Introduction to Narrative Film—Fall 2017

Instructor: Steve Marsden
Class Hours: TR 9:30-10:45
Classroom: Ferguson 183
Phone: 468-6609 (can’t return LD calls)
Office: Liberal Arts North 209
Department: English and Creative Writing
Email: marsdensj@sfasu.edu   ENG246 in subject line. Please try not to mail from within D2L—it makes following up more complicated, and may not reach me as quickly.
Office Hours: M, W 12:30-3:00 and by appointment (can also meet via Zoom)
Webpage: D2L—http://d2l.sfasu.edu (very important—check it daily)

Course Description / Objectives
According to our course catalogue, ENG 246 is

An introduction to the concepts and terminology necessary to discuss and write about narrative film in complex and compelling ways; emphasis on film literacy; the language and grammar of film; critically reading and analyzing the cinematic texts.

Student Learning Outcomes for ENG 246:
By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of film history
- Be able to identify various film movements and styles
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of cinematic genres
- Be able to analyze the formal aspects of film clearly in writing
- Understand the social and ideological functions of cinema

Textbooks

Please get this edition if possible—the former editions differ considerably. It’s a moderately expensive book, but the best one at the best price I could find.

Recommended
Some assigned movies will stream online either for free (through Youtube) or through one of the major subscription services: Hulu+, Netflix, or Amazon Prime. Other options will be made available (either group showings or films on reserve in the library), but streaming subscriptions, purchases, or DVD borrowing may be beneficial. It is your responsibility to make time to screen the films before Tuesday class time each week.

Some works may also be assigned through online copies or through electronic course reserves. It would be wise to print these out. Background information will frequently be provided in the form of web links or handouts: you’re responsible for reading and keeping up with these.
Course Policies

Phones
If you have a cell phone, only be using it when requested by the instructor. If you must receive calls due to some developing emergency, please set the phone to a silent setting. If you must talk on your phone due to some earth-shattering emergency, please leave our classroom to do so. Don’t ever text in class, unless you’ve been asked to look something up by the instructor. On exam days, please turn off and put away out of sight all electronic devices unless told otherwise.

Eating, Drinking, Sleeping and So On
Feel free to drink coffee or eat anything that's not loud, messy, and/or smelly. Please clean up after yourself, however. If you sleep in class, you will be woken up. At least feigning attention and interest is very important: please don't read the newspaper, listen to an ipod, or send instant messages during class.

Note on Films
Some films we screen and discuss may be rated R and contain violence, sexuality, and language appropriate to a film of that rating.

Reading, Viewing, Participation, and Note Taking
This course is reading intensive, and some of the works we will be studying will be quite difficult. Budget your time and read, watch and annotate ahead when necessary. Make time to see the films outside of class. Take notes as you read and view, and write out questions about your reading and viewing for use in class. Talk about your reading outside of class. Ask questions in class. If you find anything particularly impenetrable and need help, feel free to drop by my office hours to chat about it. My job is to help you understand this stuff.

This course is taught largely as a dialogue—I ask and answer questions. The students who get the most out of the class are those who participate well in class discussion. If you can answer, do.

Contact by Email
Correspondence relating to this course must use your sfasu email account. The subject line must be ENG 246. I am not certain to respond to emails with any other subject line, especially if they resemble spam. I never accept assignments by email, and emails with attachments will not be opened.

Original Work
All work turned in for credit in this course must be original work this semester for this class. You may not “recycle” work turned in previously in other courses. Recycled work will not be accepted for credit if found to be recycled (and the ordinary late penalties will accrue while you write another paper).

Plagiarism
I take plagiarism very seriously. According to SFASU Policies and Procedures:

    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.
If a student’s paper contains plagiarized material, the student will meet with me, and I will determine the outcome, which typically involve penalties from an un-revisable zero on the paper to an F for the course. In addition, an Academic Dishonesty Form will be filed. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, or fear you may not have properly cited something, please talk to me immediately.

**Attendance and Absences**

Regular attendance is required for success in this course. Lectures and discussions will highlight what sorts of things will be on the tests, there will be frequent short writing assignments and quizzes may be given at the beginning or the end of classes. Please arrive on time. No homework or in-class assignments may be made up unless your absence is excused or has been pre-arranged with me at least a full day in advance. If you miss a class for a university-excused reason, you must (by the second day you return to class) present me with a typed memo explaining the reason for your absence, and you should attach any documentation (such as a note from your doctor) to this memo.

Regardless of the reason for your absence, you are responsible for all information and work covered in class. If you missed homework or in-class assignments during an excused absence, it is your responsibility to find out what you’ve missed and arrange with me to make it up.

After four unexcused absences, every additional unexcused absence will result in a deduction of 5 percentage points from your total grade. Usually, that total will already be quite low due to missed quizzes and poor test preparation.

In accordance with university policy, after six absences (the equivalent of three weeks of missed class) for any reason whatsoever, you may be unable to earn a passing grade in the course. Please keep an eye on your absences.

**Late Major Papers and Free Homework Late**

Each student has one (1) free late homework assignment: to use it, write “Oops” clearly at the top of the completed assignment and turn it in within one week of the assigned due date (and before the last day of class). Other than this “oops” assignment, no late homework will be accepted without a university-approved absence or a very compelling excuse (my judgment) in writing, detailing your reasons and providing evidence as necessary.

Major papers turned in after the beginning of the class period on which they are due will be considered late, and will have one full letter grade (10 percentage points) deducted from their final grade. Another full letter grade will be deducted for each of our class meetings that passes after the due date. The easiest way to receive a very poor grade in this course is to turn things in late. Do not turn in papers under my office door. If you turn them in to English office staff, email me about it immediately. I am not responsible for the loss of papers turned in that way, or your subsequently lower grade.

**Turnitin Submission**

In addition to the paper copy turned in during class, all major papers must be turned in to turnitin (through D2I) in electronic copies. I may choose to grade either the electronic or paper copies of major assignments, depending on the time, so you must make them both available. Turnitin submissions are due at the same time the paper is due in class. Students are responsible for making sure the turnitin copy and the paper copy are identical, and that the paper is successfully posted. No major paper will be awarded a score other than 0 without a turnitin submission.
Midterm Grades
All 100 and 200 level classes now report midterm grades. Please take these scores in the context of the percentage of the course projects complete at that time. A passing score at midterm is no guarantee of a passing final grade. Neither is a failing score necessarily impossible to recover from. See the grade breakdown and do the math.

Extra Credit
Several times during the semester, I will announce extra credit assignments. Extra credit will only be assigned in class (it will not be posted on the website). Please do not ask me for individual extra credit. Any extra credit assignments I given will be applied to the homework / quiz score, and will be offered to everyone. With extra credit, the daily work score will top at 100%.

Withheld Grades
I do not give Withheld grades lightly. 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.

Students with Disabilities
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/.

Assignments and Grade Determination

Grade Breakdown
Quizzes, film responses, daily work: 20%  
Midterm exam: 20%  
Shot-by-shot analysis paper: 15%  
Proposal for film analysis: 5%  
Film analysis / term paper: 20%  
Final exam: 20%

Percentage Grade
90-100 A
80-89 B
70-79 C
60-69 D
0-59 F

Short Film Responses
Often, I'll have you write some relatively informal response to the film viewing and readings for a day. These should be typed, should attempt MLA format as accurately as you can unless otherwise specified, and will have other requirements as posted. The intention is to get you thinking and recording what you
think about the works, and to prepare you for class.

5 = Excellent, flawless: Very insightful, and otherwise dazzlingly good. I think "wow! I wonder if I can get a copy to teach with next semester!" This is a rare score.
4.5 = Very good: Accomplishes everything needed with style and economy, reflects a strong understanding of the subject matter, and has no very significant errors. I think "good!"
4 = Good: Does the work expected, and contains only errors that might be expected of the average careful student at this point in the semester. I think "okay."
3.5 = Needs some work: Ideas may be incomplete or unfocused, organization may be sloppy. May be “off” in tone or style. I think "well, okay, I guess."
3 = Needs a lot of work: May be unclear in spots, or have numerous, embarrassing, or unprofessional errors. I think "well, maybe next time."
2 = Unacceptable: Fails to accomplish some aspect of the assignment, or has a variety of unprofessional errors. I think "maybe he or she had a high fever or something."
1 = Token effort: Wrong assignment or shows very little work. Accomplishes little of what the assignment asks. Reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the assignment or a deficit of effort or skill. I think "why did I ever get into this line of work?" A paper with a name on it and a sentence, turned in on time.
0 = Didn't turn paper in: I think "hmm, I wonder if he or she has dropped the course?"

**Reading / Viewing Quizzes**

Often, at the beginning or end of the class period, I will ask one question, answerable by one well-constructed sentence, about something we've read or viewed. They will be graded on a three point scale, as follows:

0   You weren't there to take the quiz or didn't put your name on it.
1   You have your name on the paper, and what you have written is indeed a sentence.
2   Your answer represents a good attempt, and shows that you've read the work with some care, but isn't entirely correct.
3   The sentence answers the question and indicates that you've read well and attentively.

I don't intend these to be hard or trick questions, but they will require that you read and remember what you have read or seen. If you have an excused absence on a day when we have a reading quiz, you must bring a memo to me within two class periods explaining your absence and providing what documentation is possible. Then I will ask you another question about that day's reading. If you come in late and don't turn in a signed paper, or you have an unexcused absence and miss a quiz, you will receive a 0.

**Midterm exam: Thursday, March 7**

An online exam with both objective questions (primarily focusing on the accurate use and definition of film and narrative terms) and a brief take-home essay. Will be completed outside of class, and turned in through D2L.

**Shot-by-shot analysis paper: Thursday, March 14**

A brief paper of 4-5 pages that analyzes a sequence of shots, paying attention to narratological elements, and explaining how mise en scene, cinematography, and editing work to perform a particular effect in a film.

**Proposal for term paper: Tuesday, April 16**
A page or two that describes an analytical approach and a film or films, documenting initial research and arguing that a particular topic will make a lively and interesting paper.

**Term paper: Full Rough Draft due for Tuesday, May 7**  
**Final Draft due (in class and on paper) Thursday, May 9**

A researched paper of 4-6 pages that analyzes a film, bringing in formal and thematic elements as well as cultural, political, generic, production, or audience considerations. More detailed prompts and rubrics will be available.

**Final exam: Turned in at or before, Thursday May 16, 8-10 am**  
A take-home essay exam exploring major themes or elements learned in the course. There may be an objective section dealing with terms, concepts, movements, and definitions, as well as a thematic essay and an evaluative essay (about how well the course did).

**Extremely Tentative Schedule:**

The following is an extremely tentative schedule of topics we will address and films we might watch. The viewing schedule may change as the semester progresses. Daily readings and responses will be assigned each day on D2L. The D2L day-by-day will constitute the real adjusted schedule for all assignments.

- **Week 1**—Introduction  Watch Early film on Youtube  
- **Week 2**—Principles of Form  Watch *The General* (available Youtube)  
- **Week 3**—Elements of Narrative  Watch *Stagecoach*  
- **Week 4**—Mise en Scene  Watch *The Shape of Water*  
- **Week 5**—Cinematography  Watch *Rashomon* – Film and POV  
- **Week 6**—Acting  Watch *Sunset Boulevard*  (and clips)  
- **Week 7**—Editing  Watch *Pulp Fiction*  (and, if possible, documentary on editing *The Cutting Edge*, placed on reserve).

**Midterm exam due, Thursday, March 7**

- **Week 8**—Sound  Watch *Black Swan*  
- **Shot-by-shot analysis paper due, Thursday, March 14**
- **Week 9**—SPRING BREAK – Woo?  
- **Week 10**—Film Genres  Watch *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*  
- **Week 11**—Types of Critical Writing:  Watch *Get Out*  
- **Week 12**—Research in Film Studies:  Watch Film to be announced.  
- **Week 13**—Documentary film and voice  Watch *13th*  

**Easter Break, Thursday**

- **Week 13**—Continue 13th,  
- **Proposal due: Tuesday, April 16**
- **Week 14**—Mad Max: *Fury Road* (or substitute)  
- **Week 15**—Bandersnatch (or other novel genre)  
- **Week 16**—Prompt for final exam essay portion given out  
- **Peer review of analysis paper, Tuesday, May 7**  
- **Analysis paper due (in class and on paper) Thursday, May 9**  
- **Final exam due: Turned in at or before, Thursday May 16, 8-10 am**