

ENGLISH 4355 -- FILM CRITICISM Fall 2019

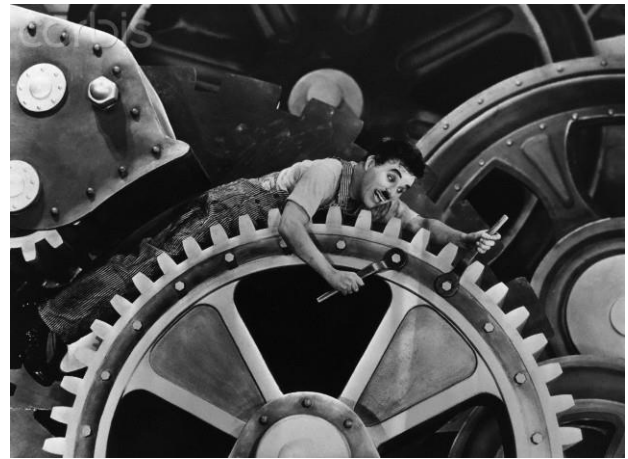
None of us can ever retrieve that innocence before all theory when art knew no need to justify itself, when one did not ask of a work of art what it said because one knew (or thought one knew) what it did. From now to the end of consciousness, we are stuck with the task of defending art. We can only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

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Office: A021B
Office Hours: 10-11 MWF, 8:30-9:30 TR,
and 2-3 MTWR
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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 critical techniques and approaches that will enable you to find meaning in films and communicate it to other readers. More specifically, you should

- acquire sufficient knowledge of the elements of film to "read" movies;
- understand the relationship between film and its social/cultural context;
- be able to apply various critical approaches (formalism, structuralism, historicism, psychological criticism, Marxism, gender criticism, and ethnic and post-colonial criticism) to analyze, interpret, and evaluate movies; and
- gain foundational understanding of the relationship between theory and criticism.

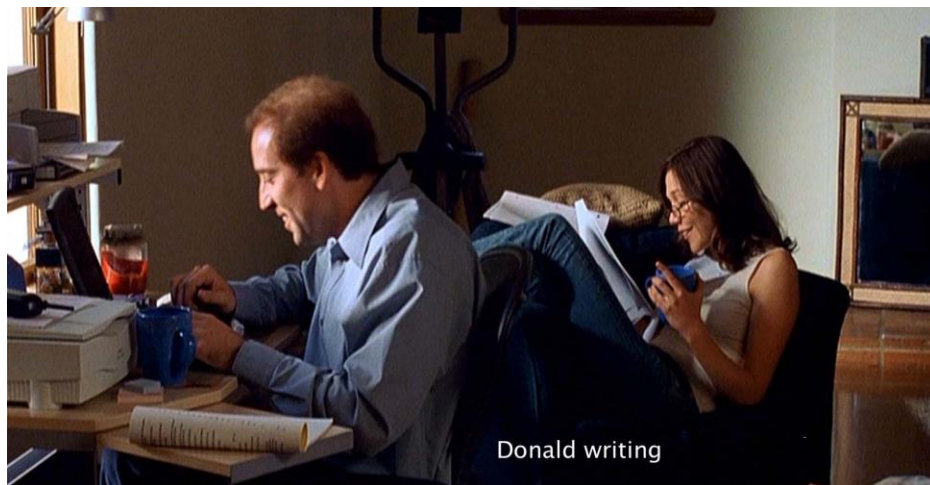
Texts

Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*. 9th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2015

Ryan, Michael. *An Introduction to Criticism: Literature/Film/Culture*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

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

- Adaptation*. Dir. Spike Jonze. Perf. Nicolas Cage, Meryl Streep, and Chris Cooper. 2002. Columbia Pictures, 2002. DVD.
- Bamboozled*. Dir. Spike Lee. Perf. Damon Wayans, Savion Glover, and Jada Pinkett Smith. 40 Acres and a Mule. 2000. New Line Cinema. 2001. DVD.
- Booksmart*. Dir. Olivia Wilde. Perf. Beanie Feldstein and Kaitlyn Dever. 2019. 20th Century Fox. 2019. DVD.
- Citizen Kane*. Dir. Orson Welles. Perf. Orson Wells, Joseph Cotton, and Dorothy Comingore. 1941. Warner Brothers, 2001. DVD.
- Get Out*. Dir. Jordan Peele. Perf. Daniel Kaluuya, Allison Williams, and Bradley Whitford. 2017. Universal Pictures. 2017. DVD.
- The Hurt Locker*. Dir. Kathryn Bigelo. Perf. Jeremy Renner and Anthony Mackie. 2010. Summit Entertainment. 2010. DVD.
- Lost in Translation*. Dir. Sophia Coppola. Perf. Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson. Universal, 2003. Universal Studios Home Video, 2004. DVD.
- Modern Times*. Dir. Charlie Chaplin. Perf. Charlie Chaplin, Paulette Goddard, and Henry Bergman. 1936. Warner Home Video, MK2 Editions, 2003. DVD.
- Night of the Hunter*. Dir. Charles Laughton. Perf. Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters, and Lillian Gish. United Artists, 1955. Criterion Collection, 2010. DVD.
- The Piano*. Dir. Jane Campion. Perf. Holly Hunter, Harvey Keitel, Sam Neill, and Anna Paquin. 1993. Artisan, 1998. DVD.
- The Shape of Water*. Dir. Guillermo del Toro. Perf. Sally Hawkins, Michel Shannon, and Doug Jones. Bull Productions and others. 2017. 20th Century Fox. 2018. DVD.



Adaptation, 2002

Selected Online Resources

- Internet Movie Database: www.imdb.com
- Internet Move Script Database: www.IMSDB.com
- American Film Institute www.AFI.com
- AMC Filmsite www.filmsite.org

Grading

Daily Work	25%	Exams	25%
Response Papers	25%	Conference Paper	25%

- *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 or exercise cannot 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.

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*.

(angelo.edu/forms/pdf/honorcode5.pdf)



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.*]

Week 1

M 8/26 Course Policies and Procedures
W 8/28 *Guide* Ch. 1 (Why Write about Film)
F 8/30 *Guide* Ch. 2, pp. 19-28 (Meaning in Movies)

Week 2

FOW: *Citizen Kane* (1941)
M 9/2 HOLIDAY
W 9/4 *Guide* Ch. 2, pp. 28-37 (Watching and Reflecting on Film)
F 9/6 Screening Report: *Citizen Kane*

Week 3

FOW: *Adaptation* (2002)
M 9/9 *Intro* Ch. 10 (Film Studies)
W 9/11 *Guide* Ch. 3, pp. 31-51 (Film as Narrative)
F 9/13 Screening Report: *Adaptation*

Week 4

FOW: *Night of the Hunter* (1955)
M 9/16 *Guide* Ch. 3, pp. 51-60 (Mise-en-Scène and Realism)
W 9/18 **Conference Paper Pre-Proposal due**
Guide Ch. 3, pp. 60-74 (Cinematography and Editing)
F 9/20 Screening Report: *Night of the Hunter*

Week 5

FOW: *The Piano* (1993)
M 9/23 *Guide* Ch. 3, pp. 74-85 (Sound as Signifier)
W 9/25 Screening Report: *The Piano*
F 9/27 TBA

Week 6

FOW: *Lost in Translation* (2003)
M 9/30 *Intro* Ch. 1 (Formalism)
W 10/2 Formalism, cont.
F 10/4 Screening Report: *Lost in Translation*

Week 7

M 10/7 Review
W 10/9 **Mid-term Exam**
F 10/11 *Guide* Ch. 5 (Writing Style and Structure)

Week 8

FOW: *Get Out* (2017)

- M 10/14 Intro Ch. 2 (Structuralism)
- W 10/16 Structuralism, cont.
- F 10/18 Screening Report: *Get Out*

Week 9

FOW: *Bamboozled* (2000)

- M 10/21 Intro Ch. 3 (Historical Criticism)
- W 10/23 **Conference Paper Proposal Due**
Historical Criticism, cont.
- F 10/25 Screening Report: *Bamboozled*

Week 10

FOW: *Hurt Locker* (2008)

- M 10/28 Intro Ch. 4 (Psychological Criticism)
- W 10/30 Psychological Criticism, cont.
- F 11/1 Screening Report: *Hurt Locker*

Week 11

FOW: *Modern Times* (1936)

- M 11/4 Intro Ch. 5 (Marxist and Political Criticism)
- W 11/6 Marxist and Political Criticism, cont.
- F 11/8 Screening Report: *Modern Times*



Booksmart, 2019

Week 12

FOW: *Booksmart* (2019)

M 11/11 *Intro* Ch. 7 (Gender Criticism)

W 11/13 Gender Criticism, cont.

F 11/15 Screening Report: *Booksmart*

Week 13

FOW: *The Shape of Water* (2017)

M 11/18 *Intro* Ch. 8 (Ethnic, Post-Colonial, and Transnational Criticism)

W 11/20 Ethnic, Post-Colonial, and Transnational Criticism, cont.

F 11/22 Screening Report: *The Shape of Water*

Week 14

M 11/25 **Conference Paper Due**

W 11/27 HOLIDAY

F 11/29 HOLIDAY

Week 15

M 12/2 Student Presentations

W 12/4 Student Presentations

F 12/6 Student Presentations

Finals Week

W 12/11 Final Exam (8-10 a.m.)

