

Englit 0532
Spring 2007
Andersen, K.

Introduction to Film Genres
ENGLIT 0532
Spring 2007
Tues. 1 - 4:50 PM

Instructor: Kara Lynn Andersen
Office: 628G Cathedral of Learning
Office hour: Wed. 4-6 PM
kla23@pitt.edu



Course Texts:

- Required:** Grant, Barry Keith, ed. *Film Genre Reader III*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2003.
Reserve readings available in Hillman Library
- Recommended:** *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*. Tim Corrigan
Film, Form and Culture. Robert Kolker. 2nd. Edition.

Course Description

In this course we will survey a total of four film genres. The term “film genre” (and its counterpart, “genre film”) is the subject of much debate in film theory, and this class will explore as many sides of the issue as possible. We will address a number of questions: What criteria are used to place a film in a particular genre? What role do audiences and movie studios play in the creation and definition of film genres? Where do film genres come from? How do genres change over time? What roles do genres play in the viewing experience? What are hybrid genres and subgenres (and why are they not simply new genres)? What can genres teach us about society? Are film genres interesting, important, useful or limiting for interpreting a film?

This is a writing intensive course, and therefore you will be expected to do a lot of writing, revising and editing for class assignments.

Course Policies

Film Screenings

All films will be shown in class. During screenings, you should behave more or less as if you were in a theater. Emotional responses (brief comments, laughter, gasping, etc.) and **quiet** eating is acceptable. Talking to your neighbor or text messaging is not acceptable, and you will be marked absent if I catch you doing it. You should be able to sit through a feature length film without needing a break, but if an emergency arises, please leave with as little disturbance as possible.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. As this is a discussion-based class, your participation in class is vital. **If you miss 2 or more classes without a documented excuse, your grade will be lowered by a portion of a letter grade for each absence. Missing more than 4 classes (excused or unexcused) is grounds for immediate failure.** If you know you have to miss a class for a legitimate reason (such as a religious holiday, documented sports absence or personal illness), it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and discuss with me how to make up the work. If you do not have a documented excuse, you cannot make up missed work.

Tardiness

If you are not in the classroom when I take roll you will be marked late. Every three late marks count as one absence. If you miss more than fifteen minutes of a class you will be marked absent.

Late Work

I do not accept late work. If you know you are going to miss a class when an assignment is due, either turn the assignment in early or arrange for someone else to turn it in for you. In-class work can be made up only in the case of religious holidays, sports absences, or illness (with a doctor's note).

If you are having personal or academic problems and need an extension on an assignment, talk to me before the deadline to see what arrangements can be made. Computer problems are not an excuse. Always save your work frequently and do not wait until the last minute to print - this way you will always have something to turn in even if you lose your later work.

Grading

The grading system is a 100 point scale. The breakdown of assignments is as follows:

Individual Assignments:

Essay 1:	20 points
Essay 2:	20 points
Group 1 assignments (2):	10 points (each)
Group 2 assignments (2):	15 points (each)
Participation:	10 points

Final Grades:

90-100:	A range
80-89:	B range
70-79:	C range
60-69:	D range
Below 60:	F

Academic Integrity

I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty in this class. If you refer to or use the work of anyone else, it must be properly documented. **My policy is that any student caught cheating or plagiarizing on any assignment will immediately fail the course.** For more information on the University of Pittsburgh's policy, please refer to the Academic Integrity Code at: <http://www.fcas.pitt.edu/academicintegrity.html>. For help understanding what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, visit the Pitt English Literature program's "Avoiding Plagiarism" website at: <http://www.pitt.edu/~englit/plagiarism.htm>.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please let both me and Disability Resources and Services (DRS) know as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.¹



¹ DRS can be reached at 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890/(412) 383-7355 (TTY).

Calendar

Week 1 - January 9

View *My Darling Clementine* (John Ford, 1946), clips from *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903)

Week 2 - January 16

Read: “Genre” (Andrew Tudor)
“The Idea of Genre in the American Cinema” (Edward Buscombe)
“The Western (Genre and Movies)” (Douglas Pye)

View: *Destry Rides Again* (George Marshall, 1939), clips from *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952) (clips),

Week 3 - January 23

Read: “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre” (Rick Altman)
“Ideology, Genre, Auteur” (Robin Wood)

View: *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Sergio Leone, 1966)

Due: Assignment 1

Week 4 - January 30

Read: “The Structural Influence: New Directions in Film Genre Study” (Thomas Schatz)

“Shoot-Out at the Genre Corral: Problems in the ‘Evolution’ of the Western” (Tag Gallagher)

View: *Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood, 1992)

Week 5 - February 6

Read: “Monsters from the Id” (Margaret Tarratt)
“‘You’ve Got to Be Fucking Kidding!’: Knowledge, Belief and Judgement
in Science Fiction” (Steve Neale) **reserve**

View: *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), *Flash Gordon: Space
Soldiers* (1936)

Due: Assignment 2

Week 6 - February 13

Read: “Genre Films and the Status Quo” (Judith Hess Wright)
“Re-examining the 1950s Invasion Narratives” (Mark Jancovich) **reserve**
View: *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Robert Wise, 1951)

Week 7 - February 20

Read: “Social Implications in the Hollywood Genres” (Jean-Loup Bouquet)

View: *Gattaca* (Andrew Nichol, 1997)

Due: Essay 1

Week 8 - February 27

Read: “Children of the Light” (Bruce F. Kawin)
“The Terror of Pleasure: The Contemporary Horror Film and Postmodern
Theory” (Tania Modleski) **reserve**

View: *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979)

Week 9 - March 6

Spring Break - No Class

Week 10 - March 13

Read: “Genre Film: A Classical Experience” (Thomas Sobchack)

View: *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931), clips from *Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau 1922) and *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (Mel Brooks, 1995)

Week 11 - March 20

Read: “Questions of Genre” (Steve Neale)

View: *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968)

Due: Assignment 3

Week 12 - March 27

Read: “Experience and Meaning in Genre Films” (Barry Keith Grant)
“Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess” (Linda Williams)

View: *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978)

Week 13 - April 3

Read:

View:

Due: Assignment 4

Week 14 - April 10

Read:

View:

Week 15 - April 17

Read:

View:

Due: Essay 2

Contact Information & Questionnaire

Name:

Major:

Year:

Email address:

Phone number:

1. Which other film classes have you taken?
2. What interests you most about this course?
3. What do you want me to know about you, as a student or a person?