

HUM 324: Introduction to Film

Fall 2011, Mondays, 5:30pm – 8:00pm, Belknap

Instructor: L. Andrew Cooper (lacoop05@louisville.edu)
Bingham 201A (502-852-8820), Humanities (502-852-6805)
Office Hours: M/W 12pm-2pm and by appointment

Course Description

Enrollment in HUM 324 requires sophomore standing.

U of L's course catalog specifies that HUM 324 introduces "the structural, thematic, and historical elements of film as an art form and as a cultural production." Film has been a dominant form of cultural expression for more than a century, so this course can't introduce every aspect of film as a medium and as an art form. What it *can* do is give you a solid foundation for thinking and communicating about film. By learning key terms and concepts while developing strategies for analyzing and interpreting the films you see, you will develop a deeper understanding of both the films themselves and their relationships with the cultures that produce them.

Course Materials

Required Textbook

Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 9th edition.
ISBN 978-0-07-338616-4

Films

The films we watch and discuss in this course are readily available to rent, stream, or buy, and some of them might be available at the library. Although you are not required to purchase copies of the films, you will need copies you can use for screen shots to include in posters, papers, and other assignments. I also recommend seeing the films in groups. Solo viewing has recently become more common, but film is still an intrinsically social art form, so seeing the films with others might enhance your appreciation.

Computer and Software

You need a computer with word processing and presentation software, such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint. You also need a media player capable of capturing still images from films, such as the VLC media player, which is available online to download for free. Digital editing software such as iMovie and Final Cut is useful but not required because you can access it at Ekstrom Library's Digital Media Suite. You must also regularly check your U of L email and review materials on this class's Blackboard site. Portable computing devices (e.g. laptops) are useful in class but not required.

Additional Materials

Some assignments might call for additional materials that involve additional expense. For example, the Shot-by-Shot Analysis assignment requires you to print a poster (commercial services can be expensive—try printing services at the [Miller IT Center](#), 502-852-6661, ulprint@louisville.edu) and mount it temporarily to a foam board or other hard backing that you provide.

Outcomes

The table below details the learning outcomes associated with this course. Emphases are not mutually exclusive. For example, virtually all outcomes relate directly or indirectly to critical thinking.

Emphasis	Outcomes
Rhetoric Filmmakers and film critics use specific vocabulary and techniques to make meaning from sounds and images. Films also function as rhetorical interventions in cultural discourses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate comprehension and mastery of film vocabulary through written and spoken communication, including quizzes, essays, and class discussions • Critique films' histories of and capacities for rhetorical intervention • Evaluate films through multimedia reviews that state and defend specific claims through rhetorical analysis of words and images
Culture, History, and Genre Films reflect the diverse cultures that produce and receive them, and they relate to the history of film as a whole as well as the conventions of specific film genres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and explain ways history, genre, and cultural diversity affect form, narrative, reception, and interpretation • Discuss how personal knowledge of and experience with films relate to the cultures, histories, and genres introduced in class • Interpret films' significance in relation to their historical and cultural contexts
Critical Thinking Understanding and interpreting films requires both attention to details (such as frames and shots) and attention to larger structures (such as sequences and diegesis).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze films through papers, presentations, and films • Apply theoretical perspectives to cinematic texts • Synthesize perspectives and information through unified arguments • Enjoy films from formal, aesthetic, historical, generic, and cultural perspectives

Assignments

Major Assignments (850 points total)

The outcomes in Table 1 refer to the following major assignments, which we will discuss in more detail during class:

1. **Interpretive Essay (individual effort, 150 points).** Write an essay of 1250-1500 words (approximately 5-6 pages) exploring how a film discussed in class reflects on its specific historical and/or cultural context. Submit a brief abstract a week before the due date.
2. **Shot-by-Shot Analysis (individual effort, 150 points).** Create a poster (using PowerPoint or other software) that examines a significant scene or sequence in one of the assigned films. Using still images, brief bullet points, and oral discussion, present an argument about how narrative, mise-en-scene, cinematography, and editing combine to make the scene meaningful.
3. **Film Review (individual effort, 100 points).** Post a 500-750 word (2-3 page) review on Blackboard that evaluates a film based on its achievements (or lack of achievement) in narrative, mise-en-scene, cinematography, acting, editing, and/or sound. Discuss the review in class.
4. **Film Review Responses (individual effort, 50 points total).** Respond briefly to ten film reviews on Blackboard during ten different weeks of class.
5. **Short Film (group and individual efforts, 300 points total).** Create a 5-7 minute film that reflects on and demonstrates the rhetoric, techniques, and conventions we have studied.
 - a. *Proposal (50 points, group).* Craft a 2-3 page proposal that describes your film and explains why you have chosen your specific topic and approach. Include storyboards.
 - b. *Film (200 points, group).* The film can take one of two forms:
 - i. *Documentary.* Choose a movie and explain why it deserves further study.
 - ii. *Fiction.* Produce either a stand-alone short fictional film or a scene you imagine as part of a larger fictional film.

After submitting the project, group members will submit evaluations of the group's performance. Using these evaluations as well as my own observations, I will assign grades for the film; therefore, individuals' grades might vary.

- c. *Rationale (50 points, individual)*. Craft a detailed rationale about how your video reflects on and demonstrates the rhetoric, techniques, and conventions we have studied.
6. **Final Exam (individual effort, 100 points)**. Demonstrate your knowledge of film rhetoric, analytical technique, and the films we have studied.

Participation (150 points total)

Participation in class discussions and activities is mandatory. Demonstrate your knowledge of the readings and films, and share your insights. During class on several unannounced (but usually predictable) occasions, you will complete quizzes on Blackboard that assess your knowledge of assigned readings. Quizzes will focus primarily on terminology. Maintaining class decorum is part of participation: noisy cell phones, disrespectful behavior, and other intrusions lower productivity and, therefore, your grade. "Disrespectful behavior" includes harassment of any kind, directed either at peers or at the instructor. This course will foster discussions of sensitive issues such as gender, race, and sexuality. All viewpoints are welcome, but as individuals express themselves, they should avoid abusive or insulting language.

Course Policies

Grading

Each assignment has a point value. Assignments add up to a total of 1000 points. The following list shows the letter grades linked to percentages of available points earned, with a description of the work:

- A** (90-100), Exceeds expectations for argument, evidence, organization, and design
- B** (80-89), Meets expectations, with notable merit in some of the categories listed above
- C** (70-79), Meets expectations
- D** (60-69), Meets most expectations, with some problems or omissions
- F** (0-59), Meets few expectations, with significant problems or omissions

Failure to complete an assignment will result in 0 points. +/- grades are +/- 3 points from the center of the grade's range. For example, a 95 is an A, a 98 is an A+, and a 92 is an A-.

Attendance

Attendance is required. If you must miss class, email me ahead of time. You have only two "freebie" days, classes you may miss without grade penalties. For other absences, you must have made a prior arrangement with me or have official documentation of an illness, injury, legal obligation, or university-sponsored activity or event that keeps you from class. I will deduct 25 points from your grade for each non-freebie, undocumented absence. Being late to class counts as either a half or a whole absence, depending on how late you are. *Missing more than 25% of our class meetings for any reason could result in grade penalties and/or failure.*

Punctual Work

Unless I approve a deadline extension in advance, which is unlikely, I will not accept major assignments after the deadline. You are responsible for all information covered during every class meeting.

Academic Conduct

Academic dishonesty is prohibited at the University of Louisville. It is a serious offense because it diminishes the quality of scholarship, makes accurate evaluation of student progress impossible, and defrauds those in society who must ultimately depend upon the knowledge and integrity of the institution and its students and faculty. For more information, see the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) (Sections 5 and 6).

Using Laptop Computers and Other Digital Devices

You may only use your laptop and other digital devices for class activities and note-taking. Using such devices during class for other activities—such as email, web-surfing, social media, or games—is rude and strictly prohibited. Inappropriate laptop use may result in grade penalties and/or expulsion from class.

Access

The University of Louisville is committed to providing access to programs and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and require accommodation to participate and complete requirements for this class, notify me immediately and contact the Disability Resource Center (Stevenson Hall, Room 119, 852-6938) for verification of eligibility and determination of specific accommodations.

Religious Holy Days and Observances

If your religious observances might require an adjustment in course work, please submit your request(s) to me in writing during the first two weeks of the semester.

Sexual Harassment

The University of Louisville strives to maintain the campus free of all forms of illegal discrimination as a place of work and study for faculty, staff, and students. Sexual harassment is unacceptable, and unlawful conduct and will not be tolerated in the workplace and the educational environment. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment, even when carried out through computers or other electronic communications systems. See the [Affirmative Action policy](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the U of L [Computer Account Usage Agreement](#).

Diversity

The University of Louisville strives to foster and sustain an environment of inclusiveness that empowers us all to achieve our highest potential without fear of prejudice or bias. We commit ourselves to building an exemplary educational community that offers a nurturing and challenging intellectual climate, a respect for the spectrum of human diversity, and a genuine understanding of the many differences—including race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, disability, religion, national origin or military status—that enrich a vibrant metropolitan research university. We expect every member of our academic family to embrace the underlying values of this vision and to demonstrate a strong commitment to attracting, retaining and supporting students, faculty and staff who reflect the diversity of our larger society.

The Fine Print

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives, to compensate for missed classes, or for similar reasons. I exercise this right rarely, but I often provide more detailed information during class. This syllabus is your guide. Keep it. Know it. Love it.

Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

NOTE: "FA" refers to pages in Bordwell and Thompson's *Film Art*. Viewing and reading should be completed *prior* to the class meeting for which they are indicated.

Week	Reading and Viewing Assignments	Due Dates and Screenings
Mon. Aug. 22	[Introduction]	
Fri. Aug 26		Film Review 1
Mon. Aug. 29	<i>Inception</i> , FA chs. 1 – 3	
Mon. Sept. 5	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS	
Fri. Sept. 9		Film Review 2
Mon. Sept. 12	<i>The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari</i> ; FA ch. 4 AND pp. 443 – 450, 454 – 467	
Fri. Sept. 16		Film Review 3
Mon. Sept. 19	<i>Rope</i> ; FA ch. 5, Miller, "Anal Rope"	Essay Abstract
Fri. Sept. 23		Film Review 4
Mon. Sept. 26	<i>Memento</i> ; FA ch. 6 AND pp. 467 – 469 Sibielski, "Postmodern Narrative"	Interpretive Essay
Fri. Sept. 30		Film Review 5
Mon. Oct. 3	<i>Singin' in the Rain</i> ; FA ch. 7 AND pp.470 – 473	
Mon. Oct. 10	MID-TERM BREAK – NO CLASS	
Fri. Oct. 14		Film Review 6
Mon. Oct. 17	<i>This Film Is Not Yet Rated</i> ; FA ch. 10	Shot-by-Shot Draft
Fri. Oct. 21		
Mon. Oct. 24	POSTER SESSION	Shot-by-Shot Final
Fri. Oct. 28		Film Review 7
Mon. Oct. 31	<i>Halloween</i> ; FA ch. 9	
Fri. Nov. 4		Film Proposal Film Review 8
Mon. Nov. 7	<i>The Terminator</i> ; Friedman, "Changes"	
Fri. Nov. 11		Film Review 9
Mon. Nov. 14	<i>Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon</i> ; FA 482 – 485; Chan, "The Global Return"	
Fri. Nov. 18		Film Review 10 AND 11
Mon. Nov. 21	<i>Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle</i>	
Mon. Nov. 28	<i>Black Swan</i>	
Mon. Dec. 5	SHORT FILMS SCREENED IN CLASS	Film, Rationale, Group Eval
Mon. DEC. 12	EXAM: 5:30pm – 8:00pm	

PLEASE READ, SIGN, AND RETURN THESE STATEMENTS TO DR. COOPER.

I affirm that I have read the entire syllabus and policy sheet for HUM 324 and understand the information and the responsibilities specified.

print name

signature

date

DIRECTIONS: Read carefully and check all that apply.

- I give my instructor, Dr. L. Andrew Cooper, permission to use copies of the work I do for this course as examples in this and other courses, as examples in presentations, and in print and electronic publications. I understand that permission is optional and will have no influence on my grade.
- I only give my instructor, Dr. L. Andrew Cooper, permission to use copies of the *collaborative* work I do in this course, such as documents and videos I create through cooperation with other students. I understand that permission is optional and will have no influence on my grade.
- I do NOT give my instructor, Dr. L. Andrew Cooper, permission to use copies of the work I do for this course as examples in this and other courses, as examples in presentations, and in print and electronic publications. I understand that permission is optional and will have no influence on my grade.

Please indicate whether you want to be acknowledged if your work is used:

- Please use my name in association with my work.
- Please use my work, but do NOT acknowledge me.

If your instructor decides to use your work, he may wish to contact you. Please provide your contact information below:

print name

signature

email address

phone number

print permanent address

Date