

EngLit 0400
Fall 2004
Borden, A.

Intro to Film 1

Introduction to Film
0400 / 25664
David Lawrence 207
M: 6-9:50 p.m.

Amy Borden
TH 11:30-1:30 Cup & Chaucer
Email: aeborden@excite.com
amb34@pitt.edu

‘Can The Dream Factory Write History?’

“Introduction to Film” is a course designed for non-film majors that explores both the study of film and the film industry. We will spend the semester learning how films are made—from the roles played by directors, screenwriters, and producers to the power stars hold in the Hollywood system. We will also examine how a critical approach to movies allows us to understand film as complicated, manufactured texts. These reflections will allow us, as interested film viewers, to explore the place of film in the university and in our culture. However, this course is more than a run through the greatest hits of Hollywood cinema; although, we will spend a fair portion of the class looking at Hollywood films we will also view foreign and independent films. It is designed as an opportunity to think about how the movies—dream images that motivate desire and longing in the audience, dream images often produced by the Dream Factory: Hollywood, an industry rooted in the manufacture of fiction and illusion—may become a manufacturer of cultural artifacts that influence the way we view and understand historical events.

During the first half of the course we will examine Hollywood filmmaking by viewing Hollywood and independent films that take as their subject the film industry itself, and we will examine the multiple ways from auteur theory to genre studies that film studies examines the movies. We will work to understand the economic and social influences at work in these productions as well as the roles played and portrayed by various agents. For the second part of the semester, we will examine the following question: How can the dream factory, an industry rooted in illusion and fiction, produce history? To that end, we will watch and discuss films that purport to portray historical events, and we will try to understand who and what determines history and, in fact, what history may be understood to be.

Required Texts (Available at the Book Center)

Course Pack.

Andrew, Dudley. *Concepts in Film Theory*. London: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*. Fifth Edition. New York: Pearson / Longman, 2004.

Mulvey, Laura. *Citizen Kane*. London: BFI, 1992.

Sobchack, Vivian. Ed. *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Films

During each class we will screen a film and, perhaps, clips from other films. Often these films are personal copies unavailable in the library. **It is mandatory that you attend each screening and, by design, each class.** When possible, the films screened in class will be on reserve in the library for HIGHLY ENCOURAGED second viewings. Additionally, you will notice on the schedule of assignments films listed to be screened outside of class. These will be on reserve in the Hillman Library Media Center, and you are responsible for these films both during in-class discussion, on the midterm, and for any quizzes that may pop up.

Academic Integrity

The policies and procedures of the University and the English Department regarding academic integrity will be enforced in this course. Students are responsible for knowing and abiding by these policies. The *Academic Integrity Code* considers a student to have plagiarized when he or she “presents as one’s own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or words of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources” (3).

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7809/412-383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Attendance

For any missed session you must email me prior to class and ask me for the missing work/handouts when you return. After one excused absence (doctor’s excused illness, family emergency) your participation grade will drop by one full grade for each missed class. (For example, an A will be lowered to a B.)

Final Grade

Attendance/Participation/Quizzes	25%
Midterm	25%
Response Papers/Presentation	20%
Final Paper	30%

Response Papers

These papers are to be 1 page, single-spaced. You should fit as much as you can in the single-page allotted. Papers that do not fill the page or do so by using fonts sized over 12 pt will not be accepted. You should use these papers to examine questions you have about the assigned films or readings. Choose either a single paragraph or scene and work to understand what is being said or expressed, how the author or filmmaker constructs the meaning of the passage or scene, and how your chosen moment is important to the film or essay as a whole.

Final Paper

Your final paper is due in my mailbox in 501 CL by 12-noon on Monday, December 13. It will be between 8-10 pages, double-spaced in Times New Roman with standard margins. You should format the paper using MLA style. A draft of your final paper is due to me on November 29 on which day, or the following Monday, you will present your paper topic and ideas to the class in a short 5-8 min. timed presentation. This presentation will account for 1/4 of your final paper grade. The topic of your paper may be anything stemming from this course that you imagine you would like to write about for a sustained period of time. The only stipulation is that you must use one of the assigned films or readings as your basis.

 Schedule of Assignments

- 8/30 **Introduction**
 Lecture: "The Industrial Origins of Cinema, Continuity Editing, and the Shot"
 Screen: *Living in Oblivion* Dir. Tom DiCillo, 1995 (92 min.)
- 9/6 **University Closed/No class**
 Outside screening: *Singin' in the Rain* Dir. Stanley Donen & Gene Kelly, 1952 (103 min.)
 Read: Corrigan, T. Chapters 1 & 2
- 9/13 **Film Production, Exhibition, Distribution, and Promotion**
 Discuss: Course Pack—Gomery, D. "The Hollywood Film Industry"
 Screen: *A Star is Born* Dir. George Cukor, 1954 (176 min.)
Group A: Response Paper #1 emailed to me by Sun. 9/19 at 3pm
- 9/20 **Stars, Identification, and the Dream Factory**
 Discuss: Course Pack—Dyer, R. "Judy Garland and Gay Men"
 Prior to Class Screen: *Meet Me in St. Louis* Dir. Vincent Minnelli, 1944 (113 min.)
 Screen: *Citizen Kane* Dir. Orson Welles, 1931 (119 min.)
Group B: Response Paper #1 emailed to me by Sun. 9/26 at 3pm
- 9/27 ***Citizen Kane* and the Creation of Critical Texts**
 Discuss: Mulvey, L. *Citizen Kane*
 Corrigan, T. Chapter 4—"Six Approaches to Writing About Film"
 Screen: *Citizen Kane* Dir. Orson Welles, 1931 (119 min.)
Form groups for Kane Presentations
- 10/4 ***Citizen Kane* and the Creation of Critical Texts (cont.)**
 Screen: *Mystic River* Dir. Clint Eastwood, 2003 (137 min.)
Group Presentations
- 10/11 **Film Authors**
 Lecture: "Auteur Theory and Film Studies"
 Discuss: Hillman Reserve: Sarris, A.: "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962"
 Screening: *Unforgiven* Dir. Clint Eastwood, 1992 (131 Min.)
- 10/18 **Midterm**
 To help you prepare, it is recommended that you study: Corrigan, T. Chapter 3
- 10/25 **Film Genre**
 Discuss: Hillman Reserve: Leo Braudy "Genre: The Conventions of Connection"
 Andrew, D. Chapter 7, "Valuation (of Genres and Auteurs)"
 Screening: *All the President's Men* Dir. (197?)

- 11/1 **Film Narrative I**
Discuss: Sobchack—Intro. & Chapter 1: White, H. “The Modernist Event”
Andrew: Chapters 5, “Narrative Structure” & Chapter 6, “Adaptation”
Screening: *Rashomon* Dir. Akira Kurosawa, 1950 (88 min.)
- 11/8 **Film and History**
Discuss: Course Pack—Rosenstone, R. “The Historical Film”
Screen: *JFK* Dir. Oliver Stone, 1991 (187 min.)
Group A: Response Paper # emailed to me by Sun. 11/14 at 3pm
- 11/15 **Film and History II**
Discuss: Sobchack—Chapter 2: Staiger, J. “Cinematic Shots”
Andrew, D. Chapter 3, “Representation”
Screen: *Medium Cool* Dir. Haskell Wexler, 1969 (110 min.)
Group B: Response Paper #2 emailed to me by Sun. 11/21 at 3pm
- 11/22 **Film and History III**
Discuss: Sobchack—Chapter 4: Tomasulo, F. “I’ll See It When I Believe It”
Andrew, D. Chapter 10, “Interpretation”
Read: Corrigan, T. Chapters 6 & 7
Screen: *The Fog of War* Dir. Errol Morris, 2004 (107 min.)
- 11/29 **Film Narrative II: Experimental Documentary**
Discuss: Course Pack—Rosen, P. “Document and Documentary”
Screen: *Reassemblage* Dir. Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1982 (40 min.)
Due: Final Paper Draft
Group A: Final Paper Presentations
- 12/6 **Final Thoughts**
Course Pack—Minh-ha, T. “The Totalizing Quest for Meaning”
Group B: Final Paper Presentations