



Film and Society: Humanities 222

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Office Hours: Monday 10:00-11:00, 6:00-7:00 p.m.;

Tuesday 9:00-10:00 a.m., 3:00-4:00 p.m.; Wednesday 1:00-3:00 p.m.; Thursday 11:15-2:15; Friday 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Course Objectives: The primary objective of this course is to examine the evolution of film—as both an art form and an industry—and its complex and important place within American culture. We will focus on the history of cinema in the United States and the social, political and economic forces that have shaped its development. We will have the opportunity to analyze a wide variety of movies, all of which will provide key insights into our culture and history.

Another, equally important, objective of this course is to help you sharpen your abilities as writers and thinkers. During the course of the semester, you will research, analyze and write about films, film audiences, genres and stars. You will need to follow MLA style of documentation.

To begin, we have to agree on a few basic points:

- Films mean something. All films are cultural artifacts, and as such, they do more than reflect our culture—they participate actively in its creation. All films have some sort of deeper meaning that may not be readily apparent but can be discovered through careful analysis. While many films were (and are) made to make money and to entertain an audience, what a culture finds entertaining can be an important key to understanding the needs, desires and fears of particular people at a particular time and place.
- Films mean more than one thing. All movies have multiple, viable interpretations, although these interpretations must be backed up with evidence.
- Some of the films may have “adult content.” If you have any reservations about watching or discussing sexually explicit or violent material, please talk to me as soon as possible.

Texts: You will have three basic texts in this class:

- John Belton’s *American Cinema/American Culture*
- Handouts distributed during the semester
- The films we will be watching in and out of class.

Course Assignments and Point Breakdown:

Essay #1: Genre Study	4-5 pages	200 points	20%
Midterm	3-4 pages	200 points	20%
Essay #2: Star Study	4-5 pages	200 points	20%
Final	3-4 pages	200 points	20%
Reading quizzes	9/drop low score	160 points	16%
Worksheets		40 points	4%

Quizzes: You will have a short quiz for each chapter. The quizzes will consist of 10-12 questions; you will answer 4 of them. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz score. If you miss a quiz, you can also make up those points through the extra credit options available on both major essays.



Worksheet 1: The worksheets are guided writings. For Worksheet 1, you will draw on your reading concerning the history of film distribution and exhibition, answering questions about the theater you visited. How is the theater you visited different from the nickelodeon or the motion picture palaces? Where do you still see traces of

these earlier venues? How does the architectural design of the theater foster a certain kind of experience or reward a certain kind of behavior? How did this mode of exhibition (in contrast to past modes) influence or even determine your reaction to the film?

Worksheet 2: The second worksheet is designed to help you think about your topic for Essay 2. You will quickly describe the persona of the star you have chosen for your second essay. You will then breakdown that persona into 3-5 different ideological elements.

Essay #1: In this essay, you will choose a genre and analyze how it reflects and/or comments on societal attitudes and ideologies. You will want to focus your topic by choosing a sub-genre, a mixed genre or a cycle of popularity. For example:

- football melodramas
- spaghetti westerns
- 1950s giant monster movies
- 21st century film noir.

Over the course of the essay, you analyze this genre in terms of a specific ideological/cultural issue such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, political ideology, etc. You will need to develop a thesis concerning how a key film or films

within this genre comment on this ideological issue or problem. For example, here are two potential thesis statements:

- In the typical musical of the 1940s, female sexuality challenges patriarchal power and must be carefully controlled.
- *Remember the Titans*, and other sports melodramas, seem to preach racial tolerance but end up reinforcing racist stereotypes concerning black masculinity.

You will need to analyze at least one film in depth, using close readings of key scenes to support your thesis, but you can use multiple films to make or complicate your point (as long as they all fall into the same genre). You need to use at least one outside source other than or in addition to Belton. Cite all the films you discuss and any outside sources you use following MLA style.

Essay #2: In this essay, you will take the star that you used in Response Paper #2 and analyze his or her star persona. As in Essay 1, you will examine this persona in terms of a specific ideological issue (which you may have already identified in Response Paper #2). For example:

- Denzel Washington represents the anxiety concerning changes in male gender identity and the need to both rethink and preserve traditional ideas concerning masculinity.
- In the 1950s, Cold War paranoia concerning communism finds expression in the star persona of Cary Grant.

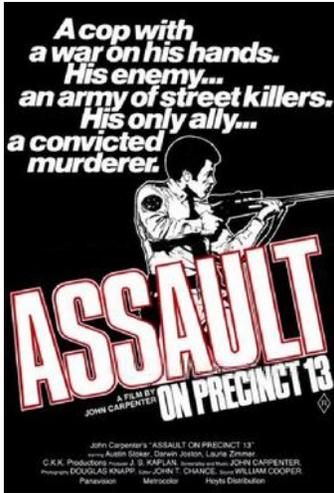
In order to prove your thesis, you have to examine at least one film in detail but feel free to include multiple films that feature this star. You must use at least one outside source other than or in addition to Belton. Cite all the films discussed and any outside sources following MLA style.



Remember that you are analyzing the star's persona and not the actual person;. Any information you find should be considered as part of the star's persona and not as evidence of their "real" character." In addition, be careful to choose a subject who is a star in lieu of or in addition to being an actor.

On Blackboard, I will be posting sample papers for Essay 1 and Essay 2.

Midterm and Final: The midterm and final will cover material from Belton, the handouts, the films, and class discussion. Both will be take-home tests and will be comprised of 5 short essay questions. For each question, you will have two choices from which to pick. You will receive a handout with guidelines on how to complete both of these exams. If you keep up with the reading, attend class and take careful notes, these exams will be relatively straight-forward.



Topics: I must approve your topics for the two major essays. You must consult with me before changing your topic, and I will not accept a paper on a topic that I did not previously approve.

Format: The essays and take home exams will be submitted via Blackboard. You can submit your essay exams by clicking on the assignment and uploading your document. Double check to make sure that you have uploaded the correct document. Please name your document as follows: Your Name (reversed) Name of Assignment. In other words, if I turned in Essay 1, the name of my document would be “Gonder Patrick Essay 1.”

Essays and exams must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. If you indent the first line of each paragraph, do not add extra spaces between paragraphs. At the top of the first page, include your name, name of the class, and the date. I encourage you to include photos whenever appropriate (although they do not count toward the page requirement).

What happens if I turn in late work?

Late papers are marked down 1/2 letter grade for each day late (not just each class meeting). If you do not turn an assignment in on time, call or email me as soon as possible (preferably the due date of the assignment).

What happens if I miss class?

You have a busy life, and you may need to miss a class. You can miss two classes, although missing a class does not excuse any work due that day. Additional absences result in your final grade being lowered by 50 points for each additional missed class. If you miss two classes, call or come see me as soon as possible.

What happens if I come to class late?

Any student who is late or leaves early on a consistent basis will be given two official warnings; after the second warning, any further tardies will be counted as absences. Please see me right away if you are going to have trouble getting to class on time or have to leave early.

Here is the most important rule of the class--if you have any difficulties or questions, talk to me as soon as possible. If you miss classes or do not turn in a major assignment, you must contact me as soon as possible so that we can discuss the best course of action.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs anytime you use another writer’s words, data or ideas without citing them in a clear and proper manner. This includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- using specific words, phrases or sentences without putting them in quotes (even if you include an intext reference)
- using an author’s specific idea without a citation
- buying a paper (from the internet or other source) and trying to pass it off as your own
- having someone (friend, family member, etc.) write all or portions of your essay.

If you are unsure about the definition of plagiarism, please contact me right away. If you think you might be committing plagiarism but are not sure, please contact me right away. **It is your responsibility to make sure that you do not commit plagiarism.**

Plagiarism is punished according to the situation and severity. The instructor and appropriate administrators will determine the punishment. Possible consequences include but are not limited to receiving an “F” for the class or being expelled from the college. I would highly recommend the website Purdue OWL for a very clear and comprehensive overview of how to use MLA style documentation.

Screening and Class Protocols: It is necessary that you observe these rules while watching the films.

- Please react to the movies, but do not distract other students.
- No food during the screenings although drinks are permitted. You may eat during the discussion/lecture section of the class. After class, please pick up your trash.
- Watch all the films carefully. I will expect you to be able to discuss them in a thoughtful manner in class and on the exams.



It is necessary that you observe these rules during class discussions/lectures.

- Respect class discussion and whoever is talking at the moment. During class discussion, be open-minded, candid, and kind.
- Wait until class is dismissed to pack up your books and materials. Please wait until the end of class or breaks to throw away trash.
- Please put your phone “to sleep.” If you have to keep your phone on due to your work or other factors, please make me aware at the beginning of the class.
- No text-messaging in class.
- Laptops are allowed for note-taking; I reserve the right to prohibit laptop use if I have reason to believe that you are not using the laptop for class purposes.

As a member of the College’s faculty, I am concerned about your well-being and development and am available to discuss any concerns. Faculty are legally obligated to share information with the College’s Title IX coordinator in certain situations to help

ensure that the student’s safety and welfare are being addressed, consistent with the requirements of the law. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of sexual assault, relational/domestic violence, and stalking.

Daily Calendar			
Dates and assignments are subject to change.			
Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
8/22	Introduction to class Ideology and cultural studies “Primitive” cinema		
8/29	Exhibition Studio system	Ch. 1: “Emergence” Ch. 4: “Studio” (stop at “Studio Style”)	Quiz 1
9/5	Labor Day: No Class		
9/12	The genre system		Worksheet 1
9/19	Comedy <i>The General</i> (1926, dirs. Buster Keaton and Clyde Bruckman)	Ch. 11: “American Comedy”	Quiz 2
9/26	Melodrama <i>Three on a Match</i> (1932, dir. Mervyn LeRoy)	Ch. 6: “Silent Melodrama”	Quiz 3
10/3	Horror and Sci-Fi	Ch. 12: “Horror”	Quiz 4
10/10	<i>The Seventh Victim</i> (1943, dir. Mark Robson)		Essay #1
10/17	<i>Singin’ in the Rain</i> (1952, Dir. Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen)		Midterm
10/24	The star system	Ch. 5: “Star System”	Quiz 5
10/31	Halloween: No Class		Worksheet 2
11/7	1950s <i>The Sweet Smell of Success</i> (1957, dir. Alexander MacKendrick)	Ch. 13: “Hollywood...Cold” Ch. 14: “Hollywood...Television” (stop at “Panning and Scanning”)	Quiz 6
11/14	1960s and 70s <i>Assault on Precinct 13</i> (1976, dir. John Carpenter)	Ch. 15: “1960s”	Quiz 7
11/21	1970s and 80s Digital media and video games	Ch. 16: “Film School Generation”	Quiz 8
11/30	1990s to the present	Ch. 17: “Into the Twenty-First”	Quiz 9
12/5	<i>Toy Story 3</i> (2010, dir. Lee Unkrich)		Essay 2
12/14			Final Exam