

Introduction to Cinema

Comm 274-002

Fall 2017

Dr. Leslie Abramson

Tuesdays 7:00-10:00 p.m.

Cuneo Hall, Room 109

Office Hours: After class or by appointment

E-mail: labramson@luc.edu

Course Objective

In Introduction to Cinema we will study film as an art form as well as a complex medium of global communication. The objectives of this course are to provide the student with the basic terminology, observational skills, analytical, historical and critical background necessary to understand the relationship of a film's form and cultural context to its content. The format of the course will consist of lecture and discussion.

Required Texts:

Film Art: An Introduction, 11th Edition, David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, Jeff Smith
New York: McGraw-Hill, 2017

Connect (*Film Art's* online text, video tutorials, practice quizzes)

<http://connect.mheducation.com/class/l-abramson-fall-2017>

Weekly films (available on reserve in Cudahy and through streaming services including Kanopy, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Vudu, and Google Play)

Essays and short story posted on Sakai

Grading:

Bullet points, one-minute film: 15%

Essay: 20% (4 pages)

Midterm: 20%

Comparative Frame Analysis: 20% (5 pages)

Final exam: 25%

Course Policies and Requirements

- Attendance is mandatory. Students must be in class on time to be considered present. Except in cases involving medical emergencies, more than one absence will result in the reduction of a student's final grade by one-third of a letter grade. Two late arrivals will be considered the equivalent of one absence.
- Note-taking is essential during class meetings.
- Students who miss a class should consider it their responsibility to obtain notes and any other information disseminated during class from fellow students.
- All viewing and reading assignments must be completed in advance of class time on the date under which they are listed.
- Take screening notes. These will help you identify important stylistic elements, themes, motifs, representations, etc. that are important to the analysis of the film.
- All assignments are due in hard copy and must be submitted in class. The essay and comparative frame analysis must **also** be submitted online through Sakai
- All bullet points are due **on time**. **No** late bullet point submissions will be accepted.
- The essay and comparative frame analysis are due on time. A late submission will result in a lower grade in all cases except documented emergencies. The assignment's grade will be reduced by 1/3rd of a letter grade for each day that it is late.
- If a student submits an essay or comparative frame analysis late via e-mail, he or she must not assume that it has reached the instructor until the instructor replies to the e-mail. If no reply is received, it remains the student's responsibility to make certain that the assignment reaches the instructor.
- Students must take the final exam when scheduled. There will be no exceptions to this rule except a documented medical emergency.
- Plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade for the essay, test, bullet point assignment, and potentially for the course. According to the Loyola University Chicago undergraduate studies catalog statement on Academic Integrity: "Plagiarism is the appropriation for gain of ideas, language, or work of another without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things

and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the deliberate taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources.

The faculty and administration of Loyola University Chicago wish to make it clear that the following acts are regarded as serious violations of personal honesty and the academic ideal that binds the university into a learning community:

Submitting as one's own:

1. Material copied from a published source: print, internet, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.
2. Another person's unpublished work or examination material.
3. Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit.
4. Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.

The critical issue is to give proper recognition to other sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty." If you have any questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism and how to cite sources, I urge you to ask me.

-Cellphones **must** be turned off during class.

-Laptops **must** be turned off during class. They can be distracting to your classmates.

-This syllabus is subject to revision in accordance with matters of material availability or time constraints.

Course Schedule

August 29

Introduction

Silent Film & the Content of the Image

September 5

Mise-en-Scene & Classical Hollywood Cinema Narrative

Viewing Assignment: *City Lights* (Chaplin, 1931)

Reading Assignment: Chapter 1: Film Art; Chapter 4: Mise-en-Scene; Chapter 4 Video

Tutorial: "Film Lighting"

Bullet points due

September 12

Cinematography: The Possibilities of the Shot

Viewing Assignment: *The Shining* (Kubrick, 1980)

Reading Assignment: Chapter 5: Cinematography; Chapter 2: Film Form; Chapter 5

Video Tutorials: "Lens and Camera Movement," "Tracking Shots Structure a Scene"

Bullet points due

One-Minute Film Fest begins

September 19

Editing: Manipulating Time & Space

Viewing Assignment: *Strangers on a Train* (Hitchcock, 1951)

Reading Assignment: Chapter 6: Editing; Chapter 6 Video Tutorials: "Editing with

Graphic Matches," "Shifting the Axis of Action: *Shaun of the Dead*," "Crosscutting,"

"Elliptical Editing," "Jump Cuts," Connect Appendix A: "Writing a Critical Analysis"

(access in self-study mode of SmartBook)

Bullet points due

September 26

The Resonances of Sound

Viewing Assignment: *Do the Right Thing* (Lee, 1989)

Reading Assignment: Chapter 7: Sound; Chapter 11 (408-413); Chapter 7 Video

Tutorials: "Sound Mixing," "Contrasting Rhythms of Sound and Image," "Offscreen

Sound," "Post Production Sound"

Bullet Points due

ESSAY DUE

October 3

The Studio System, Conventional Narrative Form, & Subversion: *Citizen Kane*

Viewing assignment: *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941)

Reading Assignment: Chapter 3: Narrative Form; Chapter 8: Style and Film Form

Bullet points due

Break

October 17

Style and the Art Film: German Expressionism

In-class screening: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene, 1920)

Reading Assignment: Chapter 12: Historical Changes in Film Art (452-469); Video

Tutorial: Chap. 10, "Surrealism in Experimental Film"

MIDTERM

October 24

Alternative Approaches to Classical Editing: Eisenstein's Political Cinema

Viewing Assignment: *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, 1925)

Reading Assignment: Chapter 12: Historical Changes in Film Art (470-492);

"Battleship Potemkin," Bill Nichols; "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram" & "A Dialectical Approach to Film Form," Sergei Eisenstein

Bullet points due

October 31

Documentary Cinema

Viewing Assignment: *13th* (DuVernay, 2016)

Reading Assignment: Chapter 10: Documentary, Experimental, and Animated Films;

Chapter 11: Documentary form and style (432-441); Chapter 10 Video Tutorial:

"Authenticity in Documentaries;" Nichols, "How Can We Differentiate Among Documentaries?"

Bullet points due

November 7

Genre and the Teenpic

Viewing Assignment: *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray, 1955)

Reading assignment: Chapter 9: Film Genres; "Film Genre and the Genre Film,"

Thomas Schatz; "Dangerous Youth," Thomas Doherty

Bullet points due

November 14

Introduction to Feminist Film Theory and Feminist Film Practice

Viewing assignment: *Lost in Translation* (Coppola, 2003)

Reading assignment: "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, Laura Mulvey; "The Body and Cinema: Some Problems for Feminism," Annette Kuhn; "Look Who's Still Talking in the Movies: White Men," Johanna Barr, *New York Times*, August 4, 2017

Bullet points due

November 21

Acting Styles, Stardom, and Screening Queerness

Viewing assignment: *Dog Day Afternoon* (Lumet, 1975)

Reading assignment: *Stars* (excerpt), Richard Dyer

Bullet points due

COMPARATIVE FRAME ANALYSIS DUE

November 28

Adaptation

Viewing assignment: *Minority Report* (Spielberg, 2002)

Reading assignment: "The Minority Report," Philip K. Dick; Chapter 13 (in Connect):

Film Adaptations

Bullet points due

December 5

The Power of Digital Communication

Viewing assignment: *The Social Network* (Fincher, 2010)

Reading assignment: "Sorkin vs. Zuckerberg," Lawrence Lessig; "The Dislike Button,"

J.M. Tyree

Bullet points due

One-Minute Film Fest concludes

December 12

FINAL EXAM