SYLLABUS – FILM AND CULTURE

Instructor: Dr. Inga Meier
Email: meieri@sfasu.edu
Office Hours: M, W 11:00 am-12:30 pm, T, TH 12:30-1:30 pm, + By Appointment
Office Location: GFA 222
Mailbox: GFA 212B

Semester: Fall 2017
Course Number: 163.001 + 163L.020
Meeting Time: M, W 10:00-10:50 am
Meeting Room: GFA 300

I. Course Description

This course provides an introductory survey of film as a distinct art form that has the ability to reflect, critique, reshape, and impact society and culture. In the first half of the course, we will consider how film narrative is formulated (as opposed to other forms of art – e.g. photography, theatre, the novel) and explore the major formal elements of film: mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, and sound design. In the second half of the course, we will expand this terminology to critically examine and analyze film, across a variety of genres, in its relationship to various aspects of society and culture (violence, race, class, gender and sexuality, etc.).

II. Course Objectives

Core Objectives:

- Critical Thinking Skills: to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
- Communication Skills: to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.
- Teamwork: to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared goal or purpose.
- Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

Student Learning Outcomes: Students who successfully complete this course will:

- gain an understanding of a variety of cinematic works as products of specific cultures, times, and places. (Obj. #1, 4)
- gain an understanding of critical commentary about film from a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary perspective. (Obj. #1)

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1 You may refer to me as “Inga,” “Dr. Meier,” or “Ms. Meier.” You may not refer to me as “Prof,” “Professor Inga,” or “Doctor Inga.” If you insist on doing so, you are required to follow this wording with an acceptable title (e.g. “Yellow-Haired Warrior” or “Mother of Dragons”).
2 Emails are not an instantaneous form of communication. In other words, please do not send me an email 20 minutes before class and then approach me in class, asking if I received your email. On average, expect a 24-hour turnaround time. Also, emails sent through D2L will NOT be answered. Please use only the SFA address.
3 There is a sign up sheet for 15-minute slots on my door. If you wish to meet with me, please sign up. However, if you are not available during office hours due to co-curricular conflicts, you may make an appointment outside of regular office hours. In other words, please don’t tell me, “I didn’t meet with you because I had class during your office hours.”
develop their abilities to analyze, write about, and discuss cinema as a cultural artifact, both informally and through formal group presentation. (Obj. #1, 2, 3)

- learn basic concepts regarding the relationship between film and culture, including: concepts of national and regional identity; the relationship between film “text” and audiences of differing perspectives and backgrounds; and the relationship between film and other forms of cultural production such as history, literature, music, art, and theatre. (Obj. #1, 3, 4)

III. Text + Materials

- Attendance of the School of Theatre’s production of *Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play*, Nov. 6-11, 7:30 pm⁴
- *Film Art: An Introduction* (Eleventh Edition)⁵ by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson

The book is available at the campus Barnes and Noble in the student center. You may procure the book however you choose (campus bookstore, online, textbook rental, locally owned bookstores, sharing with a friend, etc.). However, **it is your responsibility** to have completed the required reading by the due date.

IV. Class Procedures and Policies

**School of Theatre Attendance Policy:** A career in the fine arts demands dedication and discipline; preparation for this career (or any career, for that matter) requires conscientious development of effective work habits. To this end, regular and punctual attendance is expected for all classes, laboratories and other activities for which a student is registered or assigned.

**Further:**

- It is University policy to excuse students from class attendance for certain reasons related to health, family emergencies, or student participation in approved university-sponsored events. Excused absences from theatre classes will only be granted upon presentation of written documentation from the teacher, sponsor, or physician involved upon the first day of the student’s return. In the case of absences caused by university-sponsored events, inclusion in the university’s public listing of such absences will constitute an official excuse. **It is the student's responsibility** to inform the instructor that he/she has scheduled the planned official absence, in advance when possible.
- Students missing classes, other than university-sponsored trips, may contact the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) and request that an absence notification be sent to the instructor(s). The notification is not an excuse, and is not evaluated by OSRR. The notification is only provided as a courtesy to the student and the student's instructor(s). Students remain responsible for providing documentation in a timely manner to the instructor for each absence. The instructor determines whether such documentation is satisfactory.

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⁴ Your pass functions as a voucher for 1 ticket. It is in your interest to procure the ticket early. The pass is not itself a ticket.
⁵ Due to the fact that there are significant differences amongst editions, I strongly recommend against buying a previous edition.
• In the case of missed classes, you will be held responsible for the successful completion of assigned work and/or projects. **It is your responsibility to seek out the materials and information you missed, including lecture notes, screenings, and announcements. “I didn’t know” will not be considered an excuse.**

• **A total of ten excused and/or unexcused absences will automatically result in a failing grade.**

• Unexcused absences above 3 will result in a deduction of 10 points each off the participation grade (1% each off the final grade).

• Arriving to class after attendance has been completed or leaving prior to the end of class will be considered ½ an absence (which counts towards the maximum allowed of 9) and will be deducted from your grade accordingly.

• If at any point in the semester, you wish to know where you are at in terms of attendance, please approach me before or after class, during office hours, or email me.

• **It is your responsibility to be aware of both the attendance policy and your attendance count.**

V. Requirements

This is a university course, taken mostly by prospective film minors. While we will be utilizing the “lab” portion of this class to view films, these viewings will be framed by the critical context of the readings and lecture material. In other words, you will be expected to actively engage the films in the class discussions that follow. Part of the expectation of this course is that your writing level be appropriate to a university-level course in the humanities. If you are not confident in your writing ability, make arrangements now to take advantage of the university’s various writing assistance programs. Start with the Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC) on the first floor of Steen Library.

**Quizzes:** There will be a total of 7 quizzes covering the reading due on the day of the quiz. If you come to class after the quiz has been collected, you will not be allowed to make up the quiz. Likewise, if you arrive in class toward the end of the quiz, you will not be provided with additional time. Generally, make up quizzes will not be administered. (Rare exceptions to this may occur at my discretion and in accordance with the attendance policy.)

\[7 \text{ quizzes } \times 25 \text{ points each } = 175 \text{ points total}\]

**Film Adaptation Pitch:** You will submit a paper (as a hard copy) of approximately 3-4 pages on or before Friday, November 17. Papers will be due in my mailbox at 5:00 pm (after which the office will be closed). Using the School of Theatre’s production of *Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play* as your source material, and applying the terms and concepts of the class, you will formulate a design concept for a film adaptation of the play. You will focus on cinematography, sound, or editing.

\[250 \text{ points}\]

**Midterm Exam:** The midterm exam will be held on Wednesday, October 18. It will consist of a variety of questions covering all terms and concepts discussed in the course, ranging across film viewings, lecture material, in-class discussion, and assigned readings. Typical question types may include: true / false, short answer, matching, multiple choice, term identification, and an essay.

\[250 \text{ points}\]
Film Review: You will submit a 3-4 page film review on or before Wednesday, December 6. This review MUST be submitted via LiveText in compliance with the university’s core assessment requirements. Failure to do so by the due date will result in a 50 point deduction from the assignment grade. Specific instructions for LiveText submission will be provided separately. You must additionally provide a hard copy.

200 points

Participation / Effort: You are expected to come to class prepared and to be fully engaged during class discussions. This means that you are both physically and mentally present. As long as you meet both of these conditions, you will receive the full 100 points. However, absences (as outlined under the attendance policy) and disruptive behavior will lead to deductions.

125 points

Please note: What takes you X hours to write, takes me X x Y hours to grade. Therefore, if you hand me a 4-page paper, I cannot have it for you a couple of hours later. However, I will make every reasonable effort to return your work to you in a timely manner. On average, given the size of the class, and depending on the size of the assignment, this will be 1-2 weeks from the day that you handed in the assignment.

VI. Grading Policies

Grading Scale:

Final Grades are assigned as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum to Maximum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>900-1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>800-899</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>700-799</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>600-699</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>less than 600</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54): Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

VII. Diversity + Inclusion

This class engages material covering a diverse range of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, and disability. While I encourage you to formulate and express your thoughts and opinions throughout the semester, discriminatory remarks will not be tolerated and may constitute disruptive behavior under the student code of conduct.
VIII. Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. Please read the complete policy at: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_academic_dishonesty.pdf.

You are expected to be in full compliance with both the SFA policy and the School of Theatre policy:

SFA policy: Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

School of Theatre policy: The School of Theatre expects students to maintain the highest standards of academic conduct. Misrepresenting someone else's work as your own or knowingly allowing someone else to represent your work as his/hers constitutes academic dishonesty. Such behavior is antithetical to our work as scholars, as artists, and as members of a community founded on trust and mutual respect. It is an insult to faculty and an affront to honest students. Penalties for academic dishonesty may range from failure of a specific project to failure of the course, suspension from the production season for up to one year, and referral to university authorities for further action, which may include suspension or expulsion from the university.

Please Note: You are expected to be familiar with and able to demonstrate proper procedures for citations, following either MLA or Chicago Style guidelines, both of which are available online. Failure to cite sources is a form of academic dishonesty and will be treated accordingly. I will trust that you are invested in your own education and will not cheat. However, this trust should not be confused for a lack of vigilance on my part. If you are caught, I will consider it a violation of personal trust and will not hesitate to penalize you to the fullest extent possible. I guarantee that the penalty you may incur for a late assignment will be less than the penalty for academic dishonesty.

IX. Student Code of Conduct

Acceptable Student Behavior: Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.
Please note: Cell phone use during class is highly distracting, both to me, and the classmates seated behind you – especially during screenings. It is also rude. I have teacher eyes and can see you, even when you think you are staging a covert operation by placing the phone on your lap, and even if you are seated in the last row. I will not waste class time policing your cell phone habits. Please do not mistake this for the acceptability of such behavior. Similarly, I will not waste time repeating material because you were busy checking Facebook the first time the material was covered. However, I will deduct points from your participation grade for cell phone use at the end of the semester.

X. Concealed Carry

The law states that any institution of higher learning “… may not adopt any rule, regulation, or other provision prohibiting license holders from carrying handguns on the campus of the institution.” As such, I cannot ban lethal weapons in the classroom, since none of our department’s spaces have been approved for any kind of prohibition. However, I request that you use your best judgment and consider the importance of preserving a safe classroom environment for all students, in accordance with the student code of conduct, which remains in effect. If you are licensed to carry a handgun and choose to do so on campus, it is requested that you consider refraining from doing so in the classroom. Should you choose to carry, your weapon must be concealed and in your possession (on your body or secured in a backpack or other type of bag) at all times. Should your weapon be visible at any time, you may be referred to campus security and your grade may be affected.

XI. Additional Information

If you have a disability: To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Religious observance: If your observance of a religious holiday will prevent you from attending class, please contact me immediately so we can make appropriate arrangements.

XII. Course Outline (Subject to Change!)

Please Note: This course outline is provided to help you schedule your readings and assignments. You will notice that some weeks have more assignments or readings than others. It is YOUR responsibility to manage your time accordingly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CLASS TOPIC</th>
<th>READING DUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WED, 8/30</td>
<td>Introduction and Syllabus</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6 Due to a variety of circumstances, the course outline may change. This may include changes to the screening titles and changes to dates on which certain topics are covered or reading is due. It is your responsibility to remain abreast of any changes to the course outline.
MON, 9/4  Discussion: Film Form, Narrative  
Screening: Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) (Iñárritu, 2014) (1:59)
FA, 50-71

WED, 9/6  Discussion: Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) (Iñárritu, 2014), Narrative Form, LiveText Demo with Jennifer Stringfield
*** READING QUIZ #1***

MON, 9/11  Discussion: Mise-En-Scene  
Screening: Stranger than Fiction (Forster, 2006) (1:53)
***READING QUIZ #2***

WED, 9/13  Discussion: Stranger than Fiction (Forster, 2006)

MON, 9/18  Discussion: Cinematography
*** READING QUIZ #3***
Screening: American Beauty (Mendes, 1999) (2:02)

WED, 9/20  Discussion: American Beauty (Mendes, 1999)

MON, 9/25  Discussion: Editing
***READING QUIZ #4***
Screening: Silence of the Lambs (Demme, 1991) (1:58)

WED, 9/27  Discussion: Silence of the Lambs (Demme, 1991)

MON, 10/2  Discussion: Sound
***READING QUIZ #5***
Screening: Gravity (Cuarón, 2013) (1:31)

WED, 10/4  Discussion: Gravity (Cuarón, 2013)

MON, 10/9  Discussion: Film Style and Film Form
***READING QUIZ #6***
Screening: Kill Bill: Vol. 1 (Tarantino, 2003) (1:51)

WED, 10/11  Discussion: Kill Bill: Vol. 1 (Tarantino, 2003)

MON, 10/16  Discussion: Genre
***READING QUIZ #7***
Screening: Deadpool (Miller, 2016) (1:48)

WED, 10/18  MIDTERM EXAM

MON, 10/23  Discussion: Deadpool (Miller, 2016)
Screening: The Princess Bride (Reiner, 1987) (1:38)

WED, 10/25  Discussion: The Princess Bride (Reiner, 1987)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Film Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MON, 10/30</td>
<td>Discussion: Animation</td>
<td>Screening: <em>The Lego Movie</em> (Lord + Miller, 2014) (1:40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WED, 11/1</td>
<td>Discussion: <em>The Lego Movie</em> (Lord + Miller, 2014)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MON, 11/6</td>
<td>Discussion: Documentary Film</td>
<td>Screening: <em>Stories We Tell</em> (Polley, 2012) (1:48)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WED, 11/8</td>
<td>Discussion: <em>Stories We Tell</em> (Polley, 2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MON, 11/13</td>
<td>Discussion: Documentary Film II</td>
<td>Screening: <em>Bright Lights</em> (Bloom + Stevens, 2016) (1:35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WED, 11/15</td>
<td>Online Discussion: <em>Bright Lights</em> (Bloom + Stevens, 2016)</td>
<td><em><strong>FILM ADAPTATION DUE 11/17</strong></em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MON, 11/20</td>
<td><em><strong>THANKSGIVING BREAK</strong></em></td>
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<tr>
<td>WED, 11/22</td>
<td><em><strong>THANKSGIVING BREAK</strong></em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MON, 11/27</td>
<td>Discussion: Adaptation</td>
<td>Screening: <em>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</em> (Nair, 2012) (2:10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WED, 11/29</td>
<td>Discussion: <em>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</em> (Nair, 2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MON, 12/4</td>
<td>Discussion: Film + History</td>
<td>Screening: <em>Selma</em> (DuVernay, 2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WED, 12/6</td>
<td>Discussion: <em>Selma</em> (DuVernay, 2014)</td>
<td><em><strong>FILM REVIEW DUE</strong></em></td>
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