

HUM 524/624: Special Topics in Film Study
Film Adaptations and Remakes
Spring 2012, Tues., 4:00pm – 6:45pm, Belknap, LF 102

Instructor: L. Andrew Cooper (lacoop05@louisville.edu)
Bingham 201A (502-852-8820), Humanities (502-852-6805)
Office Hours: 2:30 – 3:30pm, and by appointment

Course Description

Enrollment in HUM 524 requires junior standing.

U of L's course catalog specifies that HUM 524 or HUM 624 is "an in-depth study on a specific topic" that "may be repeated up to three times for different topics." This course's topic is film adaptations and remakes. While some of the earliest narrative films were adapted from sources in other media, particularly print, this topic has become increasingly important in film and media studies because of questions related to "media convergence" as well as the growing dominance of visual and digital media over printed, alphabetic texts. For years, what adaptation studies generally calls the problem of fidelity has made "not as good as the book" the rote critical evaluation of film adaptations of literary sources, and in turn the traditional scholarly approach has been to discuss the various fidelities and infidelities of adapted texts to their sources. Now, a time when a book's success arguably depends on its connections to other media, fidelity no longer seems like a sufficient paradigm for understanding textual relations and transformations. Similarly, critics' knee-jerk response to remakes has long been to decry their profit-motivated lack of originality, but at a time when eroding boundaries between media make claims about originals and duplicates increasingly unintelligible, such condemnations might seem, at best, overly simplistic. This course surveys critical approaches to adaptations—or, perhaps, adaptive media in general—that express, challenge, and extend the ideas (and ideologies) of fidelity.

Course Materials

Required Texts

Assigned readings will mostly be available online, either as PDFs or links to external web sources available via the course's Blackboard site. You must also get a copy of Robert Bloch's novel *Psycho*, readily available in many editions.

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 on reserve 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 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 Theoretical Visions assignment requires creating a video. You may check out cameras for free at the library, but you might need to buy your own memory card(s) and DVD.

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
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply theories and critical perspectives through arguments that explain how others’ claims support original theses about specific films. Students in 624 should demonstrate some mastery of relevant disciplinary trends. • Interrogate rhetorics of “fidelity” and “originality” as they apply to notions of adaptation and remaking. • Participate in discussions related to the adaptation studies. Students in 624 should use rhetoric appropriate for professional forums (such as scholarly publication).
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret specific films’ chronological, contextual, and intertextual relationships with other media artifacts. Students in 624 should select texts and perspectives relevant to their thesis/dissertation specialization. • Articulate ideas about fidelity, originality, adaptation, and remaking in ways that acknowledge them as historical/cultural constructs laden with ideological assumptions. • Understand film history within a broader context of mediated expression.
<p>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).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop critical methods for approaching adaptations and remakes, including but going beyond fidelity criticism. Students in 624 should relate their work to hermeneutical and/or empirical methodologies in their fields. • Analyze details from specific texts to support larger claims. • Discuss ways in which adaptation and remaking highlight and dismantle traditional categorizations of media and genre.

Assignments

Major Assignments (800 points total)

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

1. **Discussion Stakes (individual effort, 30 points per response, 10 responses, 300 points total)**
 Write and be prepared to discuss at least three ways in which an assigned text formally or thematically reflects on some sense of “adaptation” related to media and/or cultural contexts.
2. **Negotiating Evolution (group effort, 100 points).** Sign up for a week in which you will join two other students in a presentation that highlights key ideas from the week’s assigned readings and films. Present your own ideas informally (about 10 minutes) and then lead discussion (about 10 more minutes, longer if it goes well). The presentation should combine visuals (such as a PowerPoint or Prezi) with oral argument. The discussion leadership should draw explicitly from

classmates' postings for the Discussion Stakes assignment. Before giving your presentation, meet with me at an appointed time to discuss your ideas.

3. **Adaptive Thinking (individual effort, 200 points total).** Write a critical analysis of a pair of texts you argue relate to each other as “adaptation” and/or “remake.” What is significant about this relationship? For 524, the pair must be on the syllabus, and the paper should be ~2000 words. For 624, the pair may come from your own research but must receive analysis stemming from theories and critical methods discussed in class. It should be ~3500 words, with an eye toward future expansion.
4. **Critical Transformation (group and individual efforts, 200 points).** Adapt a group’s individually-written essays into a documentary film.

Participation (200 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 unannounced (but usually predictable) occasions, you might complete quizzes that assess your knowledge of assigned readings. 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 at least a third of an absence, depending on how late you are. Showing up late is usually better than not showing up. *Missing more than 25% of our class meetings for any reason could result in automatic failure.*

Punctual Work

Unless I approve a deadline extension in advance, which is unlikely but possible, I will not accept major assignments after the deadline. You are responsible for all information 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 device 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: Names followed by numbers refer to readings available via Blackboard. Viewing and reading should be completed *prior* to the class meeting for which they are indicated.

Week	Reading and Viewing Assignments	Due Dates
Tue., Jan. 8	[Intro]	
Tue., Jan. 15	Jonze, <i>Adaptation</i> (2002) Bazin, "Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest" Stam, "Beyond Fidelity" Tomasulo, " <i>Adaptation</i> as Adaptation"	Discussion Stakes 1
Tue., Jan. 22	Forster, Howard's End (1910) Hutcheons, from <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i>	Discussion Stakes 2 Negotiating Evolution 1
Tue., Jan. 29	Ivory, <i>Howard's End</i> (1992) Hutcheons, from <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i>	Discussion Stakes 3 Negotiating Evolution 2
Tue., Feb. 5	Bloch, <i>Psycho</i> (1959) Hitchcock, <i>Psycho</i> (1960)	Discussion Stakes 4 Negotiating Evolution 3
Tue., Feb. 12	Van Sant, <i>Psycho</i> (1998) Wollen on auteurs; Benjamin on auras; Leitch, "Twice-Told Tales," "Hitchcock without Hitchcock"	Discussion Stakes 5 Negotiating Evolution 4
Tue., Feb. 19	Hitchcock, <i>The Man Who Knew Too Much</i> (1934) Hitchcock, <i>The Man Who Knew Too Much</i> (1955) McDougal, "The Director Who Knew Too Much"	Discussion Stakes 6 Negotiating Evolution 5
Tue., Feb. 26	Oz, <i>Death at a Funeral</i> (2007); LaBute, <i>Death at a Funeral</i> (2010) Forrest and Koos, "Reviewing Remakes" ; Durham, "Three Takes on Motherhood"	Discussion Stakes 7 Negotiating Evolution 6
Tue., Mar. 5	Beowulf (8 th Century) Zemeckis, <i>Beowulf</i> (2007)	Discussion Stakes 8 Negotiating Evolution 7
Tue., Mar. 12	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS	
Tue., Mar. 19	Lovecraft, At the Mountains of Madness Carroll, "Introduction: Textual Infidelities"	Adaptive Thinking Due
Tue., Mar. 26	Campbell, " Who Goes There? " Nyby [Hawks?] <i>The Thing from Another World</i> (1951)	Discussion Stakes 9
Tue., Apr. 2	Carpenter, <i>The Thing</i> (1982) Lukas and Marmysz, "Horror, Science Fiction and Fantasy Films Remade"	Discussion Stakes 10 Negotiating Evolution 8
Tue., Apr. 9	Heijningen, <i>The Thing</i> (2011) Brady, "Rethinking Remakes"	
Tue., Apr. 16	PROJECT PRESENTATIONS	Critical Transformations Due

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

I affirm that I have read the entire syllabus and policy sheet for HUM 524/624 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