

Englit 0532
Summer 2007
Allison, T.

Introduction to Film Genres

Summer 2007, 6-Week Session 1

ENGLIT 532

Class # 10864

T/Th 1-4:50 pm LAWRN 207

Instructor

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Office hours: Thursday 12-1 pm and by appt.

Course Description

This course will serve as an introduction to the theory, analysis, and history of film genres. In our case studies of four transnational genres—the Western, the musical, film noir, and the horror film—we will explore film genre's social function as ritual or myth, its relation to cultural ideologies, and its representations of race, gender, nation, and violence, among other things. Additionally, we will learn about how genres come about, how they are defined, and how they evolve over time. In particular, we will focus on the transition from classical to post-classical genres, as well as how traditional American genres have morphed into global entertainment genres in various national cinemas. At the end of this course, you will be able to identify the iconography and conventions of genres, relate genre theory to particular filmic texts, describe the histories of a number of film genres, and analyze generic strategies for creating culturally significant meanings and messages.

Required Texts

Film Genre: *Hollywood and Beyond*, by Barry Langford (Edinburgh UP, 2005)

Film Genre Reader III, edited by Barry Keith Grant (U of Texas Press, 2003)

**These books are available at the Pitt Bookstore and on reserve at Hillman Library.

Film Screenings

We will watch each film together in class. Please be a quiet, courteous spectator. If you are disruptive, sleeping, or playing with a cell phone during the movie, it will count against your participation grade and you may be asked to leave.

The R Rating: Some of the films we will watch in class are rated R, or otherwise contain graphic images of violence, sex, or other disturbing situations. If you do

not feel comfortable watching these films, please see me with concerns or consider taking another class.

Media Resources: All of the films we will screen in this class are available at the Media Resource Center on the ground floor of Hillman Library (just inside and to the right in Cup and Chaucer). If you miss or want to review a film from class, you can watch it on one of their monitors. You will need to look up the call number for the movie you want to see.

Courseweb

This class has a Courseweb site, where you can check your grades, look at the syllabus, and participate in an online discussion board. Handouts and notes may also be posted there. To access the site, go to courseweb.pitt.edu and sign in with your usual Pitt username and password. There is also a link from my.pitt.edu.

Coursework and Grades

Attendance and Participation (10% of final grade)

You are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions. More than two absences for any reason will negatively affect your participation grade and your ability to complete the course requirements (quizzes, etc.).

Quizzes (30%)

Almost every class will begin with a quiz of about 5-10 multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. The quizzes will cover the reading assigned for that day, and may include questions on material previously covered in class. Quizzes must be taken in class and cannot be made up at a later date. I will allow you to “drop” two or three of your lowest quiz grades.

Mid-term and Final Exams (30% each)

These two exams will be take-home essay tests. They will cover course readings, films, and lectures/discussions. The essay questions will be passed out in class one week before they are due. The final exam will be cumulative—it will focus on the second half of the course, but will cover concepts from the entire course.

Plagiarism

All assignments turned in for this class must be the student’s own work or must be properly attributed to the original source with proper citations. Cheating on a quiz or turning in work that includes plagiarized material or was written by someone else will result in failure for the assignment, failure for the course, and/or university disciplinary action.

Rules of thumb: Do not take someone else’s unique ideas or interpretations and pass them off as your own (cite them instead). Do not “cut

and paste" material (even a sentence!) from the Internet or any other source. Even one sentence taken without proper citation will result in failure and a report to the dean. When citing something, put the author's name and the page number in parentheses after the quotation. You should cite the source even when you paraphrase.

If you have any questions about proper citation or what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me! Also, familiarize yourself with the Academic Integrity Code (<http://www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/policy/integrity.html>) and with the English Department plagiarism policy (<http://www.english.pitt.edu/resources/plagiarism.html>).

Disability

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890 or (412) 383-7355(TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Course Schedule

UNIT 1: THE WESTERN

Tues, May 15—Introduction to the Course/The Classic Western

In-class screening: The Searchers (John Ford, 1956, 119 min.)

Thurs, May 17—The Spaghetti Western

Read for today: "Genre" (FGR, 3-11), "The Idea of Genre in the American Cinema" (FGR, 12-26), and "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre" (FGR, 27-41)

In-class screening: A Fistful of Dollars (Sergio Leone, Italy/Spain/W. Germany, 1964, 99 min.)

Tues, May 22—The Western in an Era of Generic Hybridity

Read for today: Langford, Ch. 3

In-class screening: Kill Bill: Vol. 2 (Quentin Tarantino, 2004, 136 min.)

UNIT 2: THE MUSICAL

Thurs, May 24—Busby Berkley and the Early Musical

Read for today: Langford, Ch. 4

In-class screening: Gold Diggers of 1933 (Mervyn LeRoy, 1933, 96 min.)

****Mid-term exam questions will be passed out in class**

Tues, May 29—The Self-Reflexive Musical

Read for today: "The Self-Reflexive Musical and the Myth of Entertainment"

(FGR, 457-471)

In-class screening: Singin' in the Rain (Stanley Donan/Gene Kelly, 1952, 103 min.)

Thurs, May 31—The Postmodern Musical

In-class screening: Moulin Rouge! (Baz Luhrmann, Australia/USA, 2001, 127 min.)

****Take-home mid-term exam due in class today**

UNIT 3: FILM NOIR

Tues, June 5—Classic Film Noir

Read for today: Langford, Ch. 9 and "Notes on Film Noir" (FGR, 229-242)

In-class screening: Out of the Past (Jacques Tourneur, 1947, 97 min.)

Thurs, June 7—Neo-Noir

Read for today: "Chinatown and Generic Transformation in Recent American Films" (FGR, 243-261)

In-class screening: Chinatown (Roman Polanski, 1974, 131 min.)

Tues, June 12—Global Noir

Read for today: "Global Noir: Genre Film in the Age of Transnationalism" (FGR, 516-536)

In-class screening: A Better Tomorrow (John Woo, Hong Kong, 1982, 95 min.)

UNIT 4: HORROR FILM

Thurs, June 14—Classic American Horror

Read for today: Langford, Ch. 7

In-class screening: Double Feature! The Black Cat (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1934, 65 min.) and *I Walked with a Zombie* (Jacques Tourneur, 1943, 69 min.)

****Final exam questions will be passed out in class**

Tues, June 19—Psycho and the Origins of Modern Horror

Read for today: "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess" (FGR, 141-159)

In-class screening: Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960, 109 min.)

Thurs, June 21—The Influence of Contemporary Asian Horror

In-class screening: Ringu (Hideo Nakata, Japan, 1998, 96 min.)

****Take-home final exam due in class today**