

**Seminar in Composition: Film  
History and Time**

ENGCOMP 0205      CRN10858

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FADE IN:

INT. DORM ROOM.    DAY.

SIDNEY, an 18 year old college freshman, places notebooks in bag while Sidney's roommate TAYLOR slides on boots.

SIDNEY

I hear SCFilm is really easy and all we have to do is watch movies and write about them.

TAYLOR

Yeah, but I read ratemyprofessor.com and her easiness rating is a 2. And I hear she makes us write for every class.

INT. CLASSROOM.    DAY.

(ALI sits at the head of a seminar table. She has the looks of a high school librarian and the voice of everyone's favorite kindergarten teacher. Sidney and Taylor enter. Sidney grows anxious as Taylor's guard lowers, but only for a moment.)

ALI

I've been expecting you.

(A beat).

And you're also always here (A minor chord sustains on the soundtrack).

**Welcome to Seminar in Composition: Film.**

ENGCOMP 0205 is most importantly an introductory course in composition at the university level. Our primary goals include successful writing, revision, and analysis of student-produced texts. In this course, you will be required to read, write, think and speak carefully and critically, most everyday. You will be responsible for the ways your words participate in conversations within and without our classroom.

In this section of SC: Film, we will consider two separate though related themes: cinematic conceptions of and complications for History and Time. Cinema as an art is uniquely related to the experience of time, but in what way? What can film do to and for time? For history and memory, which include not only what happened, but what didn't happen but might have, or what was necessarily impossible? How does film invent? How does it revise?

We will explore these questions through a combination of short, in-class screenings and feature-length films to be screened outside of class (see below). In all cases you will need to rescreen the film in preparation for writing.

Film Texts will include:

Twelve Monkeys (Terry Gilliam, 1995).

Hotel Rwanda (Terry George, 2004).

The Producers (Mel Brooks, 1968).

Zelig (Woody Allen, 1983).

Terminator (James Cameron, 1984).

Run, Lola, Run (Tom Tykwer, 1998).

**Screening Film Texts:**

Films will be available for screening in Hillman's Media Services Room (G-20, near Cup and Chaucer). These films are also widely available on video and DVD. Because watching a film with an

audience is a different experience from watching alone, we may on occasion attempt to arrange an (optional) outside of class screening together, or you may want to arrange this informally with friends and colleagues in your class.

In class, we will screen selections from a wide variety of films, including Schindler's List, Night and Fog, The Great Dictator, and Forest Gump, and we'll look at excerpts from the above films as time permits.

#### **Written Texts:**

I've required you to purchase Jane Aronson's LB Brief, available at the University Book Center. I may also place on reserve in Hillman (ground floor) essays you will read for class. Please do not wait until the last moment to borrow these articles, as your colleagues may do the same and the articles may not be immediately available.

#### **Student-written Texts:**

For each film and written text, you will produce a one to two page notebook entry engaging with the text and its modes of expression in no less depth than you would any other cultural artifact (essay, novel, or any other written text). These notebook entries provide opportunities for you to practice close reading, to work out some of the difficulties of the texts at hand and to prepare you for more complex and lengthier assignments: four original essays and two substantial revisions.

Notebooks should be considered less formal works, though they still must adhere to the conventions of standard written English and be error free. In order to be most valuable, notebook entries must be completed before the class in which they are due.

Essays allow you to expand on the work begun in notebook entries and to work out extended arguments.

All assignments should be typed on a computer (and saved!) and should follow MLA guidelines for formatting (guides to which are available for purchase and in the library). **They must be submitted in hard copy** (except where noted) and should be neat and stapled.

We will look at excerpts of student writing in class, and consider the form and content of these works (and the ways in which these are and are not indivisible). We will workshop student essays in parts and in their entirety. Student essays will be workshopped anonymously (unless I obtain permission in advance). To facilitate this, please only include your name on the first page of the essay.

The syllabus and specific assignments will be distributed in installments to provide the flexibility required by the kind of work we will engage in, and not merely to keep you in suspense, though a schedule of screenings and assignments follows. It is possible that we might fall a bit behind. If this is so, I will notify you, and we will keep with the same sequence. Please do keep the schedule of assignments handy, as you will be responsible for meeting deadlines unless amended. If for any reason you miss a handout, please be sure to obtain one from a peer or from me.

#### **Attendance, Participation, Assignment Submission:**

This course requires attendance and participation. Because we have limited time with one another, and because a successful seminar depends on your contributions, it is important that you attend every class. If you do miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and discuss with me how to make up work. If the absence is anticipated – religious holidays, representing the University as an athlete – you should discuss the work with me *in advance*. If you anticipate three or more absences for *any* reason, you should consider dropping this section and taking the course later under more favorable circumstances.

If you are less than comfortable participating now, I urge you to find ways of making yourself more so. Certainly notebook entries help,

providing you a handy reference to your key thoughts on the film or piece of writing.

As above, in order for a piece of writing to be most valuable to the course, it must be submitted in a timely fashion. In some exceptional circumstances, students are not able to complete an essay on time. Lateness due to extenuating and unforeseen circumstances will be tolerated once (this does *not* apply to the final portfolio). Please do not abuse this privilege or keep me in the dark. If your essay will be late, please email or call me so we can discuss arrangements for its prompt submission. (I reserve the right to require documentation). Prompt essays are returned promptly: All essays turned in on time will be returned in one week, notebooks in the next class meeting.

Attendance and participation will account for at least one-half letter grade, while the majority of your grade will be determined by the quality of your written work, and your progress over the course of the term.

I will not mark a letter grade on essays 1-3 and essay 5. Instead, I will provide extensive comments on the works' strength and weaknesses to assist you with revision. After the first two essays, we will have student-instructor conferences to discuss your work, your progress, and areas for future development. At this conference, I will provide you with a written assessment, and you will provide me with one. I will assign tentative letter grades to revised essays and 6. Your grade, while an area of concern for most students, remains as flexible as possible, to your advantage.

**The "R" Rating:**

The films selected for this section of SC:Film are of decidedly mature themes. Most of the films carry an R rating, and contain what may be considered objectionably 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.

**The Writing Center:**

The Department of English provides valuable services to student-writers through the Writing Center, located in M-2 Thaw Hall. The Writing Center provides free tutorial services. While some students in Seminar in Composition will be required to participate in tutoring, I encourage students at all levels of writing skill to consider utilizing this resource, whether for this class or for another. Students may make an appointment with a consultant by calling 412-624-6556.

**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 William Pitt Union (412-648-7890) or (412-383-7355-TTY). ODS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for ENGCOMP 0205.

College students often find that they might benefit from counseling services for anxiety, depression, relationships 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 William Pitt Union Room 311.

Date	In Class	Read by Next	Screen by Next	Write for Next
1/5	Introductions, Writing Assessment	Bazin		NB Bazin
1/10	Bazin		<u>Twelve Monkeys</u>	NB TM
1/12	Zapruder film			<b>Essay 1 due 1/17</b>
1/17	TBA			
1/19	Discuss essay 1			
1/24	Discuss essay 1	Williams		NB Williams
1/26	<u>SL</u>	Begin Meier Auschwitz		NB Meier
1/31	<u>Night and Fog</u>	Finish Meier		NB Meier
2/2	Image, Memory, Understanding?		<u>Hotel Rwanda</u>	NB HR
2/7	TBA			<b>Essay 2 due 2/9</b>
2/9	TBA			
2/14	Discuss Essay 2			
2/16	Discuss Essay 2		<u>Zelig</u>	NB Zelig
2/21	Comedies of History (GD)		<u>The Producers</u>	NB Producers
2/23	Comedies of History II			<b>Essay 3 draft due 3/2, 2 copies</b>
2/28	No class	Conferences	Monday and	Tuesday
3/2	Peer Review Essay 3			
3/7 and 3/9	No classes	Spring Break		<b>Essay 3 due by email 3/13</b>
3/14	Discuss Essay 3			
3/16	Discuss Essay 3			
3/21	TBA			<b>Essay 4 (Rev.) due 3/23</b>
3/23	TBA			
3/28	Discuss Essay 4			
3/30	The Paradoxes of Time Travel	David Lewis	<u>Terminator</u>	NB Terminator
4/4	TBA		<u>Run, Lola, Run</u>	NB Lola
4/6	TBA			<b>Essay 5 due 4/11</b>
4/11	TBA			
4/13	Discuss Essay 5			
4/18	Discuss Essay 5			<b>Essay 6 Rev. due by email 4/20</b>
4/20	Last Class			

\* Final Portfolios due by noon 4/27 in 517V CL