

UPDATED

Eng Lit 1390
Summer 2007
Trenz, J.

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Office Hours: Fridays, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Kiva Han (Craig St.)

ENGLIT 1390: Contemporary Film

LECTURE and SCREENING: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:00 p.m. to 9:50 p.m. in LAWRN 207

This course will explore the contemporary moment in international cinema in terms of film styles, movements, production, distribution, and reception through the related (but different) concepts of new media, globalization, transnationalism, race, sexuality, gender, and popular culture. The films we will study include commercial cinema, independent film, international film, digital and video production, and local/populist film work. We will investigate various sites in which contemporary film circulates, such as film festivals, the Internet, academia, the museum, and commercial theaters. We will also consider relationships between contemporary film and alternative forms of visual culture.

Required Texts

- 1) Spiegelman, Art. *In the Shadow of No Towers*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2004. (Available at the University Book Store)
- 2) All required and recommended course readings will be available for you to download from Blackboard.

Blackboard

You can access the course website at <http://courseweb.pitt.edu> where you will be able to read class-related announcements, make contributions to the discussion board, and download the syllabus, course readings, and information about the assignments. Lecture notes will not be available online. You can also use this website to email your classmates.

Occasionally, I will contact you via email to update you about your attendance and performance in class and to make announcements. The course website will send out emails only to your Pitt email account. Therefore, if you do not use your Pitt email account, please use the following instructions to **have your Pitt email forwarded** to the account you use regularly:

- 1) Go to <http://accounts.pitt.edu/>
- 2) Log in with your username and password and click "connect"
- 3) On the Management menu, click on "Edit forwarding addresses"
- 4) Enter your forwarding address(es) (the email address you use regularly) in the box(es) and click "OK"

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance Policy:

2 late arrivals = 1 absence

2 partial presences = 1 absence (for example, if you leave before or after the film screening)

2 unexcused absences = course grade lowered by one full letter grade

3 unexcused absences = F

4 excused or unexcused absences = F

Excused absences: you must turn in a doctor's note or other valid explanation in writing within a week of your absence. I will not accept excuses for absences via email.

I will keep track of attendance based on your signature in the sign-up sheet that will be circulated at the beginning of class. It is your responsibility to remember to sign in when the sheet is sent around. This will be your only valid proof that you were in class.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

READING

You will read approximately 25-50 pages before you come to each class.

- 1) **Reading Journal (20%):** This assignment will test your reading preparation for each class meeting. You will bring to each class two copies of a one-page single-spaced typewritten response to the readings scheduled for that class.

In your journal:

- * Summarize the main ideas of the assigned readings.
- * Make associative connections between the ideas in the readings and the films and/or other readings.
- * Respond to the readings.

Late assignments will not be accepted unless you have a formal medical or other legitimate excuse in writing. I will pick up your assignments in the first 10 minutes of class. Therefore, I strongly urge you to come to class on time. There will be 11 journals in all and grades will be on a **10 point scale** with 10=A+; 9.5=A; 9=A-; etc. down to 5=F.

Important Note: If you do all 11 journals, I will include only the best 8 for your final grade. If you do 10 or fewer, I will average all journals for your grade. This means that if you do all of the reading journals, you will be taking the opportunity to figure out what is expected in this assignment and to improve your grade.

2) Class Discussion (10%):

Your journal will be the basis for your contribution to class discussion. If I don't hear your voice in class, I will call on you to speak up or to read from your journal.

ACTIVE FILM VIEWING

You cannot watch films in this class merely for entertainment. This means that I will expect you to take screening notes and be able to speak in class and write in your journal with detailed examples from your notes.

3) Film Presentation and online discussion (10%)

You and another student will research one of the films on our syllabus. You will jointly make a brief (5-10 min.) presentation to the class before the screening and hand out a set of discussion questions to the class. You will then lead an online discussion on the film during the week after the screening. Each member of your group will be graded individually.

4) Discussion Board Film Posts (15%)

Participate in the course discussion board at least six times during the term. If you crowd all of your comments in the last weeks of the term, your grade will be lowered. You must post substantive comments backed by detailed observation/analysis for which you can draw on your screening notes. In other words, you are required to share short analyses of each session's film online. Or, you can choose to respond to someone else's post with a counter-analysis of your own. I will grade your posts on the same 10-point scale as your reading journals. One sentence posts will not be graded.

If you post more than six times, I will take your six best grades. I will let you know your grade within a week after you have posted it.

RESEARCH AND WRITING

5) Peer Presentation (15%)

Since contemporary film culture is always in process and all published scholarship is always slightly behind, you will contribute to the scholarship on this area in a class workshop in which you will all present your work to each other. With one other student you will prepare a 20-minute presentation on an area of contemporary film culture from a list of topics that we will generate in class together. You will also make a handout for the class and turn in a detailed outline of your presentation.

6) Midterm and Final Take-Home Exams (15% and 15%; 30% total)

For each take-home exam, you will answer assigned questions based on readings and films on the syllabus. I may also ask you to apply concepts learned in class to films of your choice.

Opportunities for Extra Credit

I will not make any special arrangements for extra credit. The responsibility for earning a grade is yours and all the information you need to do well in this class is in this syllabus.

All aspects of your course grade will depend on your careful and regular reading in advance of each class meeting. You will not do well on the research and writing assignments if you don't do the readings. Towards the end of the semester there will be no way for you to make up a poor grade in these areas.

Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's policy on academic integrity. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Everything you write in your exams and papers must be your own work, unless you quote someone else's work and provide full citations. This includes material you may have found online. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted below from the Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score or F for the paper or exam will be imposed.

The integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation on the part of faculty and honest academic conduct on the part of students. To this end, students are expected to conduct themselves at a high level of responsibility in the fulfillment of the course of their study. It is the corresponding responsibility of faculty to make clear to students those standards by which students will be evaluated, and the resources permissible for use by students during the course of their study and evaluation. The educational process is perceived as a joint faculty-student enterprise which will perforce involve professional judgment by faculty and may involve – without penalty- reasoned exception by students to the data or views offered by faculty. Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom, February 1974

Disability Accommodations

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, 648-7890 or 383-7355 (TTY)** as early as possible in the term.

If you have any questions or concerns about the course or your performance, feel free to talk to me, e-mail me, or stop by during my office hours.

ENGLIT 1390 Class Schedule

Most readings will refer to the film you watched in the *previous* class. Therefore, we will end class with the film and discuss it in the following class session. During the last four sessions the course readings will refer to the film(s) scheduled for the same class session for which they are assigned.

May 15: INTRODUCTIONS

Screening: *Spiderman 2* (Sam Raimi, 2004, 127 mins.)

Information on peer presentation handed out in class.

May 17: THE HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTER

Required Reading: Michael Punt, "What the Film Archive Can Tell Us About

Technology in the Post-Digital Era" *Design Issues* 21.2 (Spring 2005): 48-62

Robert E. Davis, "Instantaneous Worldwide Release: Coming Soon to Everyone, Everywhere" (*Transnational Cinema Reader* 73-80).

Angela Ndalianis, "Architecture of the Senses: Neo-Baroque Entertainment Spectacles" (*Rethinking Media Change* 355-373)

Recommended: Susan Hayward "Blockbusters" (*Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* 60-64)

Screening: *The World* (Zhangke Jia, 2004, 139 min.)

May 22: GLOBALIZATION AND NEW MEDIA

Reading: Tonglin Lu, "Music and Noise: Independent Film and Globalization" *The China Review* 3.1 (Spring 2003): 57-76.

Valerie Jaffee, "Bringing the World to the Nation: Jia Zhangke and the Legitimation of Chinese Underground Film" *Senses of Cinema* 32.4 (May 2004): 1-11.

Richard James Havis, "Illusory Worlds: An Interview with Jia Zhangke" *Cineaste* (Fall 2005): 58-59

Recommended: Yingjin Zhang "Cinema and the Transnational Imaginary, 1900-2002" (*Chinese National Cinema* 259-296)

Screening: *Gigli* (Martin Brest, 2003, 121 min.)

May 24: CELEBRITY AND POPULAR RECEPTION: "BENNIFER" FLOPS

Reading: Christine Geraghty "Re-examining Stardom: Questions of Texts, Bodies and Performance" (*Reinventing Film Studies* 183-201)

Susan Hayward "Stars" (*Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* 375-384)

Browse: 'User Comments' at <http://imdb.com/title/tt0299930/usercomments>

Reviews at <http://metacritic.com/film/titles/gigli/>

Recommended: Barry King "Articulating Stardom" (*Star Texts* 125-154)

Screening: *Shall We Dansu?* (Masayuki Suo, 1996, 118 min.)

Screen on your own: *Shall We Dance?* (Peter Chelsom, 2004, 119 min.)

May 29: THE TRANSNATIONAL REMAKE

Reading: Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni and Michal Daliot-Bul "'Shall We Dansu?': Dancing with the 'West' in Cotemporary Japan" *Japan Forum* 14.1 (2002): 63-75

Constantine Ververis, "Remaking Film" *Film Studies* 4 (Summer 2004): 87-103
Recommended: Kerr Houston "'Siam Not So Small': Maps, History, and Gender in *The King and I*" *Camera Obscura* 20.2 (2005): 73-117
Screening: *Heart of the World* (Guy Maddin, 2000, 6 min.)
Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary (Guy Maddin, 2002, 75 min.)

May 31: **THE CONTEMPORARY ART FILM (CINEMATIC PASTICHE)**
Reading: Steven Shaviro "Fire and Ice: The Films of Guy Maddin" (*North of Everything: English Canadian Cinema since 1980* 216-221)
William Beard "Maddin and Melodrama" *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 14.2 (Fall 2005): 2-17
Jonathan Rosenbaum "Afterword: Ten Years Later (Please Watch Carefully: *The Heart of the World*)" (*Essential Cinema: On the Necessity of Film Cannons* 191-193)
Screening: *Scorpio Rising* (Kenneth Anger, 1964, 28 min.)
Mysterious Skin (Greg Araki, 2004, 99 min.)

Mid-Term Exam due Monday, June 4 by 12 p.m.

June 5: **CONTEMPORARY QUEER FILMMAKING**
Reading: James Moran "Gregg Araki: Guerrilla Film-Maker for a Queer Generation" *Film Quarterly* 50.1 (Autumn, 1996): 18-26.
Judith Butler "Global Violence, Sexual Politics" (*Queer Ideas: The David R. Kessler Lectures in Lesbian and Gay Studies* 199-214)
Recommended:
Michele Aaron "The New Queer Spectator" (*New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader* 187-200)
Juan A. Suarez "Pop, Queer, or Fascist?: The Ambiguity of Mass Culture in Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising*" (*Experimental Cinema, The Film Reader* 115-137)
Susan Hayward "Queer Cinema" (*Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* 329-333)
Ibid. "Independent American Cinema (223-225)"
Screening: *Adaptation* (Spike Jonze, 2002, 114 min.)
"Da Funk" (Daft Punk)
"Praise You" (Fatboy Slim)
"What's Up Fatlip?" (Fatlip)
Sample on your own: Music Videos at YouTube.com (External Links for music videos on Blackboard TBA)

June 7: **SPIKE JONZE: MUSIC/VIDEO and the POPULAR WORK OF ART**
Reading: Katherine Diekmann "MTV Killed the Music Video Star" (*Stars Don't Stand Still in the Sky: Music and Myth* 89-97)
Cynthia Baron "Performances in *Adaptation*: Analyzing Human Movement in Motion Pictures" *Cineaste* (Fall 2006): 48-55
Anna Notaro "Technology in Search of an Artist: Questions of Auteursm/Authorship"

and the Contemporary Cinematic Experience" *The Velvet Light Trap* 57 (Spring 2006): 86-97

Browse: <http://YouTube.com> videos. (External Link posted on [Blackboard](#))

Recommended: David L. Smith "The Implicit Soul of Charlie Kaufman's *Adaptation*"

Screening: *Wassup Rockers* (Larry Clark, 2005, 111 min.)

June 12: **CONTEMPORARY "NEO-REALISM", COMMERCIAL HISTORY and the PUBLIC SPHERE**

Reading: Juan Flores "The Latino Imaginary: Meanings of Community and Identity" (*The Latin American Cultural Studies Reader* 606-619)

Iain Borden "Another Beach, Another Pavement: Skateboarding and the Performative Critique of Architecture" (*The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space* 179-199)

S. Craig Watkins "Black Youth and the Ironies of Capitalism" (*Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema* 51-76)

Browse: STY Official Movie Website (External Link posted on [Blackboard](#))

STY Myspace.com movie page and its 'friends' (External Link posted on [Blackboard](#))

Recommended: Susan Hayward "Italian Neo-Realism" (*Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* 226-229)

Iain Borden "Beneath the Pavement, the Beach: Skateboarding, Architecture and the Urban Realm." (*Strangely Familiar* 82-86)

Susan Hayward "Black Cinema" (*Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* 45-60)

Richard Shusterman "Popular Art and Entertainment Value" (*Philosophy and the Interpretation of Pop Culture* 131-157)

Screening: *Stomp the Yard* (Sylvain White, 2007, 116 min.)

Screen on your own: *Rize* (David LaChapelle, 2005, 84 min.)

June 14: **CONTEMPORARY NATIONAL CINEMA and FEMINISM**

Reading: Susan Hayward "Feminist Film Theory" (*Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* 134-148)

David Murphy "Africans Filming Africa: Questioning Theories of an Authentic African Cinema" (*Transnational Cinema Reader* 27-37)

Marcia Landy "Gramsci, Sembène and the Politics of Culture" (*Understanding Film: Marxist Perspectives* 58-86)

Recommended: Susan Hayward "Third Cinema" (*Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* 414-422)

Screening: *Moolaadé* (Ousmane Sembène, 2004, 120 min.)

June 19: **THE CONTEMPORARY IMAGE: THE GRAPHIC MEMOIR and the 'GRAPHIC' FILM**

Reading: Art Spiegelman *In the Shadows of No Towers*

Gillian Whitlock "Autographics: The Seeing 'I' of the Comics" *Modern Fiction Studies* 52.4 (Winter 2006): 965-969

Graham Fuller "Good Guy Bad Guy" *Sight and Sound* 15.10 (October 2005): 12-16.

Homi K. Bhabha "Terror and After..." (*Transnational Film Reader* 197-198)

Screening: *A History of Violence* (David Cronenberg, 2005, 96 min.)

June 21: **DOCUMENTARY and CONTEMPORARY MATTERS OF REPRESENTATION**

Reading: Bill Nichols "Performing Documentary" (*Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* 92-106)

James McEnteer "Alternative Realities" (*Shooting the Truth: The Rise of American Political Documentaries* 155-171)

Screening: *Strange Culture* (Lynn Hershman Leeson, 2007, 75 min.)

Final Exam due Monday, June 25 by 12 p.m.