

CINE 1895
Introduction to Film Analysis
Syllabus

Northeastern University, Fall Semester, 2014

Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:00–11:30, Snell Library, 002

Contact Information

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Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:00 to 1:00; Tuesdays, 11:00 to 1:00

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the languages, aesthetics, and cultures of cinema. After considering the ways in which films are produced, marketed, and distributed, we study the basic elements of film grammar, from shot construction to editing to sound. We then examine how that grammar is used to construct narrative cinema, non-narrative or experimental work, and documentaries. Finally, we explore the ways in which film analysis is conducted, with a brief overview of the study of film genre, film history, and film theory. Special attention will be paid to writing about film, and this course will develop the critical thinking and writing skills needed for academic film analysis. By the end of the course, students will be able to define and employ terms and concepts fundamental to film studies, and ultimately write analytical essays that show an understanding of, and engagement with film form and culture.

Required Texts

- *The Film Experience: An Introduction*, Third Edition. Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White. Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012.
- *Writing About Movies*, Third Edition. Karen Gocsik, Richard Barsam, & Dave Monahan. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013. Listed as **(WAM)**.
- A *Course Packet* of PDFs is available on the course site at **blackboard.neu.edu**. Please contact me if you have difficulties accessing or reading any of the texts. Listed as **(CP)**.

Films on Reserve

The following films are on reserve throughout the semester in the Snell Library:

- *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989), 120 min.
- *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), 119 min.
- *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974), 113 min.
- *Grizzly Man* (Werner Herzog, 2005), 103 min.
- *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), 128 min.

To assure that everyone has access, checkout times are on a three-hour limit, and must not leave the library.

Course Requirements

15% Attendance / Participation / Screening Notes

10% *Mise-en-Scène* Analysis (2 pages), **due 8:00, September 22**

10% Storyboarded Scene Analysis, **due 8:00, October 1**

20% Midterm, **October 8** & Essay (2 pages) **due 8:00, October 15**

10% Documentary Analysis (2 pages), **due 8:00, October 27**

10% Genre Analysis (3 pages), **due 8:00, November 10**

25% Final Exam, **December 3** & Two Essays (2–3 pages each), **due via email 5:00 PM, December 10**

Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance is essential, and is taken every class. **You are allowed three absences.** Each additional absence will reduce your final grade by three percentage points. For example, if you miss five classes, your highest possible grade in the course is a 94%. *You will not receive credit for the course if you miss six or more classes.* If you are sick, injured, or have a personal emergency or some other obligation, please contact me before class. I'll be happy to fill you in on material covered in class, and I recommend that you view the film on your own.

Arriving on time is also essential. **If you are late more than four times, each additional time you are late reduces your total grade by 1%.** For example, if you are late for a total of seven classes, your highest possible grade in the course is a 97%. An absence is the equivalent of a late in this regard (that is, you are not allowed three absences *and* four lates—that would count as late for seven classes)

You are expected to come prepared, having read that day's assignments, and ready to contribute to the discussion. Sleeping, texting, etc. in class will adversely affect your grade. Speaking with me before or after class, or emailing comments or observations, will also contribute to your course participation.

To assure that you are keeping up with the reading for each class, **I may periodically issue short quizzes at the beginning of class.** These may or may not be open notebook, and would contribute to your Attendance/Participation grade.

Make-up Assignment for Attendance

If you are unable to attend a class but would like to receive credit, you have the opportunity to make up for *one absence* by: 1. watching the film assigned for that class on your own time (most are available in the library and through services like Netflix; see me for options if you cannot access the film or if something else was scheduled for that class); 2. writing a two-page commentary on the film that refers explicitly to the texts assigned for that class; 3. submitting the assignment (in paper or by email) within ten days of the absence. The assignment should take around three and a half hours to complete (both film and writing)—roughly the same amount of time as a class.

Film Analysis Note-taking

You have likely spent thousands of hours watching film and television, but this was certainly most often a *passive* experience—as uncritical absorption into the story is the intention of most filmmakers. In class, however, you are expected to watch each film with an *active* and analytical eye. Note-taking is essential, and you should have pen and paper at hand at all times (no laptops are permitted—see classroom conduct). While you're welcome to establish a system that suits you, I strongly recommend that you write down apparent or significant visual/acoustic motifs; interesting *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing, and sound choices, revealing lines of dialogue, and any other narrative or non-narrative elements. As a guide, please refer to page 23 in *Writing About Movies*. These may be intermittently collected at the end of a film and evaluated as part of your attendance/participation grade.

These will be collected at the end of ten classes that include films (noted on schedule) and evaluated as part of your attendance/participation grade. The notes for each film are evaluated on a check (90%), check-plus (100%), check-minus (75%) scale and constitute one percent of the final grade. The one lowest grade is dropped.

Film Analysis Essays

You are assigned three short analyses of 2 pages in which you are to incorporate the material covered that week into an analysis of the film viewed in class. You will be given specific instructions on what is expected for each assignment. If you miss a class in which we screen the assigned film, you are required to view it on your own.

Storyboard Scene Analysis

As an alternative to a written analysis of cinematography, you are assigned a short scene from a film with which to sketch the general composition of each shot and note camera placement and any other relevant information. You will be provided a document to print out for this exercise, and we will conduct an in-class exercise on storyboarding as preparation. A QuickTime clip will be available online. Your drawing skill is not evaluated (circles and dots for heads is fine), but you should be as accurate as possible.

Exam Content and Evaluation

The midterm and final exams consist of two parts: an in-class exam and a take-home short essay assignment. The in-class exam consists of matching, multiple choice, scene analysis, and one or two short responses, and will take approximately one hour. The midterm take-home essay assignment (2-pages, 40% of the grade) will be distributed

along with the in-class exam on October 8, and is due October 15. The final take-home essay assignment (two 2–3-page essays, 60% of the grade) will be distributed on December 3, and is due 5:00 PM December 10. We will cover what is expected in the essays as the midterm approaches. The in-class exam will be on material in the textbook, course packet, and lecture notes posted on the course website.

Paper Format

Most academic journals of film, media, and culture adhere to *The Chicago Manual of Style* or the *MLA Handbook*. While the MLA or APA Style is acceptable for papers in this class, I will provide a brief citation and style handout based on the 16th Edition of the *Chicago Manual* before the first paper is due. All papers should be double spaced, 11- to 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Footnotes, endnotes, or in-text citations are acceptable. Any sources used *must* be fully cited, and included in a complete bibliography.

Late Assignments

Late papers will be marked down 5% for each day it is late. For example, an A- paper (93%) that is two days late becomes a B- (83%). Students unable to attend a class in which papers are handed in should email a copy to me by 8:30 AM of the due day. You can email me late assignments. In order to register final grades, *I must receive all late work by 5:00 pm, Friday, December 12.*

Course Grades

Course grades are based on a 100-point scale. There is no curve. Final grades are determined by performance in each area stated above and explained below.

A-range grades are reserved for students who truly excel, and surpass the expectations of the assignment. A-range papers complete all of the required criteria. The paper demonstrates a close engagement with the relevant texts, and these texts are applied to support a cogent and original argument. There are no irrelevant or redundant sentences or paragraphs; the prose is strong; and the format is flawless. Such papers not only demonstrate a mastery of the concepts addressed in the course, but also present the student's unique insights in the best light.

B-range grades are earned by students who do above-average work, clearly achieving the goals of the assignment in a thorough, solid fashion. B-range papers complete all of the required criteria. While there is a clear and compelling thesis, the paper's structure does not always provide support; some examples or sources lead into other topics. Such papers demonstrate a clear understanding of the key issues addressed in the course, but could go further in the presentation of the student's own insights.

C-range grades are earned by students who satisfactorily meet the expectations of the assignment in an adequate fashion. C-range papers lack a specific or clearly articulated thesis. The sources and examples used in the paper relate only generally to the topic at hand. The structure of the paper is barely discernible; it consists of a string of interesting scenes, insights, and quotations; the connections are tenuous. A paper with irrelevant or distracting tangents is particularly problematic with short papers, as there is limited space to support your argument. In addition to some historical or analytical inaccuracies, there may be errors in format or citation.

D-range grades are given to students who do not satisfactorily meet the expectations of the assignment. D-range papers lack an argument and show little understanding of the topic. They do not utilize outside research, or rely on websites like *Wikipedia* for support—which may be fine for preliminary research, but are generally not reliable and should not be used for academic papers.

F-grades are given to students who do not attend class regularly; who fail to meet the expectations of an assignment; and/or who fail to complete any of the assigned work for the course. A failing grade will automatically be assigned to any student who violates the academic integrity policy of the University.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty will be treated as an extremely serious matter, and can result in expulsion. At a minimum, and without exception, any assignment that has been plagiarized will receive a zero, and there is no opportunity to resubmit the assignment. In many cases, this may result in a failing grade for the course. Acts of academic dishonesty will also be referred to the to the OSCCR (Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution). Any occurrence of plagiarism will be brought to the attention of the student's Department Chair.

It is never permissible to turn in any work that has been copied from another student or copied from a source (including Internet) without properly acknowledging the source. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that all work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth by the university. If in doubt, it is much better to *over-*

cite any text from which you derive ideas. I will be happy to discuss the rules and norms of academic writing any time throughout the course. Please read Northeastern University's Academic Integrity Policy at <http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academicintegrity/>.

Special Needs / Additional Assistance

Students with special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act who need reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Resource Center (20 Dodge Hall, 617-373-2675). For additional information, please visit <http://www.northeastern.edu/drc/>.

I strongly recommend that all students utilize the Writing Center (at 412 Holmes Hall and 136 Snell Library). Visit <http://www.northeastern.edu/english/writing-center/>, or call 617-373-4549.

If you have any issues that may affect your ability to write effectively, attend or follow lectures or discussions, or meet deadlines, please let me know early in the semester so that we can accommodate you. All discussions are confidential.

Classroom Conduct

Students are expected to adhere to Northeastern University's Code of Student Conduct, to join the discourse of the academy with honesty of voice and integrity of scholarship, and to show respect for staff, professors, and other students. Disruptive behavior which is persistent or significantly interferes with classroom activities may be subject to disciplinary action.

- Cell phones—as well as iPods or other electronic devices—are to be turned off and put away for class.
- Laptops should also be turned off and put away for class. There are several reasons for this:
 - a. *You won't need them.* You are not expected to take extensive notes, and there are no exams based on lectures; much of the class is an open discussion; all clips and films will be projected for the class—if there is something relevant you would like to see, let me know and we'll look it up.
 - b. *It is distracting for the professor or student who is talking.* It is difficult to know if you are following the conversation, and it is easy to assume that your interest lies elsewhere.
 - c. *It is distracting for you!* While you might believe that you are the exception, there have been many studies that clearly state that multitasking is a myth.
- If you absolutely need to make a call or send an email, please step outside the classroom.
- **Students who violate the no-screen policy will have their final grade reduced by 1% for each violation.** This goes for the lecture, discussion, and screening sections of the class alike. I may not say anything in class, but often notice nonetheless. If the issue is persistent, I will send an email.
- Please refrain from talking during the films, or from otherwise distracting your classmates. If you need to slip out during class, please do so quietly, and shut the door behind you.
- If you need to leave class early, let me know at the beginning of class.
- Drinks should be in closed containers and food (which may be consumed during screenings) should be small, unobtrusive, and not messy: powerbars, trail mix, or other small snacks are fine; french fries, pizzas, and the like are not.

Email and Course Website

I will occasionally communicate with the entire class through your email linked to the blackboard site, so it is essential that you regularly check this or forward your Husky account to your preferred address.

The course is posted as **CINE1895 Introduction to Film Analysis** on **blackboard.neu.edu**. Please refer to the site regularly. It includes the course packet readings, all course handouts, lecture notes, deadline reminders, links to websites and videos, and a forum.

Evaluations

You are expected to fill out the online course evaluations known as TRACE (Teacher Rating and Course Evaluation) at the end of the semester. I value your feedback, and this is very helpful for the program and the university. Written responses that are specific and include examples are particularly welcome.

CINE 1895: Introduction to Film Analysis

Course Schedule

Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:00–11:30

Week 1: Introduction to Film Analysis

Class 1: Introduction to Film Analysis, Wednesday, September 3

Week 2: Film Culture, Production, & Exhibition

Class 2: Film Audiences & Film Analysis, Monday, September 8

Reading: Introduction: "Studying Film: Culture, Practice, Experience," 5–17.
Jeffrey Geiger and R.L. Rutsky, "Film Analysis: Approaches and Strategies," 1014–60. (CP)

Screening: *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962), 28 min.

Class 3: Film Production & Exhibition, Wednesday, September 10

Reading: Chapter 1: "Encountering Film: From Preproduction to Exhibition," 19–59.

Screening: *This Film is Not Yet Rated* (Kirby Dick, 2006), 98 min.

Week 3: *Mise-en-Scène*

Class 4: *Mise-en-Scène* 1, Monday, September 15

Reading: Chapter 2: "Exploring a Material World: *Mise-en-Scène*," 63–93.

Screening: *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Wes Anderson, 2009), 87 min. (notes collected)

Class 5: *Mise-en-Scène* 2, Wednesday, September 17

Reading: Sharon Willis, "A Theater of Interruptions," (Analysis of *Do the Right Thing*), 777–93. (CP)
Chapter 1: "The Challenges of Writing About Movies," 3–17,
& Chapter 2: "Looking at Movies," 19–32. (WAM)

Screening: *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989), 120 min.

Week 4: Cinematography

Class 6: Cinematography 1, Monday, September 22

<i>Mise-en-Scène</i> Analysis Due

Reading: Chapter 3: "Framing What We See: Cinematography," 95–131.

Screening: *Visions of Light: The Art of Cinematography* (Todd McCarthy, 1992), 92 min.

Class 7: Cinematography 2, Wednesday, September 24

Reading: Gregg Toland, "How I Broke the Rules in *Citizen Kane*," 569–72. (CP)
Chapter 3: "Analyzing Film" (Formal Analysis & Cultural Analysis), 33–62. (WAM)

Screening: *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), 119 min. (notes collected)

Week 5: Editing

Class 8: Editing 1, Monday, September 29

Reading: Chapter 4: "Relating Images: Editing," 133–175.

Screening: *The Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing* (Wendy Apple, 2004), 98 min.

Class 9: Editing 2, Wednesday, October 1

Storyboard Scene Analysis Due

Reading: Chapter 12: "Writing a Film Essay: Observations, Arguments, Research, and Analysis," 435–67.**Screening:** *Breathless / À bout de souffle* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960), 90 min. (notes collected)**Week 6: Sound****Class 10: Sound 1**, Monday, October 6**Reading:** Chapter 5: "Listening to the Cinema: Film Sound," 177–211.**Class 11: Sound 2**, Wednesday, October 8

Midterm Exam

Reading: Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space," 33–50. (CP)**Screening:** *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974), 113 min.**Week 7: Narrative Film****Columbus Day**, October 13**Class 12: Narrative Film**, Wednesday, October 15

Midterm Essay Due

Reading: Chapter 6: "Telling Stories: Narrative Films," 215–53.**Screening:** *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004), 108 min. (notes collected)**Week 8: Documentary Film****Class 13: Documentary Film History**, Monday, October 20**Reading:** Chapter 7: "Representing the Real: Documentary Films," 255–83.**Class 14: Werner Herzog & Documentary Film**, Wednesday, October 22**Reading:** John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" 1–28. (CP)

André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," 4–9. (CP)

Screening: *Grizzly Man* (Werner Herzog, 2005), 103 min.**Week 9: Experimental Film & Digital Cinema****Class 15: Experimental Film**, Monday, October 27

Documentary Analysis Due

Reading: Chapter 8: "Challenging Form: Experimental Film and New Media," 285–313.**Screening:** *Rhythmus 21* (Hans Richter, 1921), 3 min.*Anemic Cinema / Anémic cinema* (Marcel Duchamp, 1926), 6 min.*Ballet Mécanique* (Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy, 1924), 11 min.*Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, 1929), 16 min.*Meshes in the Afternoon* (Maya Deren & Alexander Hammid, 1943), 14 min.*Mothlight* (Stan Brackhage, 1963), 4 min.*Kustom Kar Kommandos* (Kenneth Anger, 1965), 3 min.*Jollies* (Sadie Benning, 1990), 11 min.*Lumière* (David Lynch, 1995), 1 min.*WGG Test* (Paul McCarthy, 2003), 5 min. (notes on all above films collected)

Class 16: Digital Cinema, Wednesday, October 29

Reading: Lev Manovich, "Synthetic Realism and Its Discontents," *The Language of New Media*, 785–801. (CP)

Screening: *Side by Side* (Christopher Kenneally, 2012), 99 min.

Week 10: Film Genres

Class 17: Genres 1: Genre Conventions, Monday, November 3

Reading: Chapter 9: "Rituals, Conventions, Archetypes, and Formulas: Movie Genres," 315–51.
Rick Altman, "Conclusion: A semantic/syntactic/pragmatic approach to genre," and Appendix, 207–26. (CP)

Class 18: Genres 2: Zombedies, Wednesday, November 5

Reading: Chapter 3: "Analyzing Film" (Genre Study), 62–74. (WAM)
Chapter 4: "Generating Ideas," 89–109. (WAM)

Screening: *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004), 99 min. (notes collected)

Week 11: Film History

Class 19: Classical Hollywood, Monday, November 10

Genre Analysis Due

Reading: Chapter 10: "History and Historiography: Hollywood and Beyond," 355–97.
Chapter 3: "Analyzing Film" (Historical Analysis), 75–85. (WAM)

Screening: *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934), 105 min. (notes collected)

Class 20: Italian Neorealism, New Waves, & Third Cinema, Wednesday, November 12

Reading: Cesare Zavattini, "A Thesis on Neo-Realism," 67–78. (CP)
Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation," 751–66. (CP)

Week 12: Film History & Film Theory

Class 21: Globalization & Contemporary Film Cultures, Monday, November 17

Reading: Tsung-Yi Huang, "*Chungking Express*: Walking with a Map of Desire in the Mirage of the Global City," 129–42. (CP)
Chapter 5: "Researching Movies," 111–121, and Chapter 6: "Developing Your Thesis," 123–132. (WAM)

Screening: *Chungking Express* / *Chung Hing sam lam* (Kar Wai Wong, 1994), 98 min. (notes collected)

Class 22: Early & Classical Film Theory, Wednesday, November 19

Reading: Chapter 11: "Reading about Film: Critical Theories and Methods" (Part 1), 399–413.
Siegfried Kracauer, "Basic Concepts," from *Theory of Film*, 147–58. (CP)
Rudolf Arnheim, "Film and Reality," 282–91. (CP)

Screening: *The Rules of the Game* / *La règle du jeu* (Jean Renoir, 1939), 110 min. (notes collected)

Week 13: Film Theory & Review

Class 23: Psychoanalysis, Apparatus Theory, Gender, & Representation, Monday, November 24

Reading: Chapter 11: "Reading about Film: Critical Theories and Methods" (Part 2), 413–33.
Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 711–22. (CP)

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: Review & Final Exam

Class 24: Course Review / Analyzing Hitchcock, Monday, December 1

Reading: Chapter 7: "Considering Structure and Organization," 133–152; Chapter 8: "Attending to Style," 153–165; and Chapter 9: "Revising Your Work," 167–177. **(WAM)**

Screening: *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), 128 min. **(notes collected)**

Class 25: Final Exam, Wednesday, December 3

Final Exam

Screening: *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), 109 min.

Final Essays Due: Wednesday, December 10, 5:00 PM. (email to n.blake@neu.edu)
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