ENGLISH 4355 -- FILM CRITICISM  
Fall 2018

None of us can ever retrieve that innocence before all theory when art knew no need to justify itself, when one did not ask of a work of art what it said because one knew (or thought one knew) what it did. From now to the end of consciousness, we are stuck with the task of defending art. We can only quarrel with one or another means of defense.

Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation”

It’s the job of art to free our minds, and the task of criticism to figure out what to do with that freedom. That everyone is a critic means, or should mean, that we are each of us capable of thinking against our own prejudices, of balancing skepticism with open-mindedness, of sharpening our dull and glutted senses and battling the intellectual inertia that surrounds us. We need to put our remarkable minds to use and to pay our own experience the honor of taking it seriously.

A.O. Scott, Better Living through Criticism

Instructor: Chris Ellery  
Office: A021B  
Office Hours: 10-11:30 MWF, 8:30-9:30 TR, and 2-3 MTWR  
Phone: 486-6142  
E-mail: cellery@angelo.edu

Catalog Description  
A study of the cinema as an art form and an index to popular culture.

Student Learning Outcomes

The most important learning outcome of the class is that you learn to read and respond to movies with pleasure and insight, practicing techniques in critical analysis that will enable you to find meaning in films and communicate this meaning to other readers. More specifically, you should

- acquire sufficient knowledge of the elements of film to analyze, interpret, and evaluate movies;
- understand the relationship between film and its social/cultural context;
- be able to apply various critical approaches to the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of movies;
- gain foundational understanding of the relationship between theory and criticism.

Texts


In addition to these books, each of the featured movies shown for class is a required text:


Selected Online Resources

- filmmaking.net (includes largest list of film schools): www.filmaking.net
- Internet Movie Database: www.imdb.com
- Internet Move Script Database: www.IMDb.com
- Film Reviews (Rotten Tomatoes): www.rottentomatoes.com
- American Film Institute www.AFI.com
- AMC Filmsite www.filmsite.org

Grading

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<th>Daily Work</th>
<th>25%</th>
<th>Exams</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response Papers</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Conference Paper</td>
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- Daily work includes frequent reading quizzes, group activities, conference paper proposal, and miscellaneous assignments.
- Students will submit a 2-page focused response paper on each of the required films.
- The three exams will be a mix of objective and essay questions covering issues, concepts, terms, and films.
- The conference paper will be an 8-page research essay suitable for submission to a session of the 2017 Annual Conference of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association (http://pcaaca.org/).

Personal Conduct and Responsibilities

In this and all college courses, you should conduct yourself with professionalism and collegiality, and you should take responsibility for your own learning and performance. Excellent students are motivated, dedicated, and self-reliant; they have a positive attitude and a good work ethic. You will improve your chances of succeeding in this class by following these rules:

- Stay focused. Attend class and be actively involved. Pay attention and participate in discussions. Ask questions when you have them and consult your professor when you have concerns.
- Be prepared every day. Critically read all assignments. Conscientiously complete homework and class activities. Keep up with your work.
- Follow instructions carefully, especially those on assignment prompts, and prepare assignments according to the guidelines provided.
- Encourage learning and collaborate with classmates and support the instructor in the goal of learning.
- Be courteous. To avoid distracting others, arrive on time and leave when class is dismissed.
- Avoid talking in class except when appropriate. While it is sometimes acceptable and even desirable to question opinions and even facts offered by others (including the teacher), you should do so respectfully and thoughtfully, with learning goals in mind.
- Silence and put away cell phones. Do not use any personal electronic devices unless invited to do so as part of the lesson.
- Take good care of your body and mind. Keep yourself nourished and rested.
Attendance and Make-up Policy
The following policy is consistent with ASU OP 10.04 (“Academic Regulations Concerning Student Performance”).

- This is a face-to-face class. Regular attendance is essential for success in the class. Attendance will be taken daily at the beginning of the period. Students who arrive late or do not answer the roll should see the instructor after class to be sure they are counted present. Students who enter during a quiz will not be given extra time to complete it.
- Be prepared for class each day. An absence does not excuse the student from being prepared for the next class. Thus, students who miss class should contact a classmate or the instructor to be sure of the assignment for the next class.
- All assignments are due when called for. Being permitted to submit work after the deadline gives students an advantage over those who turn work in on time; thus late work will be accepted without penalty only in the case of excused absences. The penalty for an unexcused late essay is one-half letter grade for each day late.
- Students must present credible documentation to receive an excused absence. Absences are excused for school travel, illness, or personal or family emergency. Contact the instructor as soon as possible (before a school trip or personal travel) to excuse the absence and arrange make-up work.
- Daily grades for quizzes and other in-class activities cannot be made up. Two daily grades will be dropped at the end of the term.
- E-mailed assignments will be accepted only at the request of the instructor.

Departmental Policy on Academic Honesty
Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions (www.angelo.edu/forms/pdf/honorcode5.pdf) of the Student Handbook.

Disabilities
Student Life has issued the following statement: “Persons with disabilities that may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, Room 112 University Center, in order to request such accommodations prior to any being implemented. You are encouraged to make this request early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made.”

Senior Portfolios
Candidates for the Bachelor of Arts in English are required to complete a portfolio to be eligible for graduation. Students may submit this portfolio after completing all major requirements or in the semester immediately prior to graduation. The portfolio grade will not affect GPA, but will be part of the student’s record.
**Tentative Schedule**
If you miss class, check with a classmate or the instructor to verify the assignment. [Guide=Short Guide to Writing about Film; Intro=Introduction to Criticism; Film=Film for Study.]

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<th>Week</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>W</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/27</td>
<td>Course Policies and Procedures</td>
<td>Guide Ch. 1 (Why Write about Film)</td>
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<td>8/29</td>
<td>Guide Ch. 2, pp. 19-28 (Meaning in Movies)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9/3</td>
<td>HOLIDAY</td>
<td>Guide Ch. 2, pp. 28-37 (Watching and Reflecting on Film)</td>
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<td>Screening Report: <em>Citizen Kane</em></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>Intro Ch. 10 (Film Studies)</td>
<td>Guide Ch. 3, pp. 31-51 (Film as Narrative)</td>
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<td>Screening Report: <em>Adaptation</em></td>
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<td>9/17</td>
<td>Guide Ch. 3, pp. 51-60 (Mise-en-Scène and Realism)</td>
<td>Guide Ch. 3, pp. 60-74 (Cinematography and Editing)</td>
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<td>9/21</td>
<td>Proposal Due</td>
<td>Screening Report: <em>Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein</em></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>9/24</td>
<td>Guide Ch. 3, pp. 74-85 (Sound as Signifier)</td>
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<td>9/26</td>
<td>Screening Report: <em>The Piano</em></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>10/1</td>
<td>Intro Ch. 1 (Formalism)</td>
<td>Screening Report: <em>Rushmore</em></td>
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<td>10/3</td>
<td>Formalism, cont.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>10/8</td>
<td>Review</td>
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<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
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<td>10/12</td>
<td>Guide Ch. 5 (Writing Style and Structure)</td>
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Week 8
FOW: Rashômon (1950)
M 10/15 Intro Ch. 2 (Structuralism)
W 10/17 Structuralism, cont.
F 10/19 Screening Report: Rashômon

Week 9
FOW: Modern Times (1936)
M 10/22 Intro Ch. 3 (Historical Criticism)
W 10/24 Historical Criticism, cont.
F 10/26 Screening Report: Modern Times

Week 10
FOW: Manhattan (1979)
M 10/29 Intro Ch. 4 (Psychological Criticism)
W 10/31 Psychological Criticism, cont.
F 11/2 Screening Report: Manhattan

Week 11
FOW: V for Vendetta (2005)
M 11/5 Intro Ch. 5 (Marxist and Political Criticism)
W 11/7 Marxist and Political Criticism, cont.
F 11/9 Screening Report: V for Vendetta

Week 12
FOW: Lost in Translation (2003)
M 11/12 Intro Ch. 7 (Gender Criticism)
W 11/14 Gender Criticism, cont.
F 11/16 Screening Report: Lost in Translation
Week 13
M 11/19  Conference Paper Workshop
W 11/21  TBA
F 11/23  HOLIDAY

Week 14
FOW: Get Out (2017)
M 11/26  Intro Ch. 8 (Ethnic, Post-Colonial, and Transnational Criticism)
W 11/28  Conference Paper Due
F 11/30  Screening Report: Get Out

Week 15
M 12/3  Student Presentations
W 12/5  Student Presentations
F 12/7  Student Presentations

Finals Week
W 12/12  Final Exam (8-10 a.m.)