

Engcomp 0205
Spring 2006
Trenz, J.

ENGCAMP 0205; 12159 Seminar in Composition: Film
John Trenz Spring 2006 Mon. and Wed. 11- 12:15 444CL
jjt14@pitt.edu: Office: 517W CL Off. Hrs: Mon:12:30-2:30 & by Appt.

**YOUTH IN THE MARGINS:
WRITING, REVISION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR EXPRESSION
IN "OUTSIDER" FICTION AND FILM**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Seminar in Composition: Film will strengthen your ability to think and write about your ideas with complexity and clarity. Through our engagement with works of film and literature, we will consider the problems of representing the experiences of youth in film, and specifically themes of youth as outsiders. In doing so, we will work to distinguish the modes of expression used to address youth outsiders and their own struggles for expression and recognition in chosen texts of film and literature. In writing critical essays in response to these works, we will engage with a variety of questions, develop ideas, and establish multiple perspectives about their modes of expression based on different historical, cultural, and social contexts. Further, we may ask, how does writing about film and literature, and developing our own ideas about how their modes of expression function within different contexts impact our own understanding of the relationship between youth and culture, and the understanding of others?

In addition to engaging with the films and the readings, and since this is largely a course intended to enhance the complexity (without sacrificing the clarity) of your writing, you will be asked to write extensively and often – in fact, you will submit some form of writing on a weekly basis. The reading and viewing components of the course will provide a specific cultural and historical framework in which to practice and improve your critical thinking and writing skills. Your writing should demonstrate a committed and thoughtful attempt to explore, examine, and establish a position about the issues and questions introduced by the films and the readings.

Seminar in Composition: Film has three components: interpreting films, reading, and, most importantly, writing. Our time spent in class will be dedicated to generating an energetic and dynamic discussion of each component. We will share our ideas about composition, the films, and the readings in class on a regular basis, and, occasionally, your own writing. I will do my best facilitate discussions and evaluate your writing in a manner that helps you effectively articulate and write about your ideas and critical perspectives.

REQUIREMENTS:

Papers (60%, 100 points each)

You will write six essays (4-6 pp., typed, and double-spaced). Three essays will be focused critical investigations of one of the films or books used in the course. You will also write three “Point of View” essays, which will be personal in nature, and should offer a detailed, focused, and well thought-out account of your own identification with a particular mode of expression, as well as the historical and social relationships introduced by the texts. However, Final Essay #6 may take the form of an essay or a film/video for which you will compose a creative piece of writing or film that represents a distinctive point of view upon some aspect of youth experience and outsiders.

I will evaluate the essays based on how well you demonstrate a focused and complex engagement with the modes of expression and critical concepts particular to the books and films used in the course, how well you compose your ideas in writing, and evidence that you’ve established a position upon the issues at hand. I will provide comments and a letter grade for each paper submitted.

I will hand out paper assignments at least two weeks in advance of the due date. No late papers will be accepted. However, if you have extenuating circumstances that compromise your ability to get a paper in on time, it is your responsibility to contact me *before the due date* to make alternative arrangements.

Response Papers (20%)

In 1-2 pages (typed and double-spaced), you will alternately respond to the readings, the films, and the writing of your peers. Responses are intended to help you develop ideas about the text and its mode(s) of expression. Your responses are expected to be focused, and to address a specific idea, or question you have about the material at hand. Doing so, will help you establish a more solid foundation for developing a complex investigation and critical position in the essay assignments. On occasion, I will offer a prompt or a few questions to help facilitate your writing and thinking on particular issues.

Notebooks should be thought of as less formal works, though they still must adhere to the conventions of standard written English and be error free. Credit will not be given for late response papers.

Attendance and Participation (20%)

Since Seminar in Composition: Film focuses primarily on your writing and the discussions we generate together in class, attendance is required. Please come to class on time, prepared to take part in the conversation about the films, readings, and/or peer writing. If you cannot come to class, it is your responsibility to follow up with me to arrange to turn in written work, and to find out about subsequent assignments. Missing class will affect your work and your grade. Missing more than three classes is grounds

for failure, in which case you should consider withdrawing from the course and taking it again under better circumstances.

REQUIRED BOOKS AND READINGS

Required books are available for purchase in the university bookstore. All other readings are available on reserve in Hillman Library unless otherwise indicated here or in class.

BOOKS:

A Short Guide to Writing About Film (Timothy Corrigan, 5th edition, 2004)

The Outsiders (S.E. Hinton, 1967)

The Virgin Suicides (Jeffrey Eugenides, 1994)

OTHER READINGS ON RESERVE:

Selected Chapters, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Thomas Doherty)

REQUIRED SCREENINGS

I've indicated film titles on the course schedule below, and, if available, their respective call numbers. You can expect to view approximately one film per week; films must be screened prior to the week for which they are scheduled for discussion. In some cases, I will project supplementary film excerpts during our scheduled class time.

In addition, I will attempt to facilitate an optional screening outside of our scheduled class meetings for films that need to be viewed in their entirety. I will do my best to schedule a time for screenings that is most convenient for the majority of the class. However, if you cannot make the facilitated screening, please plan to screen the film on your own in the Media Services area of Hillman Library (G-20).

The R Rating

Most of the films selected for this section of Seminar in Composition: Film are of decidedly mature themes. Some of the films carry an “**R**” rating, and contain what may be considered objectionable violence, language, or sexual content. If you foresee objections to such content, you should discuss the matter with me immediately or enroll in another Seminar in Composition section.

WRITING RESOURCES

Writing Center: Located in M2 Thaw Hall, the Writing Center is an excellent resource for working on your writing with an experienced consultant. Although you should not expect consultants to “correct” your paper for you, they can assist you in learning to organize, edit, and revise your papers. Consultants can work with you on a one-time basis, or they can work with you throughout the term. In some cases, I may require that you go to the Writing Center for help on a particular problem; otherwise, you can decide on your own to seek assistance. Their services are free, but you should check on-site or call ahead to make an appointment (624-6556).

Composition Tutorial: Those of you enrolled in Seminar in Composition may have also been placed in Composition Tutorial, a one-credit course that helps you examine your writing more closely. If you are enrolled in Composition Tutorial, you need to attend every session and bring with you the materials from this seminar (syllabus, assignments, drafts of papers, teacher’s comments, etc.). Remember: *if you have been placed into Composition Tutorial, you must pass it in order to pass Seminar in Composition.*

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Plagiarism - to steal and pass off as one's own; use without crediting the source; to commit literary theft: present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source. (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*)

Plagiarism by a student is identified as:

- when a student presents as his/her own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or works of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources;
- when a student submits work of another person in a manner which represents the work to be his/her own;
- when a student knowingly permits his/her work to be submitted by another person without the instructor's authorization. ("Student Obligations and Adjudication," University Policy 02-03-03).

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh’s Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity.

Disabilities/Counseling/Learning Skills:

If you have a **disability** for which you would like to request accommodation, you may contact the office of disability services, room 216, Pitt Union (412-648-7890) or (412-383-7355-TTY). ODS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for English 0205

College students often find that they might benefit from **counseling** services for anxiety, depression, relationship or other personal matters. If you find this is so, you may wish to call 412-648-7390.

The **Learning Skills Center** is available for students who need to develop better study habits. For information about these services, call 412-648-7920 or visit Pitt Union room 311

Week	Monday	Wednesday
Jan. 1	INTRODUCTIONS No Class	In-Class Essay Hand Out Syllabus
Jan. 8	WHY WRITE ABOUT FILM? Discuss Syllabus	Corrigan, Ch. 1&2 Journal #1 Due
	Film: <i>They Live By Night</i> (Dir. Nicholas Ray, 1948)	D-84
Jan. 15	SOME CRITICAL CONCEPTS AND FORMAL TERMS No Class: Marlin Luther King	Writing Workshop Corrigan Ch. 3
Jan. 22	CULTURE AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT Journal #2 Due Doherty Ch. 2&3	Critical Essay #1 Due
	Film: <i>Rebel Without a Cause</i> (Dir. Nicholas Ray, 1956)	DVD-290
Jan. 29	REFLECTION, IDENTIFICATION, AND FILM CULTURE Journal #3 Due Hinton, pp. 1-52	Writing Workshop Hinton, pp. 53-99
	Book: <i>The Outsiders</i>	
Feb. 5	LITERATURE AND FILM Journal #4 Due Hinton, pp. 100-180	“Point of View” Essay #1 Due: Representations of Youth in Literature and Film
	Book: <i>The Outsiders</i> Cont’d Film: <i>Over the Edge</i> (Dir. Jonathan Kaplan, 1979)	DVD-TBA

Week	Monday	Wednesday
Feb. 12	CRITICAL APPROACHES TO FILM AND WRITING/REWRITING: PRODUCTION, REVISION AND AUDIENCE INFLUENCE Writing Workshop	Corrigan Ch. 4
	Film: <i>The Outsiders: The Complete Novel</i> (Dir. Francis Coppola, 1983/2005) DVD-3431	
Feb. 19	STYLE IN FILM AND WRITING Writing Workshop Journal #5 Due	Corrigan Ch. 5
	Film: <i>Nightmare on Elm Street</i> (Dir. Wes Craven, 1984)	DVD-71
Feb. 26	FILM AND SUBCULTURE: INDEPENDENT VISIONS OF YOUTH Journal #6 Due	Critical Essay #2 Due
	Film: <i>Hairspray</i> (Dir. John Waters, 1988)	DVD-2174
Mar. 5	SRING BREAK! Begin reading: <i>The Virgin Suicides</i>	
Mar. 12	THE FUNCTION OF POINT OF VIEW IN WRITING Journal #7 Due	
	Book: <i>The Virgin Suicides</i> , pp.1-140	
Mar. 19	GENDER AND NARRATIVE VOICE Journal #8 Due	“Point of View” Essay #2 Due: Personal identification in Literature and Film
	Book: <i>The Virgin Suicides</i> , pp.140-249	

Mar. 26 ADAPTATION AND POINT OF VIEW IN FILM

Journal #9 Due

Corrigan, Ch. 6

Film: *The Virgin Suicides* (Dir. Sophia Coppola, 1999)

DVD-458

Apr. 2 FILM GENRE, HISTORY, AND INTERTEXTUALITY

Journal #10 Due

Critical Essay #5 Due – **2 copies**

Film: *Donnie Dark* (Dir. Richard Kelly, 2001)

DVD-851

Apr. 9 MODES OF REALISM: EXPANSION OF TIME AND DEPTH OF PERSPECTIVE IN FILM AND WRITING

Workshop Essay #5:
Peer Response Due

Workshop Cont'd
Final Essay Topic Statements Due

Film: *Elephant* (Dir. Gus Van Sant, 2003)

DVD-TBA

Apr. 16 WRITING, THE BODY, AND EXCESS: ALTERNATIVE POINTS OF VIEW AND ALIENATION

Revised Essay #5 Due

Conclusions

Film: *Mysterious Skin* (Dir. Greg Araki, 2005)

DVD-3473

Television Episode (In-class): TBA

***DUE, FINAL ESSAY #6 or VIDEO along with attached APOLGIA DUE BY 12:00 P.M., APRIL, 26TH**