

SYLLABUS
TFM 160 Film as Art and Communication
Fall 05 LT 161
Friday 1-3:40

INSTRUCTOR: MARK FREEMAN

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The goal of the course is to familiarize students with the significant "texts" (works) of the moving image. The course surveys a wide range of filmic expression including classics, as well as examples of challenging work by women, minorities, the avant-garde and independent filmmakers.

This course is an introduction to the styles, techniques and devices employed in moving image art. The art of film will be broadly considered---not only including dramatic and comedic features, but also documentaries, experimental film and animation. We will consider film as an art form; as a cultural artifact; as political expression; and as an economic enterprise. Classes will combine lecture, screenings and discussion.

OBJECTIVES

After completing this course students should be able to:

- * Identify and understand the formal elements and grammar of film art
- * Recognize and distinguish major film styles and genres
- * Exhibit familiarity with several critical theories of film

EVALUATION

Participation in on-line discussions, quizzes, surveys etc. 12 %
For on-line quizzes see prenhall.com/gianetti

Mid-Term Examination 15%

Reports 18%

Each film screened in class must be analyzed terms of the reading/lectures. Please address the discussion questions in the syllabus. These 12 reports should be at least two (double spaced, 12 pt font), typewritten pages. They will be collected three times during the semester. (You do not have to write about the last film screened in class.) You may receive 1.5 points for each two-page report.

Please turn in each set of reports in a 3-brad paper folder. Be sure to include your name and the names of this film you are analyzing on the front cover of the reports.

Film Analysis Project Part 1 20%

Film Analysis Project Part 2 20%

Final Exam 15%

Grades A-F with plus and minus.

Students planning to petition to enter the TFM major must earn a B or better in this course. This is a grade equal to 84% or better.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Understanding Movies by Louis D. Gianetti. 2004 10th edition.

Short Guide to Writing about Film, by Corrigan, Timothy. 5th Edition HarperCollins, 2003

Treasure of Sierra Madre by B. Traven Hill and Wang; ISBN: 0809001608

Blackboard

Student discussions, work groups and quizzes will be accessed through blackboard. For an introduction to the system see

http://its.sdsu.edu/bbsupport/instructor/docs/handouts/Using_Blackboard_St.html

<http://its.sdsu.edu/blackboard/student/gettingstarted/netiquette.html>

It's essential that the registrar have your correct email address for you to participate and especially so you can receive emails and updates about the class.

Websites

moviecliches.com/

imdb.com

netflix.com

Note films screened in this class may contain adult themes and/or explicitly sexual or violent imagery.

Class Session 1

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE: HISTORY, TECHNIQUE AND THEORY

Why study film?

Choosing groups and choosing a film for the semester long Film Analysis Project.

Introduction to Blackboard and on-line activities

Screening of Student Work

Note no written reports are required for this class. But do participate in the on-line discussion.

Class Session 2

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Reading: UM: Chapters 1 Photography and 3 Movement

Screening: *Visions of Light* 1992 Todd McCarthy 95 minutes VTC 175

Discussion Questions: Using examples from the film and lecture, identify and discuss ways of controlling the image. Consider framing, image size and placement, screen shape, color vs. black and white, lighting techniques, and film stocks or video imaging. How do these choices affect the impact of a story? Compare and contrast various styles and techniques of cinematography as presented in the film. Which excerpts were most visually compelling why? Which experts made the most impact on you? Why?

Class Session 3

EXPERIMENTAL FILM

Reading: UM Chapter 11 Critique

Screenings: *A Trip to the Moon* Georges Melies 10 min 1902 VTC 996 tape 1

Man With a Movie Camera Vertov 68 minutes 1929 DVD 729

Meshes of the Afternoon 1943 Maya Deren 14 min VTC 1522

(*Frank Film* ILL MUSIC/FVL ConCirc FVLV 1906-1 UCSD)

Discussion Questions: These are formal, mostly non-narrative films. Which film(s) did you find most accessible? Why? Considering your understanding of cinema history, which film is the most formally inventive? Give examples. Compare these films regarding their use of camera movement, editing and formal structure. What is uniquely cinematic in these films? What forms of expression are used that are unavailable to other art forms? Give examples.

Class Session 4 SOUND

Reading: UM: Chapter 5

Screening: *The Conversation* DVD-195 113 min. 1974

Discussion Questions: Describe the use of sound effects and music. How is language used? Consider tone, volume, delivery/acting, pacing etc. Is it realistic or not? How would you describe it? What's the dramatic effect of the way language is used here? How does the sound design set the scene, time and place? What does the sound design and sound editing contribute to the story and the impact of the film?

Class Session 5 EDITING

Reading: UM: Chapter 4

Screening: *Cutting Edge* Wendy Apple 9.6/2005 Barnes and Noble or
North by Northwest Hitchcock 1959 136 minutes DVD 491

Exercise: Analyze an action sequence of at least 15 shots from a movie of your choice. Describe the camera placement and movement. Describe the action of the character(s). Note the in and out points of any relevant sound effects, music and dialog. Describe any transitional devices (dissolves, fades etc.) Give the timing in seconds for each shot. (Using a DVD you can refer to the timecode in the display window. Or you can use a watch to time the length of a shot.) Rough storyboard sketches are a plus, but are not required. SUMMARIZE what you have learned about the process of sequence construction from this assignment.

Note this exercise is your report for this class.

Class Session 6 MISE EN SCENE

Readings: UM: Chapter 2 *Mise en Scene* and Chapter 7 *Drama*

Screening: *8 1/2* Federico Fellini 1963 138 min. DVD 553

Discussion Questions: Describe the *mise en scene*. What is the period and setting of the film? How is this signaled by the *mise en scene*? How does it comment on or support the action and story? Be sure to cite specific examples from the film.

How is the film manipulated technically to make a story point? What aspects of style illuminate character or plot? What does the film say about the relationship between art and "real" life --- between "reel and real? Between real and surreal (the world of dreams.) In what ways does the film exhibit a poetic rather than dramatic sensibility? What is the film's point-of-view regarding the artist and the process of creativity? (Use specific examples from the film to support your

answers.)

Reports for Classes 2-5 Due

Class Session 7
FILM GENRES

Readings: UM: UM Chapter 8 Story and Chapter 9 Writing
Screening: *The Misfits* John Huston 1961 124 min VTC 1274

Discussion Questions: Classify the film by genre and genre cycle. Discuss the filmmaker's stance toward the genre's conventions. Classify the film in the context of Genre development as Primitive, Classical, Revisionist or Parodic. Explain and give examples. The author of the screenplay, Arthur Miller is best known as a playwright? In what ways does the film seem like a stage production? How does the writer take it advantage of cinematic techniques.

Class Session 8
MIDTERM

Film Analysis Part 1 is due in class Friday October 21st.

Class Session 9
ACTING and COMEDY

Reading: UM Chapter 6 Acting
Screening: *The Great Dictator* Chaplin 1940 126 minutes VTC 804

Discussion Questions: How does Chaplin use body language and physical humor to establish each of the two characters he plays in this film? Give examples of humorous or satirical techniques Chaplin uses to make social and political points. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using humor rather than drama to critique current events? How is Chaplin's approach similar to or different from a contemporary "court jester" like Michael Moore?

Class Session 10
DOCUMENTARY

Screening: *Thin Blue Line* Errol Morris 1997 101 minutes VTC 1791

Discussion Questions: Describe and analyze the camera, sound and editing techniques used in this film. How they different than a traditional journalistic approach to documentary? How is the film similar to or different from current portraits of "bands on the road." Do you think this style was influential? Why or why not?

Reports for Classes 6, 7, 9 Due

Class Session 11

FILM and LITERATURE

Reading: *Treasure of Sierra Madre*, by B. Traven Hill and Wang; ISBN: 0809001608

Screening: *Treasure of Sierra Madre* John Huston 1948 126 minutes TV 7094LR Laser

Discussion Questions: Identify points of comparison between the novel and the film. Is this a loose or faithful adaptation? (See UM p 421.) Discuss the use of symbolism in both. What are the strengths and weakness of each form ---novel and film? Explain how you responded to each. Be sure to include specific examples from both the film and novel.

Class Session 12

IDEOLOGY

RACE, ETHNICITY, CLASS, GENDER---VIEWS of the "OTHER"

Readings: UM: Chapter 10 Ideology

Screening: *Central Station* Brazil Walter Salles 1998 106 minues VTC 1318

Discussion Questions: Discuss the film in terms of the categories and classifications outlined in the reading. What is Third Cinema? Is this film a good example of Third Cinema? Why? Why Not? How is this film similar to and/or different from that a typical Hollywood treatment of poverty, prostitution, unemployment? Be specific. Give examples.

Class Session 13 NO CLASS ENJOY THANKSGIVING

Class Session 14

ANIMATION

Screening: *Waking Life* Linklater 2001 99 minutes VTC 2728

Discussion Questions: This film is a combination of traditionally filmed scenes and computer animation. How is the content and impact of the film changed by this technique? How would the impact and feeling of the film be different if it were presented as originally photographed? If it were hand drawn Disney style animation? Is the technique chosen the best match for the story? Why or Why not?

Class Session 15

Reading: UM Chapter 12

Screening *Citizen Kane* Orson Welles 1941 113 minutes TFM Collection

Discussion Questions: *Citizen Kane* is routinely described as one of the greatest films of all time. Consider what we have covered in this course. Read the detailed analysis in the text. Citing specific examples from the film, make an argument supporting or disagreeing with the claim to fame for CK. What is your personal, informed judgment? It should demonstrate with examples and reasoned arguments why you think the film deserves its reputation or why, on the contrary, you are convinced it's over-rated.

(These discussion questions do not have to be written up or turned in,)

Reports for Classes 10, 11, 12 and 14 Due

Film Analysis Part 2 is due in class Friday December 9th.

Final Exam 1 pm Little Theatre Friday 12/16/05