

English 434.001, Literature and Film

Professor Gerald Duchovnay, Fall 2012

Office: Hall of Languages 326 Office Hours: TR 10:15-11:00, 12:15-1:45; Thursday 4:30-5:15

Other times by email or via appointment

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Course Description: English 434, Literature and Film, which satisfies the Visual and Performing Arts requirement of the University Studies core, examines the interaction of film and literary texts, and the qualities of each. During the semester we will consider what happens when a variety of short stories, novels, or plays are made into a film; if we approach film and literary texts differently; and how we view and read these texts. We will also consider the cultures out of which the texts come: Does it make a difference if the work was written in 1789 or 1934 and filmed in 2011, or if the story was written by an Argentinian, and filmed in London by an Italian director (*Blow Up*)?

This course will be useful to anyone who has an interest in learning more about films and literature in general, screenwriting, how the written word is translated to the screen, how the written word in another language is translated (first in print, then to the screen), and cultural and historical aspects of adaptation. The course may also be of interest to those who might use film or multi-media in a work environment such as teaching or production, those who may have an interest in directing, photography, cinematography, illustration, acting, computer graphics, and the like, or those who have an interest in literature, film, history, and culture.

No background in film studies is needed for this course. You will, however, be asked to look at and think about films more reflectively than some of you have in the past. We will read about and view the films from a variety of perspectives; your responses to these texts and close viewing and reading of the texts will be important components of this class. We will not be making films in this course.

In comparing films and literature, including some from other cultures, it is important to understand that what some individuals may find offensive, others will find commonplace. Nudity in films in Finland, Sweden, Norway, or Denmark is commonplace, and tv shows with frontal nudity is not uncommon in Latin American and European countries. We have had a Production Code and movie rating system that has changed substantially since 1933, and there are different kinds of movie rating systems in other countries. Some countries have no rating system at all; some have a movie industry controlled by the government of that country. A film that might have been banned in the U.S. ten years ago might have played widely in commercial theatres in other countries. When *Midnight Cowboy* opened in the U.S., it was rated "X." Today, it is "R" rated and many would consider it "PG-13." D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, considered literary classics, were banned in this country for decades. Adrian Lyne's *Lolita*, a remake of an earlier film by Stanley Kubrick, which was based on a novel by Vladimir Nabokov, was shown in Europe, but could not find an American distributor until Showtime was willing to purchase it for cable viewing. Later it appeared in theaters. All within a period of two years. *Huckleberry Finn*, novels by Judy Blume, the Harry Potter novels, and J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* are still banned in some high schools and some community libraries. What appears in *National Geographic* maybe banned by some schools. For another take on what it is like to read some of our "classics" in a foreign land, I recommend Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (Random House, 2003).

Films or clips to be shown, especially in the second half of the course, will be determined in part by interests of those enrolled, but some may be more recent films, or we may focus on a particular type of film. Because we will be dealing with a variety of literary works and films, from this country and elsewhere, and because most contemporary films are not rated G, or PG-13, *if your value system does not permit you to view films that may have some violence, obscene language, occasional nudity, or vivid images from our or other cultures, this course may not be for you and you may want to choose a different course.*

My presentations will involve some lecturing, but primarily we will discuss what you are reading and seeing. Our texts for this course are *Understanding Movies*, a text used on campuses nationwide, and *Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen*. As the title of the first book suggests, its purpose is to increase your understanding of movies and movie making. There are many more names and terms than you can reasonably expect to internalize during one semester. As we progress through the course, I will give you a list of names

and terms for you to know. They will be the basis for the identifications in the exams; they will also serve as a solid foundation for the understanding of film. Don't be overwhelmed by the readings, but keep up with them. Also, familiarize yourself with the layout of the text, the glossary, bibliographies, index, and illustrations. These "extras" are valuable aids to what we will be studying.

The second text is a collection of short stories that have been made into films. We will read and discuss some of the stories and see some of the films. In addition, your first paper will be based on one of the short stories in our text and the filmed version of that short story. There are other such collections, such as *Reel Future*, *Reel Horror*, and *No, But I Saw the Movie*. Some of the movie versions of the stories to be read will be available in the Media Center on campus in video or DVD format, may be rented or purchased on your own, might be available via streaming, or, if need be, may be available from your instructor.

Since 1895, thousands of films have been made in this and other countries. I do not claim to know all of them, or even a majority of them. Therefore, you may be familiar with some movies that I or others in the class have not heard of or seen. Don't hesitate to make references to those movies in class. If things go according to schedule, we will have the opportunity to see 12-14 filmed texts and some clips and shorts. You are welcome and encouraged to see as many films as you can on your own. In addition to our discussions, you will have an opportunity to explore one aspect of adaptation in your first short paper and then some other aspect of film and literary studies in the second short paper.

Course Objectives:

- 1) To become familiar with the difference between film and literary texts;
- 2) to become familiar with ways of "reading" films;
- 3) to become more skilled in discussing and evaluating movie and literary texts;
- 4) to develop greater skills in visual literacy;
- 5) to exam film as a reflection of cultures and periods of history;
- 6) to increase your knowledge of film techniques and the grammar of film.
- 7) to become familiar with some significant filmed texts.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements involved in adapting texts to film;
2. Students will demonstrate analytical skills in visual literacy and reading filmed texts;
3. Students will demonstrate a familiarity with ways of discussing and evaluating films as reflections of cultures and source texts;
4. Students will participate in a "community" interested in discussing/analyzing films beyond the surface level of narrative or character.

Textbooks: Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*. 12th edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon/Pearson, 2011.

ISBN: 978-0-205-73754-3

Harrison, Stephanie, Ed. *Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen*. New York: Three Rivers Press/Random House, 2005. ISBN: 1-4000-5314-5

Handouts

Some movies available at the Media Center.

Books at Reserve Desk or downloaded – as needed

Evaluations: Grades will be determined by two examinations, two short papers, short written responses to films, class participation, and most likely one oral presentations and one abstract. (Oral presentations will depend on class size an timing.) This is a tentative breakdown because what we will/can do will be determined in part by how many are enrolled in the class, and if the orals/abstracts fall into place. A possible breakdown is as follows:

Exam 1=15% Paper 1 =15% Written Responses to Films=15%

Exam 2=15% Paper 2 =20% Class Participation=10% Oral/Abstract=10%

Examination Policy: The mid-term and final exams are listed on the schedule. The date of the final is firmly established by the university. It will be on Tuesday, December 11. In-class tests will consist of objective, short answer and essay questions.

Make-up Exams: Except for extraordinary circumstances, make-up examinations--which I dislike and which will offer less options and thus tend to be a bit more difficult--will be given only once, at a time and place to be announced.

Final Examination: The final examination will consist of questions that focus on the materials of the last half of the term (similar in format to the first exam) and a cumulative question that asks you to bring together materials from the entire course.

Attendance: I cannot urge you strongly enough to attend all classes. Without being in class you lose the benefit of participating or listening to responses to the films. Class absences will have a negative effect on the evaluation of classroom participation. Absences will be noted by the instructor; absences in excess of three will contribute to the lowering of your grade. Six absences--unless for extraordinary circumstances and appropriate notification to your instructor--will result in your being dropped from the class. Those who are dropped from class without having attended regularly and who are on financial aid may be required to repay their financial aid. All instructors would prefer that students reflect a professional attitude toward the work of the class and attendance. If you find yourself in a situation that prevents you from attending class, especially **if you have to miss a few classes in a row, it is IMPERATIVE that you notify me about your situation.** If I do not hear from you and you have six absences, especially if you are a no-show for a week or two at a time, I will initiate the process to drop you from the class, or you will receive an "F" in the class if it is past the drop deadline.

We meet only twice a week, and material shown in class will not be re-shown in class. You might find some of these films on cable or via Netflix. It will be your responsibility to view the films you miss. The Media Center on campus (second floor Ag/IT Building, Room 212) may have copies of some of the material for you to view there. However, do not expect or anticipate if you have missed a film and that it is not available that your instructor will be able to show it to you at some other time or provide you with a copy to view. You are responsible for seeing all the material shown in class. Time permitting, I encourage you to view a film more than once on your own. Films, like other "texts" such as books, paintings are worth multiple viewings. On a rare occasion it is possible that class may run a bit longer than scheduled in order for us to complete a film or the end of a discussion, but I will try to get you out on time. If you have a problem with attendance policy or the long days, please let me know in the first week of classes. I will try to end by 4:20 each day.

Common Decency: All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. In addition, you are requested to turn off your cell phones, ipads, and other forms of technology before entering the classroom. Common courtesy says you do not receive or answer calls during class. Restrooms in the Hall of Languages are on the first and third floors. You do not need to ask your instructor for permission to leave to use the restroom.

Students with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services / Texas A&M University-Commerce/ Gee Library, Room 132 / Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148**
StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu

Papers: These assignments will be worked out with me. One paper, the first, will focus specifically on the issue of adaptation. You will be asked to choose one text from *Adaptations* or possibly some collections I may put on reserve. You will want to make sure you have access to the film adaptation of the literary text, see the movie outside of class, and do a paper and, possibly, an oral presentation on some aspect of adaptation that relates to that film. The key concept here is to remember that you are not really doing a paper on the entire film. You are focusing on maybe two minutes of film to discuss with regard to aspects of the adaptation process. Your second paper will probably focus on something we have not seen in class. We may focus on a particular genre. If we choose to do so, or, depending upon how the class moves, there is a possibility that you might do a fuller study of the film you analyzed in the first paper. We will discuss the format for the papers and topics in class as the class progresses. Approaches you might consider in dealing with aspects of

adaptation that Giannetti talks about in his book, include: how acting impacts characterization; how set design reflects theme; literary vs film censorship as applied to one film/novel or the ratings system as applied to the filmed version of a literary text; ideology and literature and film; or, aspects of color or of photography in film. These are general areas for exploration, but will need to be narrowed down as you proceed to develop a thesis.

Format: The first paper will be 5-7 pages, double-spaced, computer printed, plus documentation as needed. The first paper needs to be a close reading of the text and film; this paper does not require you to go to outside sources, but you may if you so choose. You will need to submit two copies of the finished paper. The second paper will be 6-8 pages, plus documentation. More on these assignments as we progress in the course.

Academic Honesty Statement: Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3])

Plagiarism: Our word plagiarism is derived from a word that means "to kidnap." Plagiarism is a form of kidnapping someone else's ideas, opinions, arguments, or research, and presenting them (it) as your own. Plagiarism "includes (but is not limited to) failure to indicate the source with quotation marks or footnotes where appropriate if any of the following are reproduced in the work submitted: 1. A phrase, written or musical; 2. A graphic element; 3. A proof; 4. Specific language; 5. An idea derived from the work, published or unpublished, of another person" or group; 6. material "borrowed" from the internet without attribution.

Much of the confusion and unintentional dishonesty in undergraduate papers results from ignorance or carelessness with regard to attribution of sources. When you borrow from what others have said, you are obligated to acknowledge your sources. We all solicit opinions about our writing from family, friends, or colleagues. Your indebtedness to others for sharing ideas with you about your paper or for reading and commenting on it can be indicated in an acknowledgements page accompanying each formal assignment. If you go beyond conversations with friends or colleagues to other outside sources, you need to acknowledge these sources in your paper and in a Works Cited page. If you are uncertain about your documentation, please see your instructor before you submit your paper. Intentional plagiarism will result in a zero for the work and appropriate disciplinary action.

Film Responses: I suggest that you keep a notebook or folder with responses to the films. The purpose of these responses is to get you to record on paper your initial observations and reactions about the film, a brief summary, and factual details (director, actors, year of release, etc.). In addition, this information should assist you when reviewing for exams.

Teacher Certification: TExES/TOPT (Teacher Certification Examinations)

Students who plan to teach English, Spanish, or English as a Second Language in Texas public schools must pass the appropriate state certification tests. *There may be advisors available to you regarding these exams. If so, you should contact the appropriate advisor for the exam you are taking by the beginning of your junior year, if not sooner.*

Schedule: This schedule is tentative and subject to change. **The films and clips listed are only possibilities to give you a sense of what we might be viewing.** Because of bad weather, technological snafus, campus events (speakers, banned book week, etc.) that might link to what we are doing, and a variety of other unexpected happenings, please be flexible. I will try to stay as close to the schedule as possible regarding your exams, readings, and paper due dates, but there most likely will be changes related to the actual films or clips, especially with regard to film choices for the second half of the semester.

Key Dates: First set of orals – October 9 & 11

First paper and abstract to be submitted (two copies) – Oct. 11 (can submit earlier)

Mid-term examination--October 18

Second set of orals – Dec. 4 & 6

Second paper due (two copies) – Dec. 6
Final Examination, Tuesday, Dec. 11, 1:15-4:00 p.m.

Week 1 (Aug 28 & Aug 30)

Info Sheet + Course Syllabus + Pre-Assessment

Looking at Film/Reading Film

sample clip

Assignment for Thursday:

For Next Time, Read: The Course Syllabus, plus *Adaptations*, xv-xix, 211-213 (bottom of page),
and "Stage to Lordsburg," 218-230

For Next Time: Read: Giannetti, pp. 396-400, on Literary Adaptations
Giannetti, Chapter 8, Story, pp. 330-366

Aug 30 Discussion of Syllabus/Course Elements of Fiction

Discussion/Response to "Stage to Lordsburg" & *Stagecoach*

Looking at Filmed Fiction

Stagecoach

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Story, pp. 330-366

Week 2 (Sept. 4 & Sept. 6) (Banned Books Week)

Discussion: westerns, traits, *Stagecoach*

Discussion--Paper 1 and Orals/Abstracts

Handout: Paper/Orals / Film Choice

Anatomy of a Scene: *The Cooler*
clip, Film Analysis, *Juno*

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 9, Writing, 367-381

Sept. 6 Film & Literature Analysis (again)

Discussion of Paper/Giannetti, Chpt. 8 & 9

Westerns (American Cinema Series)/or TBA

List of Terms, Unit 1 (Giannetti) + other docs

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 9, Writing, 381-401

: Review *Great Expectations* handout

Week 3 (Sept.11 & Sept. 13)

Screenwriting /Film & Literature

Great Expectations

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 1, "Photography," 2-22

Sept. 13– Discussion: *Great Expectations*

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Photography, 22-43

Week 4 (Sept. 18 & 20)

Sept. 18 – From the Writers Point of View: *Adaptation*

Adaptation, 2002

Aspects of Filmmaking & Story Telling – Point of View

For Next Time, Read:: Giannetti, Chapter 2, *Mise en Scène*, 44--66

Sept. 20 – Discussion of *Adaptation*

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 2, *Mise en Scène*, 67-91

Adaptations, "Rear Window" (aka "It Had to be Murder"), 67-103

Week 5 (Sept 25 & Sept. 27)

Another Way of Looking?

Rear Window, 1954

Discussion: Rear Window/Pure Cinema/Film Openings

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 7, "Drama," 286-303

Scripts, Dialogue. Theatre, & Film

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 7, "Drama," 303-330

Adaptations, "The Cyclists Raid" 284-295

Week 6 (Oct 2 & Oct 4)

Discussion: "The Cyclist's Raid"

Paper and Oral Presentation Info – sample paper; abstract handouts
For Next Time, Read: Chapter 6, "Acting," 237-268

The Wild One, 1954

Oct. 4 – Acting & Director Greats from the Hollywood Golden Age

Sample Papers/Discussion / Orals Preparation

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 6, "Acting," 268-287

Brando documentary

Week 7 (Oct. 9 & Oct. 11)

Oral Presentations 2-4:15

oral presentations

Oct. 11 More presentations

Exam Study Questions

For Next Time, Film (Based on orals?)

oral presentations

Week 8 (Oct. 16 & Oct. 18)

Oct 16 - Topic/Film to be announced

Oct 18-- Mid Term Examination

Read for Next Time: Chapter 3, Giannetti, "Movement," 92-131

Wk 9 Oct 23 & Oct. 25)

Oct. 23 Course Direction

The Killers, 1946 or TBA

Genre Adaptations

Handouts: Unit 2, Terms/Paper 2 Discussion/How to Find Sources

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 11, Critique, 447-486

Oct. 25 Intro. *The Killers*, 1964 + Film Genre Selection

The Killers, 1964 or TBA

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 4, "Editing," 131-155

Week 10 (Oct 30 & Nov. 1)

Oct. 30 Film Noir + Film Genres

Genre Films (Doc)

Discussion of *The Killers*

Assignment: Chapter 4, "Editing," 155-200

: Read: *Adaptations*, 370-382, "Bringing Up Baby"

Nov. 1 Screwball Comedy & Acting

Bringing Up Baby or TBA

Assignment: Responses to *Bringing Up Baby*

: Read for next time, Giannetti, Chapter 3, "Movement," 92-130

Week 11 (Nov. 6 & Nov. 8)

Nov. 6 Discussion: Form and Content

Types of Adaptations – Discussion

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 5, Sound, 201-236

TBA

Read: *Adaptations*, 257-264 (up to *Ghost World*)

Nov. 8 Comedy, Comics, and Film

American Splendor or TBA

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 10, Ideology /Viewer and Film, 402-428

Week 12 (Nov. 13 & 15)

Nov. 13--Discussion

For Next Time, Read: Giannetti, Chapter 10, Ideology, 428-445

The Lives of Others

Nov. 15--Ideology and Film

For Next Time, review Giannetti's chapter 7 on Drama

Week 13 (Nov. 20 & Nov. 22)

Drama, Acting, and Film

Streetcar Named Desire or TBA

Thanksgiving--no class

Week 14 (Nov. 27 & Nov 29)

-- Film, Politics, History, and Culture

Official Story or TBA

Handouts: Paraphrasing, Documenting

Nov. 29 Docudrama/Adaptation/Documentary

The Class (French) or *Rabbit Proof Fence*

Week 15 (Dec. 4 & Dec. 6)

All Papers Due, 2 Copies Due; All abstracts due (copies for everyone)

Oral Presentations/Abstracts

Course Evaluations on line / Handouts: Possible Exam Questions for Final

Week 16 -- Dec. 11---- Final Examination, 1:15-4:00 pm

8/23/2012