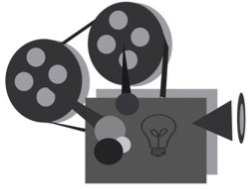


English 268: Fundamentals of Film (P1)



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Office Hours: T/R 9-9:30 a.m., W 2:30-4:30 p.m.
(no appointment is necessary during office hours)
whenever my office door is open, and
by appointment at other times

Description and Goals

Many of us watch film uncritically, without considering how the film's construction creates our responses. This course will introduce students to the fundamentals of film language and provide conceptual tools needed to critically analyze films. As we focus on *mise-en-scène*, editing, narrative, performance, and other elements of film, we will see how these structural elements function to express complex meanings. The course films have been selected to provide exposure to several genres and to give a sense of how film form has evolved over time.

Text

Barsam, Richard. *Looking at Movies*. Second edition; includes two DVDs.

Films

All films are available at the Lavery Library Reserve Desk for in-library use.

The Wizard of Oz (1939; dir. Victor Fleming)
Courage Under Fire (1996; dir. Edward Zwick)
The Draughtsman's Contract (1982; dir. Peter Greenaway)
Rosemary's Baby (1968; dir. Roman Polanski)
Singing in the Rain (1952; dir. Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly)
The Silence of the Lambs (1990; dir. Jonathan Demme)
Rebecca (1940; dir. Alfred Hitchcock)
Citizen Kane (1941; dir. Orson Welles)
Touching the Void (2003; dir. Kevin McDonald)
Michael Clayton (2007; dir. Tony Gilroy)

Electronic Resources

A website for ENGL 268 will be under continuous development throughout the semester at the URL <http://www.jadwin.net/268>. It will contain this syllabus with any updates, links to electronic resources, other materials, and downloads of assignments, handouts, and other materials. E-mail me with ideas and suggestions for links to the ENGL 268 website.

Requirements

Weekly In-Class Mini Tests (10 total; 5% each, 50% of your final grade). Brief reading and viewing tests will be administered at the beginning of each class except where noted. The tests will combine multiple-choice questions on basic facts and ideas from the chapter with a brief written response to the *question of the week*, which is described in advance on the syllabus for those who like to consider their answers in advance. These reading tests are closed-book and closed-note and *cannot be made up*. Your lowest grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

To succeed on these reading tests, make sure you understand the basic information from each chapter (see "How to Prepare for Class" below) and think at least briefly about the question before you come to class. Show up on time, as tardy students will not be allotted extra time to finish. Before administering each test, I will take questions at the beginning of class to clarify any issues you are having trouble understanding.

Midterms and Final Exam (totaling 50% of your final grade). There will be two midterms (15% each of your final grade) and a final exam (20% of your final grade). See the calendar below for details.

Attendance and Participation (Penalty, Neutral, Bonus system). There is no substitute for showing up, on time. Aim to miss no more than 1 class. More than 2 absences and more than 2 tardies will likely lower your grade. Turn off cell phones, computers, and pagers before class begins. Students who use electronic devices during class will receive final-grade **penalties** (see below).

Students who participate constructively in class learn more, increase the quality of the class, and introduce important ideas and questions. If you participate regularly and constructively (listening attentively to everyone in the class and speaking often) you will receive a **bonus** of up to 5% on your final grade.

Conversely, if your participation is negative - texting, checking email, talking on the phone, whispering with friends, passing notes, eating a noisy meal, leaving litter behind, sleeping in class, etc. - your final grade will receive a **penalty** of up to 5%.

If your participation has been neither positive nor negative, your contribution will be considered **neutral** and your final grade will be unaffected.

If you miss class, have another student discuss his or her notes with you. Then, if you have further questions that they are unable to answer, contact me. You're responsible for finding out about any assignments, due dates, and announcements and for fulfilling them on time. Extra handouts and worksheets will be available after class on the front of my office door, and on the website, for pickup or download anytime.

Academic Honesty Policy

We often do our best work in collaboration with others, and throughout your life you will consult with other people, in person and in print, as you develop your ideas. However, while it is entirely legitimate to consult others, it is unethical to take their ideas and pass them off as your own. The best way to avoid plagiarism is to acknowledge the source(s) of your ideas. If you borrow someone else's ideas, whether you use a direct quote, summary, or paraphrase, clearly indicate who it belongs to.

You are required to familiarize yourself with Fisher's Academic Honesty policy. Talk with me if you have questions. Ignorance about plagiarism does not excuse it. Students who have plagiarized will be disciplined as detailed in the Student Handbook, up to and including failing the course.

Statement for Students with Diagnosed Disabilities

In compliance with St. John Fisher College policy and applicable laws, appropriate academic accommodations are available to you if you are a student with a disability. All requests for accommodations must be supported by appropriate documentation/diagnosis and determined reasonable by St. John Fisher College. Students with documented disabilities (physical, learning, psychological) who may need academic accommodations are advised to make an appointment with the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities in the Student Development Center, Kearney 211. Late notification will delay requested accommodations.

Film Viewing

You will be required to watch one film per week, on your own time, outside of class. Clips will be shown during class, but there is insufficient class time to permit the showing of entire films. The films may be checked out at the Lavery Library Reserve desk for 3-hour use in the library only. Feel free to buy or rent your own copies of the films, but be aware that local video outlets may not stock all of our class films.

When you watch the weekly films:

- ▶ Use the “Screening Checklist” at the end of the applicable chapter in Barsam to take notes on the film. Hand-write your notes or use a computer - your choice.
- ▶ Bring your notes to class.
- ▶ Whenever possible, watch the DVD version of the film, and watch the “easter eggs,” or extras that are often included DVD versions.
- ▶ Avoid talking and interruptions (trips to the fridge, phone calls, bathroom breaks, etc.) while watching a film.

I encourage you to view at least one additional film (preferably from the AFI top-100 films list) in each category, and share your observations about it in class or in your written work. *Important:* Some of the films we will study contain scenes that may offend viewers. Because it’s important that we all watch the same films, however, substitutions will not be allowed.

How to Prepare for Class

All readings listed on the calendar below are required and you will be tested on them as well as on the information and ideas introduced in class. Watch the weekly films before coming to class (see above). Note that each chapter *begins* with a series of learning objectives and *ends* with a Screening Checklist and a series of Questions for Review; use these to assist your understanding of the course materials.

| date | reading and discussion topics (from subheadings in Barsam) and exams | Mini-Test Topic | film of the week |
|-------|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| 9/9 | introduction to the course | t.b.a. | <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> |
| 9/16 | Ch. 1, "What is a Movie?" form and content; viewers’ expectations; identifying patterns; principles of film form. | Describe whose POV the camera lens focuses on in <i>Courage</i> , and evaluate the extent to which you identify with the camera lens. | <i>Courage Under Fire</i> |
| 9/23 | Ch. 1, "What is a Movie?" realism/anti-realism; cinematic language; types of movies (genres) | Persuade me which genre(s) <i>Courage</i> belongs to or draws upon. Provide evidence for your assertions. | |
| 9/30 | Ch. 2, "Narrative" defining narrative; narrative elements; analyzing how narrative works in <i>Stagecoach</i> | What is the story of <i>Draughtsman</i> ? What is the plot? Enumerate and describe the gaps between those two elements. | <i>The Draughtsman’s Contract</i> |
| 10/7 | MIDTERM 1 (first hour of class). Ch. 3, "Mise-en-scène" | [Be prepared to write about the basics of mise-en-scène on your midterm. Describe how the film’s setting, costumes, music, and makeup help create the film’s overall meaning. What kind of world is created here?] | <i>The Draughtsman’s Contract</i> |
| 10/14 | No class tonight - Dr. Jadwin at conference. | | |
| 10/21 | Ch. 4, "Cinematography" defining cinematography; the role of the director of photography; the shot - framing, speed, length, and special effects | Identify at least one example in <i>Rosemary</i> of the cinematographer’s unusual use of framing and explain how and why the film uses that effect. | <i>Rosemary’s Baby</i> |

| date | reading and discussion topics (from subheadings in Barsam) and exams | Mini-Test Topic | film of the week |
|-------|--|--|---------------------------------|
| 10/28 | Ch. 5, "Acting" the evolution of and history of screen acting (compared to stage acting) | Explain what <i>Singin' in the Rain</i> tells us about the history of film acting and the nature of film acting in 1952. | <i>Singin' in the Rain</i> |
| 11/4 | Ch. 5, "Acting" some aspects of performance; how film-making affects acting; acting in <i>Stella Dallas</i> | Describe how Anthony Hopkins uses body language, gestures, facial expressions, and speech to embody Dr. Hannibal Lecter. | <i>The Silence of the Lambs</i> |
| 11/11 | Ch. 6, "Editing" defining editing; the role of the editor; continuity and discontinuity; transitions; some editing techniques/creations | Track the match cuts in <i>Rebecca</i> , and explain what sort of visual or narrative information they convey. | <i>Rebecca</i> |
| 11/18 | MIDTERM 2 (first hour of class). Ch. 7, "Sound" sound production; describing sound; sources, types, and functions of film sound; sound in <i>Citizen Kane</i> | [Be prepared to write about the basics of "Sound" on your midterm. For this chapter, identify some scenes in <i>Kane</i> where sound is used expressively and explain how this functions within the film.] | <i>Citizen Kane</i> |
| 11/24 | Thanksgiving break - no class tonight. | | |
| 12/2 | Ch. 8, "Thinking about Movies, Theory, and Meaning" Film theory and criticism; critical approaches to analyzing films. | Should we categorize <i>Touching the Void</i> as a documentary or as a work of fiction? Choose one; provide evidence for your assertions. | <i>Touching the Void</i> |
| 12/9 | Ch. 8 continued; focus tonight on explicit, implicit, and ideological meanings and how the <i>form</i> of cinema helps create meaning. | The film uses an extended flashback to bracket a period in Michael's life. How and why does his attitude change during this period? | <i>Michael Clayton</i> |
| 12/16 | CUMULATIVE FINAL EXAM (covering major topics from throughout the course and with special focus on material since last midterm), from 6:30-9 p.m. in our usual room (B-214). | | |