

COMM 1851 – Introduction to Film

Course Description

Motion pictures have become a worldwide form of entertainment, the rare item that can combine high artistic endeavor with huge international business. My goal with this online course is to introduce you to both sides of this coin. You will learn about the aesthetic, technical and entrepreneurial aspects utilized in making films, the history of filmmaking, and the theories at work behind the craft. The films we'll view will range from the birth of cinema to modern day. You'll cultivate a deeper understanding and appreciation of cinema, both as an art form and a mirror of society and culture, and you'll engage in analysis of the medium and its messages.

When you finish this class, if you decide to further your instruction in film, you'll have a better idea of how the different disciplines of film intertwine with one another, before you begin your own projects. If you have no interest in production, you'll learn more about the filmmaking process, and how the industry works. In either case, you'll watch a number of great movies, and hopefully you'll have some fun.

Course Objectives

- To develop cinematic literacy
- To consider many technical, craft and business-based components of cinema
- To analyze the aesthetic properties of the medium
- To consider about the theories and ideas of film genre and authorship
- To analyze cinematic subtexts and the underlying meanings of films
- To develop critical and analytical skills in viewing and writing about film

Assignments

1. Viewing Exercises/Short Writing Assignments (4): 40%
2. Quizzes (8): 30%
3. Discussion Board Postings/Participation (4): 20%
4. Final Exam: 10%

Grade Scale: A+ (99-100) A (94-98) A- (90-93) B+ (87-89) B (84-86) B- (80-83) C+ (77-79) C (74-78) C- (70-73) D (60-69) F (59 and below)

Textbook Reading

SIKOV, ED. *Film Studies: An Introduction*, 1st Edition. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010. The 1st edition of the textbook is available as an online book through the UM library.

Additional readings will be posted on eCourseware.

Viewings

Students are required to view entire films, clips, and video essays as part of this class. Expect to spend time each week for viewings. The Kanopy streaming service is available by using your University of Memphis login. The main streaming resources will be Kanopy, Vimeo, YouTube and TubiTV. These platforms have been chosen for accessibility and lack of additional fees. If you are unable to access these platforms, please be prepared to pay for rentals of the films by using a different streaming platform (Amazon, iTunes) Please give full attention to the viewings.

Assignment Guidelines

INDIVIDUAL GUIDELINES FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT WILL BE POSTED ON ECOURSEWARE.

Viewing Exercises. 40 points out of 100.

Films will be viewed for analysis. Each student will type four short response papers ranging in length from 250-500 words. These written assignments will be submitted online via eCourseware dropbox. Guidelines for each exercise will be posted on eCourseware. Bibliographies should accompany each exercise.

Quizzes. 30 points out of 100.

Quizzes assess knowledge from readings during the week. While quizzes in the class are “open book,” it’s important to note that quizzes have a stated time limit. Quizzes have a mixture of multiple choice, true/false, fill-in the blank, and short answer.

Discussion Board for Posting/Participation. 20 points out of 100.

Discussion board postings respond to questions posed by the instructor. After posting your initial required discussion, you must comment upon the postings of at least two other students in the class. Your grade for each posting will reflect the degree to which you respond thoughtfully to the Discussion Board question and to the comments of other members of the class.

Each Discussion Board posting will consist of the following:

- your initial 250-word discussion
- two 100-word commentaries on others' postings

Please expect to communicate with me by eCourseware e-mail about your progress in the course. You should check in to the course eCourseware site every day to read the home page “News” announcements and to answer any e-mail from me.

Final Exam. 10 points out of 100.

The final exam is cumulative and will test on all content of the class from readings to viewings. Similar to the quizzes, the exam will have a time limit. It will be a mixture of multiple choice, true/false, fill-in the blank, and short answer.

Class Guidelines

Due Dates: Assignments are expected to be turned in on time. Failure to do so will typically result in a zero for that assignment.

Communication: The main communication platform for the class will be eCourseware. Please expect to converse with me by eCourseware e-mail about your progress in the course. And please check in to the 1851 eCourseware site daily to read home page announcements and to answer any e-mail from me. And if you'd like to meet via Zoom, just let me know.

Reading/Viewing: Ed Sikov's *Film Studies: An Introduction*, 1st Edition, is used to create the structure of the class and is required reading. The book is available digitally through The University of Memphis library website. Additional readings will be posted on eCourseware. Viewings will be linked through the module, found on Kanopy, Vimeo, YouTube and TubiTV.

Be aware, information found in the readings will appear on the quizzes. Information from readings and viewings will appear on the final exam.

A note on book editions: We will continue to use the 1st edition of the textbook for this class. However, the 2nd edition of the textbook was released in May 2020. It seems that the only major difference is that the 2nd edition has two extra chapters added at the end. If you end up purchasing the 2nd edition, you should still be able to use it for class.

Warning: R-Rated (MPAA) and unrated audio/visual content will sometimes be part of your viewing assignments. The films have been chosen for their ability to demonstrate the key concepts of the course and, in many cases, for their ability to engage us intellectually and aesthetically. Some films might contain ideas, images, or words that are offensive to some members of the class. Please be prepared to analyze and think about films whether you like them or not. By remaining enrolled, you acknowledge and accept this element of the course.

Student Accommodations: Students with accessibility issues or learning accommodation issues due to a disability should contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) to submit an official request for course accommodations. Contact DRS at 901.678.2880 or at drs@memphis.edu. (<https://www.memphis.edu/drs/index.php>)

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. Students guilty of academic misconduct, either directly or indirectly, through participation or assistance, are immediately responsible to the instructor of the class in addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions which may be imposed through the regular institutional disciplinary procedures. (<https://www.memphis.edu/osa/students/academic-misconduct.php>)

Student Health: Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at deanofstudents@memphis.edu.

Student Resources: Students who need additional resources can visit the Dean of Students Office website at <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php>.

CLASS SCHEDULE

NOTE: THIS CLASS WILL TAKE PLACE ASYNCHRONOUSLY ONLINE. WE WILL NOT MEET IN PERSON THIS SEMESTER.

PLEASE START EACH WEEK'S WORK WITH THE REQUIRED READING. THIS WILL GIVE YOU A FRAMEWORK FOR THE REST OF THE LESSON.

Week 1/Module 1: Mise-en-scene

Reading: Introduction & Chapter 1 in the book

Viewing: *Sherlock Jr.*, *The Immigrant* (on Kanopy) + Clips

Please complete requested Discussion Introduction & eCourseware email

Week 2/Module 2: Movement

Reading: Chapter 2 in the book

Viewing: *Stagecoach* (on Kanopy) + Clips

Quiz #1 (on Week 1 material)

Week 3/Module 3: Cinematography

Reading: Ch. 3 in the book

Viewing: *Visions of Light* (on Youtube) + Clips

Viewing Exercise 1 - Mise-en-scene & Long Takes Due by 11:59PM Sunday 9/6

Week 4/Module 4: Noir

Reading: Noir Articles

Viewing: *Hitch-Hiker* + *Detour* (on Kanopy)

Quiz #2 (on Week 2 & 3 material)

Week 5/Module 5: Editing

Reading: Ch. 4 in the book

Viewing: *The Cutting Edge* (on Youtube) + Clips

Discussion 1 - Film Noir Visual Style Due by 11:59PM Sunday 9/20

Week 6/Module 6: Sound and Music

Reading: Ch. 5 in the book

Viewing: Short Films + Clips

Quiz #3 (on Week 4 & 5 material)

Week 7/Module 7: Narrative

Reading: Ch. 6 in the book

Viewing: *Short Term 12* (on Youtube) + Clips

Viewing Exercise 2 - Editing & Sound Due by 11:59 PM Sunday 10/4

Week 8/Module 8: Screenwriting

Reading: Ch. 7 in the book + Article

Viewing: *Moonlight* (on Kanopy)

Quiz #4 (on Week 6 & 7 material)

Week 9/Module 9: Auteur and Performance

Reading: Ch. 8 and 9 in the book

Viewing: *Leave No Trace* (on Kanopy) + Clips

Quiz #5 (on Week 8 material)

Discussion 2 - Narrative and Structure Due by 11:59 PM Sunday 10/18

Week 10/Module 10: Directing

Reading: Articles

Viewing: *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (on Kanopy)

Viewing Exercise 3 - Plot Segmentation & Ideology Due by 11:59 PM Sunday 10/25

Week 11/Module 11: Genre

Reading: Ch. 10 in the book

Viewing: *Night of the Living Dead*

Quiz #6 (on Week 9 & 10 material)

Discussion 3 - Auteur Due by 11:59 PM Sunday 11/1

Week 12/Module 12: Documentary

Reading: Articles

Viewing: *Tower* (on Kanopy)

Viewing Exercise 4 - Genre Analysis Due by 11:59 PM Sunday 11/8

Week 13/Module 13: Independent vs. Studio Film Business

Discussion 4 - Documentary Due by 11:59 PM Sunday 11/15

Reading: Articles

Viewing: *Tangerine* (on TubiTV)

Quiz #7 (on Week 11 & 12 material)

Week 14/Module 14: Producing and Development

(Short module; must be completed by 11:59 PM on 11/17)

Reading: Articles

Viewing: Short Films & Clips

Quiz #8 (on Week 13 material)

FINAL EXAM - November 18-24 (Material from all 14 Modules will be included)

Syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor