



FMS 1310: INTRODUCTION TO FILM STUDIES

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Room 223 Dwyer
Day W
Time 10-12:45

COURSE DESCRIPTION

FMS 1310 is an introduction to film analysis that examines critical approaches of authorship, genre, presentation, and narrative. Students will become literate in the language of cinema and learn basic film concepts, techniques, and terminology. Focal topics include spectatorship, ideology, social and political context, celebrity culture, ambits of meaning, and modes of film criticism. FMS 1310 is designed for students who love movies but may lack the experience to make viable interpretive arguments about them.

TEXT

Pramaggiore, Maria and Tom Wallis. *Film: A Critical Introduction*. Third Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2012.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

TH 2140 is part of Element 4 of the Wright State University Core. Learning outcomes for this Element include these criteria:

1. Critically analyzing significant creative, literary, philosophical or religious works.
2. Understanding and discussing the complex blend of imaginative vision, socio-cultural context, ethical values, and aesthetic judgment in creative, philosophical or religious works.
3. Recognizing, evaluating and responding to creative, philosophical or religious works.
4. Developing appropriate and ethical applications of knowledge in the humanities or the arts.

GRADING SCALE

Course grades will be based on the following points system:

Assignments & Outlines	650
Film Journal	350
Midterm Reviews	500
Final Essay	500
Total Points	2000

As I grade your work, **Pilot** tallies the points so that you may gauge your performance in the course at any time during the semester. At the end of the semester, points will be converted to percentages, and percentages will be converted to letter grades. Here is the grading rubric:

90.0-100%	A
80.0-89.9%	B
70.0-79.9%	C
60.0-69.9%	D
0-59.9%	F

ATTENDANCE

Attendance will be taken at all course screenings, lectures and discussions. If you are late or leave early, you will be marked accordingly. Excessive absences and tardiness inhibits the learning environment of the course and will result in a lowering of your final grade. As we only meet once a week, it is important that you attend class. Any expected absence during the semester should be reported to me with sufficient documentation. Excused absences are limited to emergencies such as an extreme illness or a death in the family that requires travel.

DISCUSSION & PARTICIPATION

Basically this course consists of viewing and talking about films in conjunction with the assigned readings in *Film: A Critical Introduction*. It should be fun and I want to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere. At the same time, I expect you to engage with the material in a substantive, thoughtful and academic manner.

Participation includes in-class speaking and responsive listening. This is crucial. Simply showing up for class does not constitute participation. You are expected to present your informed ideas and show respect for others in the classroom. Participation entails mental and verbal attendance. Please make an effort to contribute to the learning environment.

ASSIGNMENTS

Numerous writing exercises and responses will be assigned throughout the course. They will be available on **Pilot** and due at **9 a.m. every Friday**. Each assignment will concern the film we viewed and/or the chapter(s) in the textbook you read earlier in the week. The goal is to develop your writing, thinking and interpretive abilities vis-à-vis the cinematic form.

All writing will be graded on content as well as writing mechanics. Format your work according to MLA style.

FILM JOURNAL

It is important to take notes during screenings. This is the first step in any type of film writing, be it a popular review or critical analysis. You are required to write a journal entry on every film that we view in class. Each entry should be **250-500 words**. You will not turn in entries one at a time; rather, at the end of the course, you will turn in your entire journal via **Pilot**, so it must be typed on a computer and saved as a **.doc, .docx, .rtf** or **.pdf** document. Don't wait until the last minute to write all of your entries. Ideally you will write an entry for a film on the same day you view it while the material is still fresh in your head.

Because journals explore individual responses to films, entries tend to vary significantly from one film to the next. Some entries might make an evaluative claim and explain the reasons for it. Others could include interpretive observations, noting a film's motifs and parallels, references to other films, or significant scenes. However you choose to approach the journal, be sure that each entry is detailed, substantive, and makes an effort to engage with the film in a meaningful way. Keeping a journal will help you prepare for the midterm and final essays, especially if you provide information that prods your memory. The more descriptive you are, the better.

MIDTERM REVIEWS & FINAL ESSAY

Halfway through the semester, you will be asked to write two movie reviews, one premised on a **descriptive claim** (a neutral account of the basic plot and style of a film), the other on an **evaluative claim** (a judgment that a film is good or bad based on specific criteria). Then, at the end of the semester, you will write an essay premised on an **interpretive claim** (an argument about a film's meaning and significance that foregrounds particular themes). Full descriptions of these assignments are available on Pilot.

To prepare for these writing projects, you must keep up with the assigned readings in the textbook and also take detailed notes during lectures and discussions. Close attention should be paid to the weekly feature screenings and any additional clips showed in class.

RULES OF CONDUCT

[1] No cell phone use in class or at screenings.

[2] Laptops should be used in class only for taking notes. Please refrain from activity on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

[3] No talking during screenings.

[4] If you miss a screening, it is your responsibility to find the film and screen it outside of class. I am happy to lend out a DVD, but generally I only have one copy, and it will be loaned on a first-come-first-serve basis.

[5] Check your email regularly for news and updates regarding the course.

STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER (SSC)



The Student Success Center offers FREE services to help students meet their full potential. Students can find tutoring in any subject, study buddies, one-on-one technology workshops, feedback on writing assignments, and general academic skills coaching. Location: **182 Andrews**. Phone: **419.586.0362**. Web: **www.wright.edu/lake/ssc**.

Students who use the SSC for help on their writing assignments will be given 10 extra credit points for each visit. You may visit the SSC as many times as you like. At the end of the semester, I will tally and add all extra credit points to your final grade. In order to receive extra credit points, you must turn in all assignments for the course.

Call, go to the website, or visit the SSC to make an appointment. If you are a student at the Dayton Campus, you may acquire the same extra credit points by using the SSC in Dunbar Library.

OFFICE OF DISABILITIES SERVICES (ODS)

If a student has a disability that will require special accommodations, it is essential that he or she discuss it with the instructor and the Office of Disability Services before or during the first week of the semester. ODS will work with these students on an individual basis to determine what services, equipment, and accommodations would be appropriate regarding their documented needs. Students who may qualify for these types of service should initiate contact with the instructor and/or ODS as soon as possible to enable the university to meet their needs. Please call Deanna Springer at **419.586.0366** or **800.237.1477**; she can be contacted by email at **deanna.springer@wright.edu**. For more information, visit the ODS in **225 Dwyer**.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism occurs when a writer: [1] copies verbatim from an author without quotation or attempts to disguise the act by selective omissions or alterations; [2] paraphrases from an author without naming the source in the text of the paper or providing a list of references at the end; [3] turns in a paper written by somebody else. As a point of academic integrity, you are required to submit original material of your own creation. Plagiarism of any material is a serious offense and, if established with sufficient evidence, can result in failure of the course or dismissal from the university.

CLASS CALENDAR

Week Schedule

- 1 Introduction to the Course
Man with the Movie Camera (1929)
Reading: Chp. 1 (Introduction) & Chp. 3 (Writing About Film)
- 2 Sound & Image
The Shining (1980)
Reading: Chp. 8 (Sound)

- 3 Aesthetics
 Sin City (2005)
 Reading: Chp. 2 (An Approach to Film Analysis)

- 4 Narrative Structure, Perspective & Meaning
 Psycho (1960)
 Reading: Chp. 4 (Narrative Form)

- 5 Style & Genre
 A Fistful of Dollars (1964)
 Reading: Chp. 13 (Genre)

- 6 Authorship & Auteurism
 Desperado (1995)
 Reading: Chp. 14 (Film Authorship)

- 7 Mockumentaries
 This Is Spinal Tap (1983)
 Reading: Chp. 9 (Alternatives to Narrative Fiction Film)
 Midterm Outlines

- 8 **Midterm Reviews**

- 9 Cult Cinema
 They Live (1987)
 Reading: Chp. 7 (Editing)

- 10 Cinematography
 Apocalypse Now (1979)
 Reading: Chp. 6 (Cinematography)

- 11 Ideology & Politics
 Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse (1991)
 Reading: Chp. 10 (Film & Ideology)

- 12 Acting & Blocking
 Citizen Kane (1941)
 Reading: Chp. 5 (*Mise en Scène*)

- 13 Metafilm
 Tropic Thunder (2008)
 Reading: Chp. 11 (Social Context & Film Style)

- 14 The Blockbuster
 Justice League (2017)
 Reading: Chp. 15 (Cinema as Industry)
 Final Outline

E **Final Essay**
 Film Journal