

**Introduction to Film Analysis—Fall 20xx**  
**FILM / ENGL 251-500**  
**Description, Policies and Requirements**

**Dr. Juan J. Alonzo, Associate Professor**  
**Bolton Hall 303, 845-2786**  
**LAAH 540, 845-8302**  
**[jjalonzo@tamu.edu](mailto:jjalonzo@tamu.edu)**  
**Office Hours: T, Th 3:30-5:00**

**Catalogue Description:** Fundamental aspects of film analysis and criticism. Cross-listed with ENGL 251.

**Fall 2012 Description:** Like the film medium itself, the study of motion pictures has a long and diverse tradition, and this course will introduce you to the methods of film analysis. Our focus will be to gain an understanding of the various ways movies as artistic visual products create meaning and are embedded within a social context. We will examine the elements of film form, including narrative structure, camera techniques, editing, sound, lighting, *mis-en-scène*, and acting; we will investigate how these elements come together to create film aesthetics and the production of meaning. We will explore the social contexts of film production, including film's relation to other artistic movements and the importance of industrial systems and national cinemas in the creation of certain kinds of movies. We will pay close attention to the concept of genre and the evolution of genre within social contexts. While our focus will be narrative fiction films, we will also dip into documentary and experimental cinema.

The ultimate goal of the class is to help you understand that movies are not merely entertainment to be passively consumed. Film is an art form that produces meaning and is worthy of aesthetic analysis.

**Learning Outcomes. At the end of the course, students will be able to:**

1. Identify the discrete formal elements that define film as an art form in short and long essays, quizzes, and the midterm exam.
2. Apply an understanding of the elements of film form to critical analysis of movies.
3. Demonstrate the connection between individual works and their social, cultural, and historical contexts in the midterm exam and in an extended critical essay.
4. Make distinctions among the variety of film genres and the particular aesthetic principles that define these genres and produce meaning.
5. Apply critical reading skills to the writing of analytical essays.
6. Work collaboratively to make a short narrative film.

**Core Curriculum Objectives:**

*Critical Thinking Skills (CTS):* The course will enhance critical thinking skills through the formal analysis of cinematic texts and the reading of texts relating to film aesthetics.

*Communication Skills (CS):* The course enhances communication skills through small and large group discussion of ideas, issues, questions, and themes central to film analysis and appreciation.

*Teamwork (TW)*: The course will enhance students' ability to consider different points of view and to integrate the ideas of others into a cohesive work product.

*Social Responsibility (SR)*: The course enhances social responsibility by helping students to make a connection between film as an artistic medium and film as a medium of social and cultural change, film as a documenter of history, and film an active participant in social transformation.

### **Evaluation of Core Objectives**

CTS: The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on written work, a midterm exam and class participation. Written work and the midterm exam will be essay-based and will require students to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the course reading and from film clips.

CS: Communication skills will be evaluated through written, oral, and audio-visual creative work. Each form of communication will carry criteria particular to its nature.

TW: The course will enhance students' ability to consider different points of view and to work collaboratively with others to create a team project. Each student in a team will have a particular role and students will be required to document individual contributions to the team project. The project will consist of a short narrative film demonstrating elements of film form.

SR: The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon a final essay in which students conduct an extended analysis of a film. In addition to a formal analysis, students will be required to assess the social, cultural, and historical significance of the film text in question.

### **Required Texts**

Barsam and Monahan, *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., includes DVDs)

Nichols, *Engaging Cinema: An Introduction to Film Studies*

(Additional Readings made available via Moodle or web links)

### **Course Work**

<b>Attendance and Moodle Participation</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Quizzes (5-7 unannounced quizzes)</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Mid-Term Exam</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Four 300-word Short Analyses (4 x 5%)</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>3-5 minute narrative film (collaborative)</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>5-page Film Analysis Essay</b>	<b>20%</b>

**Film Screenings:** This course requires your attendance at regularly scheduled film screenings throughout the semester. While many (though not all) of the films can be rented or streamed, the best way to see these movies is on the big screen with your peers. Attendance at film screenings will count toward your overall attendance grade.

**Class Attendance:** Students are expected to attend every class and to arrive promptly. Because your understanding of the concepts of the course depend on diligent participation and group collaboration, **more than three unexcused absences will result in a grade penalty.** Excessive unexcused absences (more than **seven** in a T/Th class) will result in failure from the course.

Refer to <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07> for regulations on excused/unexcused absences due to illness, observation of religious holidays, and for the list of university-authorized activities.

**Moodle:** Moodle is a Virtual Learning Environment that will extend your learning outside the classroom and provide you opportunities for informal writing and discussion. You are required to enroll and participate in the ENGL 251 / FILM 251 Moodle class page. Login information is forthcoming via email. **Moodle assignments will be emailed for maximum flexibility (they are not on the syllabus).**

**Collaboration:** Consistent with the art of filmmaking, which is a strongly collaborative process, you will be required to work in teams of 4 students to create a short narrative film (3-5 minutes). Each student will have a significant role: screenwriter, director, cinematographer, and editor.

**Computers:** You may bring a computer to class only if you are to take notes on it; however, you must disable the wireless network, refrain from sending email, opening web pages, playing games, or doing things that will distract your classmates.

**Cell Phones** and other electronic devices: Please turn off your cell phones and other devices before the beginning of class and keep them off your desk.

**Email Communication:** Check your mail every day for announcements, assignments, and other updates to the class syllabus. Maintaining informed and in communication via e-mail is a university requirement, per Rule 61, which “establishes e-mail as an official means of communication (equivalent to the U.S. Postal Service) at Texas A&M University. It also establishes student responsibilities for use of official TAMU e-mail accounts and official e-mail correspondence.” Please refer to <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule61>, particularly sections 61.2.3 and 61.2.4.

**Scholastic Honesty:** “An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.” Turning in work that is not your own or any other form of scholastic dishonesty will result in a major course penalty, including failure. Visit <http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/> for a full discussion of scholastic dishonesty, as well as student rights and responsibilities, procedures, and disciplinary consequences.

**Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 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 believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, Cain Hall, rm. B118, phone number 845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

### **Grading Scale/Rubric for the Short Paper and Essays**

**A** This essay contains few, if any, errors in sentence structure and coherence; it develops an interesting, insightful, tightly focused argument. The argument is complex and fully developed, and the essay provides the reader with clear, well-researched support; argumentation fully justifies the author’s conclusions. The style of the paper is eloquent and sophisticated.

**B** This essay contains few errors in sentence structure, and develops a clear, coherent argument. Support and explanation of that argument, however, are either insufficient to convince the reader completely or do not make clear how the author reaches his or her conclusions.

**C** This essay is fundamentally sound at the level of sentence structure and diction, but its arguments rely too heavily on assertion, not research. Specific support is either unclear or missing, and the focus of the essay may stray from its stated argument to make a more general or unrelated point. There may also be problems of coherence, complexity, or in the overall development of the argument.

**D** This essay contains serious problems at the level of sentence structure and diction. It is marred by repeated mechanical errors and/or awkward constructions that obscure meaning. The argument relies almost completely on assertion, with no clear support, development, or analysis.

### **Grading Rubric for Quizzes, Exams, and Final Grades**

95-100 A+

90-94 A

85-89 B+

80-84 B

75-79 C+

70-74 C

65-69 D+

60-64 D

0-59 F

**Introduction to Film Analysis—Fall 2012**  
**FILM / ENGL 251-500 T/Th 9:35-10:50 HECC 209**  
**SYLLABUS**

NOTES: *Looking at Movies* appears as *LM*; *Engaging Cinema* appears as *EC*. Some readings and films are to be announced (TBA) or subject to change. Changes or substitutions to the syllabus will be emailed. **All readings are due by the date assigned.**

**Part I: The Formal Elements; Types of Movies; Narrative Structure**

- T 8/28 Introduction to the course, policies and assignments
- Th 8 “Introduction: Some Basic Issues and Concepts,” EC 3-25  
“Film as Language” EC 29-69  
“Writing and Speaking” EC 435-39  
**Screening: *Modern Times* (Charles Chaplin, 1936, USA) 7:15 p.m. HECC 209**
- T 9/4 “Principles of Film Form,” LM 27-57
- Th 9/6 “Types of Movies,” LM 59-111  
**Screening: *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941, USA) 7:15 p.m. HECC 209**
- T 9/11 “Forms of Cinematic Engagement and the Avant-Garde,” EC 70-98  
“Documentary,” EC 99-135  
**Short Analysis #1 Due (online via turnitin.com)**
- Th 9/13 “Narrative and Fiction,” EC 136-72  
**Screening: documentaries and experimental films, 7:15 p.m. HECC 209**
- T 9/18 “Elements of Narrative,” LM 113-54
- Th 9/20 “Mis-en-Scène,” LM 155-206  
**Screening: *Searching for Sonny* (Andrew Disney, 2011, USA) 7:15 p.m. HECC 209 [Special guest: Andrew Disney]**
- T 9/25 “Cinematography,” LM 207-68  
**Short Analysis #2 Due (online via turnitin.com)**
- Th 9/27 “Acting,” LM 269-318  
**Screening: *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958, USA) 7:15 p.m. HECC 209**
- T 10/2 “Editing,” LM 319-66
- Th 10/4 “Sound,” LM 367-409  
**Screening: *Yojimbo* (Akira Kurosawa, 1961, Japan) 7:15 p.m. HECC 209**
- T 10/9 Class Canceled. Prepare for Midterm Exam  
**Short Analysis #3 Due (online via turnitin.com)**

Th 10/11 MIDTERM EXAM

**Part II: Approaches to and Styles of Film; Exploring Genres; The Social Context**

T 10/16 “Three Fundamental Styles: Realism, Modernism, Postmodernism,” EC 175-208

Th 10/18 “Genre Films,” EC 248-86  
**Screening: *Sironia* (Brandon Dickerson, 2011, USA) 7:15 p.m. HECC 209**  
**[Special guest: Wes Cunningham, actor]**

T 10/23 “Ideology and the Cinema,” EC 287-324

Th 10/25 Reading TBA  
**Screening: *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982, USA) 7:15 p.m. HECC 209**

T 10/30 “Race and Ethnicity,” EC 325-58  
**Short Analysis #4 Due (online via turnitin.com)**

Th 11/1 Reading TBA  
**Screening: *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989, USA)**

T 11/6 “Gender and Masculinity,” EC 359-394

Th 11/8 “Feminism and Film,” 395-431  
**Screening: *The Virgin Suicides* (Sophia Coppola, 1999, USA)**  
**7:15 p.m. HECC 209**

T 11/13 “Filmmaking Technologies...,” LM 459-93

Th 11/15 “Writing and Speaking,” EC 441-76  
**Screening: *Man on a Mission: Richard Garriott’s Road to the Stars* (Mike Woolf, 2010, USA) 7:15 p.m. HECC 209** [Special guest: Mike Woolf]

T 11/20 “The Institutional and National Contexts: Hollywood and Beyond,” EC 209-47  
“Film History,” LM 411-57  
**Short Narrative Film Due (Collaborative Project)**

**Th 11/22 Thanksgiving Holiday**

T 11/27 Readings TBA

Th 11/29 Readings TBA  
**Screening: *Gomorra* (Matteo Garrone, 2008, Italy)**

T 12/4 Last Day of class  
**Final Essay Due**