

John Cabot University

COM 210-2, Introduction to Cinema, Spring 2018

Period: Tuesday 9:00–11:00 am

Room: G.K.1.3-Guarini Campus, Kushlan Wing, First Floor, Room 3

Instructor: Marco G. Ferrari, mferrari@johncabot.edu

Office hours: by appointment

SYLLABUS

Course Description

This course is designed as an introduction to the art, history, and business of film. It presents an introduction to film aesthetics and the formal properties of film, locating specific styles and narrative forms within specific classical and alternative film movements. Film theories and critical strategies for the analysis of film will be investigated. The course will be divided into weekly screenings and lectures.

Textbook:

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. 2008. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 11th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill. 2016. ISBN 978-1259534959

It is recommended for you to purchase this book. Available at the Anglo American Bookshop, via della Vite, 102 (<http://www.aab.it>) or via Amazon. Additionally a copy of it is on reserve at the library.

**Please note that an International Edition of Film Art exists and if you buy from any of the Amazons outside of the US there is a good chance that is the version you will be getting. If you are buying a new book make sure you get the 11th Edition (updated and has better resale market value). Also, just to confuse everyone further there are Kindle editions (and other e-book editions with other sellers or possibly on Bordwell and Thompsons personal blog) which are equivalent. In non-US Amazon you can only buy the Kindle version. In Amazon US you can also rent at a much lower price.

Course Home Page

<http://moodle.johncabot.edu/>

Enrollment Key: COM210-2Spring18 (case sensitive)

Additional readings, guides, assignments and in-class material will be posted on Moodle along with auxiliary readings and points of reference that can help further understanding. Additional material may be distributed in class. Since Moodle is not integrated with the school database, and with the class roster, you will have to create your own account, if you do not have already one. Once you have an account, you will have to enroll in this course by using the enrollment key (noted above).

Screenings

Each class will have a time where we will view key feature-length works. Additional content not listed on the syllabus that is screened in class will also be available in the Viewings List (with links when possible) on Moodle and updated on a weekly basis.

Learning Outcomes

Students will learn how to discuss the principal formal and technical properties of film. They will develop an ability to discuss and analyze film as an artistic, industrial, and socio-cultural phenomenon. They will gain an awareness of the different contexts surrounding film production and exhibition, and the relationship between popular, documentary, and avant-garde production. They will be able to trace a history of film narrative and participate in debates including the race, gender, and the ideology and ethics of cinema.

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By the end of this course, students will be better skilled in:

- Watching, describing and analyzing films.
- Reading and critically assessing academic literature on films and cinema.
- Researching, drafting, editing and writing an academic essay.

Grading

- Short Paper, 3-5, single-spaced (20%)
- Scene + Segment Analysis (20%)
- In-class Presentation (15%)
- Final Research Paper, 6-8 pages, single-spaced (25%)
- Attendance, Discussion, *Screening Notes (20%)

*Scanned copies of your hand-written screening notes must be handed in as a PDF via email on the last day of class.

Attendance Requirements

Attendance and punctuality are absolutely crucial. Unexcused absences will result in an F (Fail) grade for Attendance & Participation. More than 5 unexcused absences will result in failing the course. If unexcused, a tardy of more than 10 minutes will be counted as an absence. Screenings are mandatory and cannot be guaranteed to be available outside of class.

You cannot make-up a major exam (midterm or final) without the permission of the Dean's Office. The Dean's Office will grant such permission only when the absence was caused by a serious impediment, such as a documented illness, hospitalization or death in the immediate family (in which you must attend the funeral) or other situations of similar gravity. Absences due to other meaningful conflicts, such as job interviews, family celebrations, travel difficulties, student misunderstandings or personal convenience, will not be excused. Students who will be absent from a major exam must notify the Dean's Office prior to that exam. Absences from class due to the observance of a religious holiday will normally be excused. Individual students who will have to miss class to observe a religious holiday should notify the instructor by the end of the Add/Drop period to make prior arrangements for making up any work that will be missed.

Office Hours

I am available to discuss any concerns or questions outside of class time. Please do not hesitate to email me to schedule a meeting.

Academic Honesty

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

Students with Learning or Other Disabilities

John Cabot University does not discriminate on the basis of disability or handicap. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

Assessment Criteria

A: work of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course.

B: This is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

C: This is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

D: This level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

F: This work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the assignment.

Class Etiquette

The following is to help you cultivate professional demeanor in your life and to develop a respectful relationship with your classmates and professor. Not following these guidelines can impact your participation and attendance grade.

General: Read the syllabus and visit the class website. 99.9% of your questions will be answered there.

In-class: Arrive on time and remain in class during the duration of class. If you must leave, do not leave right at the start of class (when important announcements are being made), during student presentations and during screenings. Chronic tardiness will impact your grade.

Class discussion: Lessons are built around class discussion, so be prepared to discuss the assigned material during class. Please come with informed ideas and opinions.

Missing class: If you miss class, you do not need to email the professor to ask what you missed or what you need to cover. All that information is on the class syllabus and it is not necessary for the professor to type up and email you the lecture when you can get the information from the course readings and your classmates. You can also meet with the professor before the following class to ask questions.

Email: Professors maintain regular working hours and have office hours. Please do not email on the weekend or the night before class and expect an immediate response. When emailing, please include something in the email text. Do not just send an email with a subject line and attachment.

Phones and computers: Phones are strictly forbidden in class. If you use one, you will be counted as absent (after one warning). Computers and tablets are allowed on a case-by-case basis. Please ask for permission before using computers in class. All computers must be closed during screenings of media.

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Reviewing assignment drafts: In some special cases and given adequate warning, students concerned about their grades can discuss drafts of their projects during office hours.

Assignment approval: Most assignments require topic approval. Make sure you understand the assignment requirements and submit your proposal in a timely manner. Assignments that need topic approval that are not formally approved will not receive credit.

Assignment extensions: Under special circumstances extensions are given, but you must first ask for permission. If you submit an assignment late without first asking for an extension, your grade will be affected by the normal penalty.

Grades: Do not argue about your grade. Grades are not a form of punishment or reward, and are not a reflection of who you are as a human being. Rather, grades serve as a signpost of where you are at in terms of skills, abilities and quality of work in relation to the assignment. It is there to help you understand the areas where you need to improve your work.

SCHEDULE

Please note that this schedule is subject to change.

Week 1, Introduction to Cinema: History, Art and Moving Pictures

- Screening: *Un Chien Andalou* (Louis Bunuel, France, 1929, 16 min); Early Cinema Shorts (Marey, Lumiere, Melies, Porter, Griffith)
- Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapters 1 and 12; Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction"

Week 2, Classical Hollywood Cinema, Dramatic Narrative, Narration and Point of View

- Screening: *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1954, 112 min); *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, USA, 1941, 120 min)
- Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapter 3

Week 3, Neo-Realism (continue Dramatic Narrative, Narration and Point of View)

- Screening: *Roma Città Aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1945, 105 min); *Ladri di Biciclette* (Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1948, 83 min)
- Readings: "Bicycle Thief" and "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" in Bazin, André. *What Is Cinema?: Volume II*. University of California Press, 2005.

Week 4, Editing: Continuity and Discontinuity

- Screening: *In the Mood for Love* (Kar Wai Wong, 2001, China, 98 min)
- Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapter 6

Week 5, The Image: Mise-en-Scene, Space, Composition, Light, Color

- Screening: *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky, Soviet Union, 1981, 162 min)
- Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapters 4 and 8

****SHORT PAPER DUE****

Week 6, Cinematography and Camera Movement

- Screening: *L'Eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, Italy, 1962, 126 min)
- Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapter 5 and 11

+ make-up day Friday, February 16, Museum Visit, off-campus, place and time TBD

Week 7: The Take and Montage

- Screening: *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, USA, 1973, 112 min); *Strike* (Sergei Eisenstein, USSR, 1924)
- Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapter 12; "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram" in Eisenstein, Sergei, and Jay Leyda. *Film Form; Essays in Film Theory*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949; Deren Maya. *Tempo and Tension*. The Movies as Medium, 1970.

Week 8: Technological Innovation: Sound, Color and Widescreen

- Screening: *A Fistful of Dollars* (Sergio Leone, Italy/Spain/West Germany, 1964, 99 min)
- Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapters 7 and 9

****SCENE + SEGMENT ANALYSIS DUE****

Week 9, Modernist Narrative/Narrative Space

- Screening: *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1966); *2 or 3 Things* (Jean Luc Godard, France, 1967)

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- Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapter 10; David Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice"; Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theater", *The Rustle of Language*, 1984.

Week 10, Non-Narrative Cinema: Documentary

- Screening: *San Solei* (Chris Marker, France, 1983, 104 min); *Chronicle of a Summer* (Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch, France, 1960, 85 min).
- Readings; Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapter 10; Astruc, "Birth of a New Avant-Garde"

Week 11, Ideological Critique + Feminist Film

- Screening: *Medium Cool* (Haskell Wexler, USA, 1969, 150 min); *Sans Toit Ni Loi/Vagabond* (Agnes Varda, France, 1985, 105 min)
- Reading: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"; Bunuel, *Cinema Instrument of Poetry*, 1978.

****IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS****

Week 12,

Spring Break, No Classes

Week 13, Political Film

- Screening: *Memories of Under Development* (Tomas Gutierrez Alea, Cuba, 1973, 97 min); *Black Panthers* (Agnes Varda, USA, 1968, 31 min)
- Reading: Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema", 1969; Fernando Solanas & Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema"; Alea, "Beyond the Reflections of Reality, *Memories of Under Development*", 1980.

Week 14, Art Cinema, Avant-Garde Film, Video Art & The Cinematic Turn

No class April 25, make-up day Friday February 16

- Screening: *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Maya Daren, USA, 1943, 18 min); *Gravesend* (Steve McQueen, 2007, 18min); & Various viewings (TBD);
Reading: Brakhage, "Metaphors on Vision"; Friedberg, *The End of Cinema*; Jameson, *Postmodernism and Consumer Society--Buonaventure Hotel*; Steyerl, *In Defense of the Poor Image*, *Eflux Journal*, 2009.
Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapter 10.

Week 15, Post-Classical & Independent Cinema

- Screening: *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, USA, 1970, 95 min); *Do The Right Thing* (Spike Lee, USA, 1989, 120 min)
- Paper Review sessions
- Reading: David Bordwell, et al. *Film Art: An Introduction*, Chapter 12

Week 16, Finals Week

****FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE****