/18, 19, 21      Globalization, war correspondents, and the Third World  
SCREENING: UNDER FIRE (1984)  
DUE: FILM REPORT #4
- 4/25, 26, 28      Fake news, Janet Cooke, and media ethics  
READING: Ehrlich, Chapter 7  
SCREENING: SHATTERED GLASS (2003)
- 5/2, 3, 5      Investigative reporting, the decline of print media, and the future of journalism  
SCREENING: SPOTLIGHT (2015)  
DUE: FINAL RESEARCH PAPER AND BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 5/9      FINAL EXAM (6 p.m.)