

Introduction to Film

HUM 141

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Brief Course Description:

This course is a basic introduction to how films communicate meaning and influence society. The course gives the students an understanding of film forms, techniques and styles. Students develop a critical viewpoint and be able to explain the many ways in which film communicates. The overall goal of the course is to produce perceptive and sensitive film viewers. Feature-length films are viewed in class.

Detailed Course Description:

This is a general course designed to acquaint the student with a basic exposure and appreciation of film as an art form. The students will learn various areas of the three major areas of filmmaking: Pre-Production, Production, Post-Production. The course will help students acquire and develop an understanding of and a greater appreciation for the art and history of film through viewing specific films, critiquing aspects of filmmaking, and understanding the director's intent in making the film. The course will also cover important critical analysis techniques when studying film to enhance analysis skills and how to better understand film and filmmakers' intentions. Important historical works and genres will be discussed and the major works in each genre will also be discussed. The students will also learn various duties found in filmmaking and how they have developed over the years. The course work includes film craft projects, testing of terms and definitions and critically analyzing various aspects of film.

Required Text:

Joe Boggs and Denis W. Petrie. *The Art of Watching Films*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
7th Edition, 2006.

Interesting Websites:

<http://www.imdb.com/>
www.rottentomatoes.com/
<http://movies.nytimes.com/pages/movies/index.html>
<http://www.kids-in-mind.com/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/> (for writing)

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. View and review films with a critical understanding of the material.
2. Recite the dramatic structures.
3. Identify the basic elements of film.
4. Identify the various genres and styles of film and their purposes.

5. Define the various differences between films and their purposes in society.
6. Define the various roles required in the filmmaking process.
7. Identify the basic elements of the various film jobs and duties.
8. Evaluate a film and write a critique on various areas of the film.

9. Evaluate important story aspects such as character development, plot, scene, setting, and dramatic structure.
10. Identify important historical changes in film.
11. Recite areas of the basic history of film and know the major films which changed the history of filmmaking..

Learning Tasks and Activities:

In order to accomplish succeed in this course each student needs to:

1. Read carefully each assigned chapter in the texts.
2. Read critically and carefully any handout selection the instructor may give.
3. Engage actively in class discussion (attendance, therefore, is assumed).
4. Keep accurate notes on lectures and discussions.
5. Write all assigned papers and complete all assignments on time.
6. Document carefully when appropriate.

Assessment of Outcomes:

Student learning will be assessed and grades assigned in the following areas:

1. Responsibility: the ability to recognize, understand, and accept ownership for learning by self-assessing, demonstrating, and evaluating behaviors that support the learning situation.
2. Communications: the ability to create meaning between themselves and their audience: learn to listen, speak and write effectively using words, graphic, electronic media, computers, and quantified data.
3. Problem-solving: the ability to assess, evaluate, and apply information from a variety of sources in a variety of contexts.
4. Global Awareness: students will demonstrate an awareness and appraisal of the world: its scientific complexity, its social diversity, and its artistic variety.

Statement About Written Work:

Make sure to review MLA (Modern Language Association Format) when writing documents for the class. While this is not an English class, your writing must be clear and accurate before I will read your work. If you need assistance with writing the reports concerning what content needs to be included please ask me. If you need assistance with writing the report please visit the Tutoring Center for assistance. If there are too many structural or grammatical errors I will not accept, read or grade the work.

Plagiarism:

The following rules and definitions concerning plagiarism:

Definition: Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas without giving proper credit to the person who devised them. It includes any of the following:

1. Not citing the source for words or ideas which are not your own
2. Incorrect documentation into the body and the Works Cited Page
3. Carelessness or sloppiness in the research which results in faulty documentation
4. Use of purchased or acquired papers

Penalties for Cheating or Plagiarizing (WAC 132Q-4-061)

If the instructor suspects or believes the student has cheated or plagiarized, he is authorized to fail the student unless that student can prove the authenticity of the paper. The burden of proof rests on the student. If the instructor is convinced that cheating or plagiarism has taken place, the student will be dropped with a failing grade in the course.

First Offense: Automatic failure of the paper or test and possible failure of the course.

Second Offense: Automatic failure of the course.

A Statement About Electronic Devices:

The student may not use cell phones, mp3 players, or other communication or entertainment devices during class time. If the student is using such a device he/she will be asked to leave the class and will receive a failing grade for the day. If the student continues to use such devices he/she will be given a grade of 'F' for the class and will not be able to return to the class.

Eating In Class:

Please be sure to use the time before and/or after class to find your nourishment. While we do view films in this course and you may eat popcorn in the movie theatre or other food at home or at the movie you are not allowed to eat during the viewing of the films in this class. If the student is found eating or drinking (other than water) in class he/she will be asked to put it away or throw it away. If the student refuses, then he/she will be asked to leave and will receive a failing grade for the day. If the student continues to choose to eat or drink (other than water) during class then he/she will be given a grade of 'F' for the class and will not be able to return to the class.

Withdrawal Policy:

Please make sure to know the last day to withdraw from class. If the student does not withdraw by the deadline then he/she is given the grade of 'F'.

Disabilities Statement:

In accordance with the mandates of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973-Subpart E and the Americans with Disabilities Act, accommodations for otherwise qualified students with a disability(s) will be considered after receiving a student's request. The student will need to register with the Disability Support Services (DSS) office and provide appropriate documentation of the disability. Once the student has established a file and the disability(s) has been verified by DSS, then the facts of each situation will be thoroughly analyzed and reviewed to determine appropriate reasonable accommodations for classroom, laboratory or clinical settings. Accommodations that would compromise patient care, or fundamentally alter the essential nature of a program or activity are not considered to be reasonable.

A student who is denied an accommodation has the right to request a review of the determination through the defined grievance process available at each institution. *Procedures for student grievance are outlined in the SCC Student Handbook and in the SCC Center for Students with Disabilities Student Handbook.*

Withdrawal Policy:

Please make sure to know the last day to withdraw from class. If the student does not withdraw by the deadline then he/she is given the grade of 'F'. No Z grade is possible.

Assessment:

Reviews (5 Reviews = 20pts. each (100pts. Total)

The student will write reviews about the five films which will be screened in class. The student will respond to specific questions for each film given by the instructor. Each review must be typed in MLA format

Attendance and Participation (30pts.)

Each student will need to attend class, participate in discussions, participate in group work and complete required work for the full duration of each class meeting. If the student is late he will not be allowed in class unless he/she has made arrangements with the instructor prior to the specific day of class. If the student misses more than three class meetings he/she will lose 5 points. More than five absences are grounds for failure.

Mid-term (20pts.)

The mid-term exam will be on the material we discussed in class. This in-class exam will be about various elements of theatre which we have discussed as well as readings from the handouts and the text. **You must take the Mid-term in order to pass the class.**

Responses (4 Total 15 pts each = 60pts.)

The student will complete four (4) responses to a type of film or moviemaking material. These materials will include written documents, screenplay excerpts, examples, criticism, or other types of aspects of film. Each response must be typed in MLA format

Independent Review (10pts.)

Each student must write a critique one of American Film Institute's (AFI) 100 American Greatest Movies which is not being screened in class. The report must include a thorough critique based on the material discussed in class.

Final Project (40pts.)

The final project will include an oral presentation. The student can chose one of two methods in which to complete the final project. A. The Research or B. The Application. Either method will be acceptable and will depend on the student's preference.

A. The Research

The student will find a scene which best illustrates a medium of film which we discussed. (For example, the student can discuss effective directing, screenwriting, film scoring, sound effects, promotional material, make-up or visual effects) The student is given specific questions to answer prior to the presentation which will be answered during the presentation along with a clear, concise paragraph of review.

B. The Application

The student can create a scene live or on film which illustrates an example of a medium of film which we discussed. (For example, the student can direct a scene, write and present a screenplay, compose and present a piece of music as a film score, create effective sound effects, create effective promotional material (teaser, trailer or poster), create a make-up design or create a visual effect.) The student is given specific questions to answer prior to the presentation which will be answered during the presentation along with a clear, concise paragraph of review.

You must complete the Final Project in order to pass the class.

Totals:

Reviews = 100pts.

Attendance & Participation =30pts.

Mid-term =20pts.

Responses =60pts.

Independent Review = 10pts.

Final Project =40pts.

Total = 260 pts.

Grades:

260-234 = A

233-208 = B

207-182 = C

181-156 = D

155-below = F

No Make-Up Work:

There is no make-up work. The student must make arrangement turn any work in or give the presentation before the due date if he/she is unable to turn it in at the assigned day and time. All work is counted in the overall grading.

Extra Credit

There are two possibilities for extra credit. One: The student can volunteer to help with the current play at Spokane Community College. Make sure to ask the instructor for more details. Two: The student can discover the mystery score for the day to earn one (1) point for each score by discovering the movie, the year the movie was made a three sentence evaluation of the music. This is limited to a total of five mystery scores (totaling five (5) points).

Expectations:

For each class each student needs to...

1. Be punctual and attend every class, except in extreme emergencies.
2. Have the appropriate supplies (paper, text books, writing tools, and other supplies).
3. Have read the assigned material and be prepared to discuss the readings.
4. Listen attentively and participate through class discussions and group lessons.
5. Respect everyone's point of views and ideas.
6. Choose to learn as much as possible and show a positive attitude about the material while in class.
7. Develop positive learning habits throughout the class.

The Instructor will...

1. Attend every class on time and be prepared.
2. Grade each essay and all other work fairly and objectively.
3. Inform each student about the course content and grading policies.
4. Try to answer each question to the best of his ability.
5. Make the lessons and materials as interesting as possible.

The Instructor and students will understand that life is a continual learning and creative process.

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Assignment Schedule

Week One:

Why Study Films? Basic

Area of Study: Directing: Seeing the Big Picture

Genre of Study: Drama: What is a drama?

How does it illustrate the human condition on the screen. The change from plays to films. The difference of film and plays. The challenges of filmmaking. Three Phases of Filmmaking: Preproduction, Production, Postproduction.

Presentation: Directing

Week Two:

Area of Study: Editing: Making the Cut

Drama Screening: TBA

Week Three:

Area of Study: Screenplays: From Word to Screen

Genre of Study: Romance/Comedy/Romantic Comedy/Dramady

What sense of humor? Pacing, timing, character exaggeration. Changing humor through history. Creating the perfect comedy.

Presentation: Screenplay

Week Four:

Area of Study: Setting/Location/Backdrops: Creating Reality

Comedy Screening: TBA

Week Five:

Area of Study: Music & Sound Effects: Enhancing the Scene

Genre of Study: Thriller/Suspense/Action

How suspense and thriller films are different. Threats and release of tension. Raising the bar—change from suspense to thriller to horror. Discuss the elements of action and adventure films. What makes them tick?

Mid-Term

Week Six:

Area of Study: Trailers and Promotion: The Expansive PR

Suspense/Thriller/Action Screening: TBA

Week Seven:

Area of Study: Special Effects, Visual Effects & Stunts: Extraordinary Feats

Genre of Study: Fantasy/Horror/Science Fiction

What makes genre films such as Science Fiction and Horror so popular? How have they changed? Visual Effects maturity.

Presentation: Promotional Material

Week Eight:

Area of Study: Ratings System

Genre of Study: Foreign Films/Animation/ Western /War /Epic /Historical/Musical

Area of Study: Ratings System

Science Fiction/Fantasy/Horror Screening: TBA

The non-USA filmmaking. How foreign films each are cultural specific identities. Cross-cultural films. When do foreign films work in the US? Academy vs. Golden Globe.

Week Nine:

Area of Study: Make-up & Costumes: Transforming Reality

Genre of Study: Experimental Films

The changing face of make-up. Visual effects can enhance any scene. The progression of filmmaking maturing storytelling elements through visual effects.

Presentation: Make-up and Visual Effects

Week Ten:

Genre of Study: Documentary/Short Film/Independent Films

Foreign Film Screening: TBA

Short films: more difficult than you think. Short films are changing the face of film. "I will make my own film then," says the no money, independent filmmaker.

Final Project