

# Film Analysis

## ENG 2300 - Section 7308

**Instructor:** Cristina Ruiz-Poveda

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**Meetings:** Class MWF 7 at ROL115. Screenings R E1-E3 at ROL115

**Office Hours:** Mondays 1--3 pm, Wednesdays 12-12:50 pm, and by appointment at TUR 4415

### Course Description:

ENG 2300 will introduce you to film vocabulary and film analysis. Films take many forms and are shaped by a wide range of cultural conditions. In this course, you will learn how to analyze films and their forms by examining how moving images create meanings and communicate to audiences in a variety of cinematic contexts. You will develop your analytic skills in the context of film history and film theory and you will learn to appreciate film as a cultural expression rather than a form of entertainment. This course is not a film appreciation class; besides dealing with the pleasures of cinema, we will learn film theory and study film as a cultural form.

In addition, this course will challenge you as a writer and a creator. Throughout the semester, you will develop techniques of persuasive writing as you work to compose compelling, evocative analyses of the films you view. You will also make small creative audiovisual exercises to understand how films are articulated and to address theoretical issues studied in class on a practical level.

**Course Goals and Outcomes:** By the end of the semester you should be able to...

- Analyze films critically using film vocabulary
- Be aware of the power of cinematic language
- Appreciate film as a cultural product and form of knowledge rather than only entertainment
- Understand the creative production process of films
- Confront, accept, and enjoy "different" films, those that depart from conventions that you may now take for granted
- Understand your own experience as a spectator
- Articulate how films create meanings through formal elements
- Adapt your writing style to varied genres and audiences

### Materials:

Required:

- Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, *The Film Experience* (3rd Ed)
- The instructor will provide other required materials through Canvas.

Recommended:

- Corrigan, Timothy. *Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 8th Edition. Boston: Pearson, 2012.
- Yale Film Analysis site, <http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/>

### Assignments and Grading

#### Participation and preparedness - 20%

Students should be prepared to discuss the materials and actively participate in class activities. Group work is an important component of the participation grade. Absences, tardiness, and lack of preparedness will lower your participation grade. Always bring the readings to class. There might be unannounced reading quizzes to ensure you complete and understand the readings. You will take notes during the screenings on worksheets provided by the instructor, which will be part of the participation grade.

#### Film Vocabulary Quiz - 5 %

During the first two weeks you will learn many technical words about film. To ensure you get familiar with these terms, there will be an announced quiz.

#### Viewing Responses (3 x 500 words. 1500 words total) - 20%

Bi-weekly brief responses about the film of the week or close readings of individual scenes with a focus on the topic covered in that unit (editing, sound...). Try to relate the film to the readings of the week. These assignments are short, but they should demonstrate professionalism and analytical thinking.

Moon-watching Exercise (500-700 words) -10%

Using the technique described in the Duckworth reading, pick one scene from any of the films watched to date and record your observations of the scene for five days (do not focus on significance and interpretation at this point). After you have recorded your observations, write a short paragraph explaining the significance of the scene.

Midterm Exam and essay: (750-1000 words) - 20%

The exam will be open on canvas and you will complete it at home. It will have a section of questions and a short essay prompt.

Final Project: Film Analysis Essay (2000-2500 words) or Film - 30%

Option 1 : You will write a critical essay analyzing one of the films we have screened in class this semester. You can relate it to other films (from the same filmmaker, from the same period...) or you can just focus on one. You will need to do research (1-3 sources, you can use the readings for class too) to create innovative arguments and to back up your claims. You will consider the different elements studied during the semester as a whole. You will create an argument about the film, interpreting it or analyzing it from a particular theoretical framework. Make sure you share the topic with me before getting started.

Option 2: For the final project, you will also have an artistic option. You can create a short film from scratch using any techniques and technologies (it can be a photo story, an animated film, a documentary...). The goal of this project is not to achieve technical perfection or artisanship, but rather to reflect about the theories and styles studied in class. Your film should engage with the issues and elements of film analysis creating an argument. In addition to the film, you will write an art statement to explain how your project incorporates elements of film analysis and what your main argument is.

Option 3: The third option combines written and visual skills. You will create a film idea composed by a summary, a script, basic character designs, and audiovisual references (songs you would include, looks that would resemble your cinematography...). You do NOT have to write the script of a feature film, but either the script of a short film, or a relevant scene of your own feature film. In addition, you will write an art statement explaining the dossier of your film and justifying how you engage with theoretical issues in this project.

Extra Credit:

Throughout the semester, interesting film talks and screenings will take place on campus or in Gainesville. These events are listed on Canvas and I encourage you to attend. If you go to at least one of these events and write a short (500-700 words) response about it, your grade will be affected positively. The response needs to incorporate concepts learnt in class and reflect theoretically about the talk or screening.

**Grade Scale and Rubric:**

A: You fulfilled the guidelines of the assignments properly, and your work shows originality and creativity. Your papers demonstrate that you took extra steps to compose your writing by integrating ideas studied in class. A range papers must be free of typos and grammatical errors. You read the assigned materials, write interesting and well-thought responses, and engage in productive class discussion.

B: You fulfilled the guidelines of the assignments. Your work has a few minor grammar or spelling errors, but is complete and well organized. Your papers incorporate critical concepts studied in class, but it is slightly ineffective due to formal errors or to weak arguments. You read the materials, write correct responses, and participate in class.

C: You fulfilled the guidelines of the assignments but your work needs significant revision. Your papers are logical in content, but your writing is wrong. You sometimes fail to read the materials, write basic responses, and you participate in class with superficial contributions.

D: You neglected basic requirements of the assignments and completed them at a poor quality level. Your papers need significant revision. The content is incomplete and the organization unclear. You do not address concepts studied in class in depth. You barely do the readings, your responses are very poor or in-existent, and you do not participate in class.

E: An E is usually reserved for people who do not do the work or do not come to class. However, students will earn an E if their work clearly shows little effort, if they do not communicate with the instructor about their work or absences, and if they don't read the materials.

A	93-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62
B+	87-89	c+	77-79	D+	67-69	E	0-59

For information about UF grading policies, visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

#### **Attendance Policy:**

This is a participation-driven course. Missing class will affect your grade negatively and it will deprive your classmates of your contribution to discussion.

- Absence does not justify late submissions. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to remain informed and come to the next class prepared.
- **Six** missed periods will result on a failing grade. This policy includes screening periods.
- Justified absences only involve university-sponsored events, religious holidays, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena), or severe weather conditions. These absences must be discussed with the instructor or they will not be justified.
- **Being tardy** or leaving early **twice** will count as an absence.
- **Communication** with the instructor is crucial to avoid grading and accommodation problems related to absences. These policies are consistent with the UF's attendance policies. For more information on these policies, please visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

#### **Late Work:**

Late submissions will not be accepted, unless one of the justified causes for absence is involved. Late work cannot be made up for a lower grade. I might consider deadline extensions, but you would need to request them at least 48hrs before the original due date.

#### **Screening Policy:**

To analyze films successfully you should be actively engaged during the viewing. Take notes during the screening to be prepared for class discussion and response essays. The instructor will provide worksheets for each screening that will be evaluated throughout the semester.

Keep in mind that some of the films might contain "adult" themes, explicit language, sexual scenes, or physical and verbal violence. **If you suspect that any of the films contains scenes you cannot watch with a group, you may watch the film on your own.** However, controversial topics will unavoidably emerge in our screenings and discussions and you are expected to be willing to discuss them respectfully and critically.

Use of cell-phones is **NOT PERMITTED**. **Cell phone use will result in being marked absent for the period.**

#### **Communication with the Instructor:**

You can contact me via email or during my office hours. Please allow 48 hours to respond. If my office hours do not work for you, we can schedule an appointment.

**Integrity and Diversity:**

Please keep in mind that UF students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. This class is discussion-based, and conflicting opinions may arise. Some of the texts and films we will discuss engage in controversial topics and opinions, sometimes representing violence or controversial situations graphically. Diverse student backgrounds combined with sometimes provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Active learning requires students to honestly share their thoughts and respectfully engage with each other's opinions. Disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated.

In addition, a truly responsive learning environment requires the teacher to adapt to the students' needs. Make mindful use of the opportunities provided by your instructor to improve the class and adapt the materials to the group.

**Class behavior:**

- The use of cell phones, computers, or other electronic gadgets is only allowed for note taking. Please silence your phones. **Texting in class will count as an absence.**
- According to UF policy, it is not allowed to eat in class. It is distracting and will make your classmates hungry!

**Assignment Format:**

- Assignments should be submitted in MLA format, in Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, 1" margins on all sides, name/instructor's name/course/date in upper left corner of first page, last name and page number located in top right of every page.
- Electronic copies must be submitted through the e-learning Canvas site by the assigned due date to ensure that your instructor has a back-up of your work.

**Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:**

All students are required to abide by the UF Student Honor Code. Many times, students make mistakes in the way they quote or cite other work. Even those cases constitute a dishonest academic practice. Never copy paste without adding quotation marks and mentioning the name of the original author. In this course, one case of plagiarism on an assignment can involve failing that assignment. Should plagiarism occur again, the student will be reported to the Dean of Students Office and risks failing the course and other, more severe penalties. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

**Final Grade Appeals:** Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Department of English Program Assistant. Appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower grade.

**Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit:** This course can satisfy the General Education Requirement for Composition or Humanities.

**Statement of Writing Requirement (WR):** This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing.

**Statement of Student Disability Services:** The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

**Statement of Harassment:** UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more information, see: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/policies-2/sexual-harassment/>

**Course Evaluations:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. These evaluations are conducted online during the last weeks of the semester. Your instructor will give you time in class to fill the evaluations.

# Course Schedule

The Schedule is subject to change. The readings from the book are listed as FE. The rest of the readings can be found on Canvas. Usually we will have a maximum of 2 readings each week. Each unit is designed to introduce a cinematic technique (such as, for example, editing) but also a critical issue (such as, for example, representations of history).

## **Week One: Introduction to Film and basic film history**

W. Jan. 6 - Introduction to the class and presentations

TR. Screening: *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)

F. Jan. 8 - Basic cinematic language: Discussion of the film

Read: Section "Basic Terms" on Yale's website

## **Week Two: Editing I (narrative and storytelling)**

M. Jan. 11 - Basic notions of editing and IMR

Read FE. Ch. 4 - Relating Images

Section "Editing" of Yale's film website

W. Jan. 13 - Three-act structure and the hero's journey

TR. Screening: *Breathless* (Jean Luc Godard, 1959)

F. Jan. 15 - Discussion of the film

Film vocabulary quiz

## **Week Three: Editing II (temporality, subjectivity, and memory)**

M. Jan. 18 - Holiday, no class

Read: Corrigan's *Short Guide to Writing about Film - Introduction*

W. Jan. 20 - Alternative editing

TR. Screening: *In the Mood for Love* (Wong Kar Wai, 2000) (and scenes from *Memento*)

F. Jan. 22 - Discussion of the film

## **Week Four: Cinematography (feminist criticism)**

M. Jan. 25 - Basic elements of cinematography

Read: FE. Ch. 3 - Framing What We See

Section "Cinematography" of Yale's website

Viewing response 1 due

W. Jan. 27 - Group activity: script and storyboard

TR. Screening: *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)

F. Jan. 29 - Discussion of the film

Read: Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*

### **Week Five: Mise-en-scene I (realism/naturalism)**

M. Feb. 1 - Defining mise-en-scene

Read: FE. Ch.2 - Exploring the Material World

Read: Section "Mise-en-scène" of Yale's website

W. Feb. 3 - "Theatrical" vs. "naturalist"

TR. Screening: *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941)

F. Feb. 5 - Discussion of the film

### **Week Six: Mise-en-scene II (deconstruction, modernity, and postmodernity)**

Feb. 8 - Auteur theory

Read: Andrew Sarris' Notes on Auteur Theory

Viewing response 2 due

Feb. 10 - Postmodernity

TR. Screening: *Inglourious Basterds* (Quentin Tarantino, 2009)

Feb. 12 - Discussion of the film

Read: Stella Setka's *Bastardized History*

### **Week Seven: Sound in film (voice and history)**

Feb. 15 - Basic sound notions

Read: FE. Ch. 5 - Listening to the Cinema

Section "Sound" of Yale's Film website

Feb. 17 - Voice

TR. Screening: *The Secret Life of Words* (Coixet, 2006)

Feb. 19 - Discussion of the film

### **Week Eight: Music in film (uchronia and anachronic history)**

Feb. 22 - Music in silent films and IMR

Viewing response 3 due

No reading

Feb. 24 - Music in modernity and MTV aesthetics

TR. Screening: *Marie Antoinette* (Sofia Coppola, 2006)

Feb. 26 - Discussion of the film

Read: Anna Backman's *The Historical Threshold*

### **Week Nine: Spring Break**

Feb. 29 - Spring Break, no class

Mar. 2 - Spring Break, no class

Mar. 4 - Spring Break, no class

### **Week Ten: Acting methods and character design**

Mar. 7 - Introduction to performance. Stanislavski and method acting

Read: Andrew Kievan's *Introduction: Interpreting Performance*

Homework: Music in film activity (no response due)

Mar. 9 - Alternative acting techniques

TR. Screening: *Shadows* (John Casavettes, 1960)

Mar. 11 - Discussion of the film  
Acting activity

### **Week Eleven: Filming reality: documentaries (nationalism and anti-heroes)**

Mar. 14 - Documentary modes I

Read: FE. Ch. 7- Representing the Real

Mar. 16 - Documentary modes II

TR. Screening: *Waltz with Bashir* (Folman, 2008)

Mar. 18 - Discussion of the film

Read: Joseph Kraemer's *Trauma and Representation in the Animated Documentary*

### **Week Twelve: Animation I (autobiography)**

Mar. 21 - Basic theory of animation. Orthodox animation: Disney and Warner Bros

Read: Paul Wells' *Towards a Theory of Animation*

Mar. 23 - Orthodox animation and 3D

TR. Screening: *Persepolis* (Marjane Strapi, 2007)

Mar. 25 - Discussion of the film  
Character design activity

### **Week Thirteen: Animation II (transnationalism)**

Mar. 28 - Experimental Animation

Midterm exam due

Mar. 30 - Japanese Animation

TR. Screening: *Ponyo* (Hayao Miyazaki, 2008)

Apr. 1 - Discussion of the film

Read: The Little Mermaid (Grimm's version) and Debora Ross' Miyazaki's Little Mermaid

**Week Fourteen: Genres and styles (to be decided by the class)**

Apr. 4 - To be decided by the class  
Moon-watching exercise due

Apr. 6 - To be decided by the class

TR. Screening: To be decided by the class

Apr. 8 - To be decided by the class  
Genre activity: recreating a genre

**Week Fifteen: Digital cinema and VFX (ontology of cinema)**

Apr. 11 - What defines cinema?  
Read: Andre Bazin's *Ontology of the Photographic Image*

Apr. 13 -Visual effects, new media, and cinema of the attractions  
Read: Andrew Parley's *Visual Digital Culture - Conclusion*

TR. Screening: *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010)

Apr. 15 - Discussion of the film  
No reading

**Week Sixteen: Final assignment**

Apr. 18 -Conferences and writing session

Apr. 20 - Last day of class: Submissions, final game and course evaluations  
Final project due