ENGLISH 4381 – SPECIAL TOPICS: AMERICAN CINEMA
Spring 2019
11-12:15 TR – A005

“The screen is a magic medium. It has such power that it can retain interest as it conveys emotions and moods that no other art form can hope to tackle.”
Stanley Kubrick

“A film is never really good unless the camera is an eye in the head of a poet.”
Orson Welles

“Most of us do not consciously look at movies.”
Roger Ebert

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PHONE: 486-6142
HOURS: 9-11 MWF, 9:30-11 TR, 2-3 MTWR
EMAIL: cellery@angelo.edu

DESCRIPTION

This course examines American movies as artifacts of social discourse in the United States. Combining historical and aesthetic approaches, the course will begin with the emergence of cinema, trace the development of classic Hollywood style, and follow its evolution in the postwar era after the breakdown of the studio system. The major genres—melodrama, the musical, comedy, the war movie, film noir, the western, horror, and sci-fi—will be examined as enduring expressions of national attitudes, aspirations, and anxieties.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Over the course of the semester, students should
• develop sufficient knowledge of the elements of film to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and better appreciate the art of cinema;
• trace the emergence of the classic Hollywood style and understand major developments in American film history;
• understand, analyze, and appreciate American cinema as a modern art form with the power both to influence and to reflect American experience and identity.

REQUIRED TEXT

### FILMOGRAPHY

12 Years a Slave (Steve McQueen, 2013)
Casablanca (Michael Curtiz, 1942)
The Dirty Dozen (Robert Aldrich, 1967)
Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee, 1989)
High Noon (Fred Zimmerman, 1952)
It Happened One Night (Frank Capra, 1934)
La La Land (Damien Chazelle, 2016)
Life of an American Fireman (George Fleming and Edwin S. Porter, 1903)
The Shining (Stanley Kubrick, 1980)
Singin’ in the Rain (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952)
Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976)
Unforgiven (Clint Eastwood, 1992)
Zero Dark Thirty (Kathryn Bigelow, 2012)

### SELECTED ONLINE SITES

- American Film Institute [http://www.AFI.com](http://www.AFI.com)
- Film Reviews (Rotten Tomatoes): [www.rottentomatoes.com](http://www.rottentomatoes.com)
- Interesting Film Sites: [www.d.umn.edu/~tisbell/FilmSites.html](http://www.d.umn.edu/~tisbell/FilmSites.html)
- Internet Movie Database: [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)
- Screenplays on line: [www.script-o-rama.com](http://www.script-o-rama.com)

### GRADING

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Work</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screening Reports</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Project</td>
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- **Daily work** includes frequent reading quizzes, class discussions, group activities, project proposal, and miscellaneous assignments.
- Students will submit a 1-2-page **screening report** on each of the required films.
- The two **exams** will be a mix of objective and essay questions.
- The **project** will be shaped by student interest and major. All projects will include a writing component and will relate in some way to American cinema.
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 the instructor to support the goals of enlightenment and 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 often 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.

If there's specific resistance to women making movies, I just choose to ignore that as an obstacle for two reasons: I can't change my gender, and I refuse to stop making movies.

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Kathryn Bigelow

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AZ QUOTES
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, personal or family emergency, and religious holy days observed by the student (see below). 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.**

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 of the Student Handbook.


ACCOMODATIONS

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.”
OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS

“A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence. A student who is excused under section 2 may not be penalized for the absence; however, the instructor may respond appropriately if the student fails to complete the assignment satisfactorily.” (See ASU Op 10.19.)

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**

The schedule below indicates reading and viewing assignments for the semester. The material listed beside the date indicates the material due at the beginning of the period on that date. Assignments (including films for study) are subject to change.

- **ACAC = American Film / American Culture**
- **FoW = Film of the Week**

**Week 1**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>T Introduction</td>
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<td>1/17</td>
<td>R ACAC Preface, Introduction, and Ch. 1 (“Emergence of Cinema as an Institution”)</td>
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**Week 2**

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<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>T ACAC Ch. 2 (“Classic Hollywood Cinema: Narration”), pp. 21-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/25</td>
<td>R FoW: <em>Casablanca</em> (Michael Curtiz, 1942)</td>
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**Week 3**

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<tr>
<td>1/29</td>
<td>T ACAC Ch. 4 (“The Studio System”)</td>
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<td>1/31</td>
<td>R ACAC Ch. 5 (“The Star System”)</td>
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**Week 4**

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<tr>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>T ACAC Ch. 6 (“Silent Film Melodrama”)</td>
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<td>2/7</td>
<td>R FoW: <em>12 Years a Slave</em> (Steve McQueen, 2013)</td>
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**Week 5**

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<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>T ACAC Ch. 7 (“The Musical”)</td>
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<td>2/14</td>
<td>R FoW: <em>La La Land</em> (Damien Chazelle, 2016)</td>
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**Week 6**

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<tr>
<td>2/19</td>
<td>T ACAC Ch. 8 (“American Comedy”)</td>
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<td>2/21</td>
<td>R ASU Writers Conference in Honor of Elmer Kelton</td>
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**Week 7**

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<tr>
<td>2/26</td>
<td>T ACAC Ch. 9 (“War and Cinema”)</td>
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<td>2/28</td>
<td>R <strong>Project Proposals due</strong></td>
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Week 8
T 3/5 Review
R 3/7 Midterm Exam

3/11-3/14 SPRING BREAK: See you at the movies!

Week 9
T 3/19 ACAC Ch 10 (“Film Noir”)
R 3/21 FoW: FoW: Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976)

Week 10
T 3/26 ACAC Ch. 11 (“The Making of the West”)  
R 3/28 Project Progress Reports due  
FoW: Unforgiven (Clint Eastwood, 1992)

Week 11
T 4/2 ACAC Ch. 12 (“Horror and Science Fiction”)  
R 4/4 FoW: The Shining (Stanley Kubrick, 1980)

Week 12
T 4/9 ACAC Ch. 13 (“Hollywood and the Cold War”)  
R 4/11 ACAC Ch. 14 (“Hollywood in the Age of Television”)  
FoW: High Noon (Fred Zimmerman, 1952)

Week 13
T 4/16 ACAC Ch. 15 (“The 1960s: The Counterculture Strikes Back”)  
R 4/18 Projects Due  
ACAC Ch. 16 (“The Film School Generation”)  
FoW: Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee, 1989)

Week 14
T 4/23 Student Reports
R 4/25 Student Reports

Week 15
T 4/30 ACAC Ch. 17 (“Into the Twenty-First Century”)  
FoW: Zero Dark Thirty (Kathryn Bigelow, 2012)
R 5/2 Review

Finals Week
T 5/7 FINAL EXAM (10:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.)