

English 530.001, History of Narrative Film

Professor Gerald Duchovnay

Spring 2013 Thurs 4:30-7:10, HL 203

Office: Hall of Languages 326

Office Hours: TH, 10:15-11, 12:15-1:45; T, 4:30-5:00. Other times by appointment.

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Course Description: English 530, History of Narrative Film, will examine the development of key moments and representative films in U.S. and international film history from the last one hundred and ten years. In the U. S. and abroad, this period has produced thousands of feature films and documentaries that entertained or educated, or have done both. They also deal with and create history and myths about people and culture. I do not claim to know all of the films made during the history of narrative film. You may very well be familiar with 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 segments of, or complete features, of a dozen historically and culturally significant films as well as clips, shorts, and segments of some documentaries.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will develop an awareness of a key films and film movements in narrative film history;
2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of film concepts (i.e., the "grammar of film") related to films viewed, readings, and discussions;
3. Students will produce texts that demonstrate visual literacy (essays, responses, oral presentations);
4. Students will participate in a community interested in discussing/analyzing films beyond the surface level of narrative and character.

Related Course Objectives:

To become more knowledgeable in various ways of "reading" film aesthetics;

To become more skilled in understanding the arc of narrative film history;

To become familiar with key aspects of film aesthetics as reflected in individual films;

To prepare a thoughtful conference- or journal-ready study of some aspect of one or more films.

Textbook: Mast, Gerald and Bruce F. Kawin. *A Short History of the Movies*. 11th Edition. Boston: Longman, 2010. ISBN 9780205755578

For brief summaries, credits, actors, directors, and reviews of particular films, you might want to start with: Imdb.com (Internet Movie database.com)

For other useful film textbooks (on reserve):

Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*. 11th edition. Boston: Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice-Hall, 2008. A very readable overview of what to consider with regard to sound, photography, editing, movement, acting, writing, ideology and the like in film studies.

Giannetti, Louis and Scott Eyman. *Flashback: A Brief History of Film*. 6th Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2010. On reserve. Breaks down film history into decades, U.S. and International. Good for an overview of the decades and film history. Less "scholarly" than the Mast and Kawin text.

Gee Library/Reserves: A number of film books related to film history and film theory can be found on my reserve lists for English 530 and English 432.

Attendance: Please try to attend all classes. Without being in class you lose the benefit of participating or listening to responses to the films. However, if you are sick, contagious, or been with others who have been and you consider yourself a carrier of disease, don't come to class. There has been enough illness going around even before our semester begins. Unless there are meaningful reasons for your absences, class absences will have a negative effect on the evaluation of classroom participation. Absences in excess of three will contribute to the lowering of your grade. After six absences you will be dropped from the class. If there are truly extraordinary circumstances, it is incumbent upon you to notify me about your situation to see if you are able to remain in the class. *It is my understanding that those who are dropped from class without having attended regularly and who are on financial aid may be required to repay their financial aid.*

We meet only once a week, and it is unlikely that material shown in class will be re-shown at a future time. Some of the films we will be seeing are on DVD and are available from Youtube, Netflix, Hastings, Blockbusters, or other sources (including your classmates). Some, by coincidence, may be shown on various movie channels such as Turner Classic Movies, Showtime, Cinemax, or others. Remember that those presented with commercials may be edited for tv, and even, occasionally, stations without commercials may edit a film for content or length. Some of the films may be available at the Media Center on campus. (Also a place to study films for your work if the films are on DVD or video and you don't have access to equipment.) I encourage you to view a film more than once. As you read about film history, you will discover how filmmakers such as Tarantino, Scorsese, Truffaut, Godard and countless others came to film by carefully watching films, some as many as twenty times or more. Occasionally, it is possible that classes may run a bit longer than scheduled. Since some of you have rides or another graduate class immediately after this one, I will try not to let that happen. And if you have to leave, you should leave. I do not intentionally try to keep you over.

Evaluations: Grades will be determined by periodic responses to films or readings, an extended or synthesized response to a question or two about the films and readings (due around midterm), either one paper (8-10 pages) suitable for conference presentation or a draft of a scholarly article (18-24 pages), an annotated bibliography accompanying the final paper (to include a minimum of ten sources, plus three substantive reviews--350 words or more--you found on your movie, class participation, and one or two oral presentation. One presentation will serve as an introduction to a film or film movement, and the second will be a brief commentary on your final project. Final Paper: 25%; Annotated Bibliography: 10%; Responses: 20%; Mid Semester Response 20%; Oral presentations: *10-15%; Class Participation: *10-15%. (*Weight of percentages will vary depending upon whether there will be one or two oral presentations.)

Final Examination: Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, there will be no final examination in this course.

Presentations and Final Paper: As I envision the presentations, each of you will do a brief commentary on one film or film movement we will be considering during the semester and lead a discussion on that film or film movement. This may occur either before we see a film (in or out of class) or after we have seen it. The second presentation will be a brief commentary on your work for the final paper. The focus of the final papers will be on a film you have chosen from the 1950s. Most often that decade is overlooked or slighted, given the post-war period, the ascendancy of television, the Renaissance of U.S. films in the 60s and 70s, and the growing influence of international cinema. By focusing on one decade, we will glean a better understanding of the history and culture of the period, and, should you opt to do so, it will help the group to form panels for conference presentations.

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 before entering the classroom. *Common courtesy says you do not receive or answer calls during class. And no text messaging in class.* If you are expecting an emergency call, please let me know ahead of time, put your phone on vibrator mode, and sit close to the exit so you can leave discreetly to take the call. One exception: If you are using your phone or tablet to assist in the work we are doing in class, then it can remain on.

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

The Writing Center. The Writing Center is dedicated to helping writers take advantage of all opportunities for learning related to the writing process; to that end, the Center can assist writers at any stage of the writing process. In addition to your instructor, this is the place to go for additional assistance with your reading and writing projects at TAMU-Commerce. The Center can help you with your papers and digital texts for your classes. The Center is on the ground floor of the Hall of Languages (room 103), and maybe available on line or at the Gee Library. To schedule an appointment, come to HL 103 or call (903) 886-5280 to check out the hours or to see if there is on-line assistance available. DON'T, though, wait until the last minute to get assistance.

Class Schedule: The key words here are tentative and flexibility. We meet only once a week and will need to make very good use of all available class time. Primarily we will discuss what you are reading and seeing. I hope we can see one feature or part of a feature each week, and have presentations on each one. Because of logistics, availability, time constraints, the failure of technology, possible guests, and your preferences, we may make changes as we progress during the semester.

Read Before First Class Meeting, Mast, Chpt 1, Introductory Assumptions, pp. 1-9. To be discussed duringt the first class.

Week 1

1/17 Course Introduction: Overview Film/TBA
Early Cinema
Read for Next Time: Mast, Chpts 3 &4

Week 2

1/24 Early Cinema: The Pioneers Film/TBA
Read for Next Time: Mast, Chpt 5, Mast 151-168

Week 3

1/31 Early Film Comedy Film/TBA
Read for Next Time: Mast, Chpt. 7&8

Week 4

2/7 German Expressionism & Soviet Montage Film/TBA
Read for Next Time: Mast, Chpts 9 & 11

<u>Week 5</u> 2/14	Coming of Sound & Studio System Read for Next Time: Mast, Chpt 11 (again)	Film/TBA
<u>Week 6</u> 2/21	Studio System and Film Genres Read for Next Time: Mast, Chpt 12	Film/TBA
<u>Week 7</u> 2/28	The Forties/War and its Aftermath Read for Next Time: Mast, Chpt 13	Film/TBA
<u>Week 8</u> 3/7	Changes Abroad Mid-semester Response Due	Film/TBA
<u>Week 9--</u>	3/14 Spring Break Read for Next Class Meeting: Mast, Chpt 14	
Week 10 3/21	National Cinemas/ Challenges to the U.S. Industry Read for Next Time: Mast, Chpt. 15	Film/TBA
<u>Week 11</u> 3/28	Major Changes in Hollywood Read for Next Time: Mast, Chpt. 17	Film/TBA
<u>Week 12</u> 4/4	The New Hollywood/Genres Reborn?	Film/TBA
<u>Week 13</u> 4/11	Hollywood's Competition: The Overseas Market	Film/TBA
<u>Week 14</u> 4/18	International Cinema vs American Imperialism	Film/TBA
<u>Week 15</u> 4/25	Presentations + Annotated Bibliography Due	
<u>Week 16</u> 5/2	Presentations + Final Papers Due	
Week 17 5/9	Finals Week	