Dr. Buckman, Humanities and Religious Studies 180: The Film (C2), Fall 2011

Office: Mendocino 2020/ Office Phone: 278-5335/ I am not on campus MWF

Office Hours: Tuesday 2:45-3:15pm and 5:00-5:30pm, Thursday 9-10:15am, and by appointment

E-mail: abuckman@saclink.csus.edu (This is preferable to the SacCT e-mail and more frequently checked.)

Required Texts and Materials:

- Subscription to Netflix (cheapest is ~$6/month). Watching movies prior to class enables us to discuss the films more thoroughly and/or discuss more films. You also may purchase or rent the actual DVDs if you wish, of course. The Sacramento Public Library system is also a good source for video/DVD. I do recommend viewing the films for class more than once.
- 2 scantron sheets (#882)
- Access to SacCT for discussion list, notes, and quizzes (online.csus.edu)

Catalog Description: Introduction to the aesthetics of cinema with special attention to the evolution of critical theories of cinema within the framework of 20th century arts and ideas. 3 units.

Course Description and Expectations: An introduction to the aesthetics of cinema; as such, the course is designed for those who have little or no background in film as an art form. In this course we will be discussing the history and aesthetics of film; this discussion will be enhanced through both readings and screenings. We will be focusing on a body of information and concepts to be learned and applied to film. Included in this focus will be an emphasis on the components of film as a visual text and as art, on the director as author of the film, and on film critique. A variety of films will be shown in this course, and, most likely, no student will like all the films that will be shown in this class. The point of the course is not to entertain you or to show you only the sorts of films you are already used to watching. Rather, the point is to expand your ability to appreciate and analyze a variety of film types. Such an increase in understanding can increase your pleasure in viewing films. We also will be viewing some television programs as examples of techniques and to enable a discussion of auteur theory.

Watching unfamiliar films is one aspect of the course. Students are expected to have reading assignments (as well as other assignments) prepared as indicated in the syllabus or otherwise noted. Although this is an enjoyable class (or so I hope), it is also a serious academic one. You will not do well in the class unless you attend the entire class regularly, pay close attention to the films, and complete reading and writing assignments, exams, and quizzes. Although we will not be able to cover a discussion of all the material in the text fully, you will be responsible for familiarity with the information presented in the text: make note of questions you have and bring them to class. If you have a question or problem with class, please come and talk to me. BE PRO-ACTIVE!

Learning Goals: Upon completion of HRS 180, successful students will be able to:

- Appreciate and analyze a variety of film types and genres
- Compare and contrast different modes of filmmaking
- Demonstrate visual literacy
- Apply the techniques of formal analysis to film
• Understand and analyze the ways in which film contributes to and reflects the representation of diverse peoples.

Class Policies and Procedures:

Behavior: *Respect for both one's classmates and professor is appropriate to the college environment.* This includes making a positive contribution to the course and not distracting from the learning of others: come on time, **turn off all electronics**, pay attention, and don’t leave during class. Tardiness and leaving during class are not acceptable since 1) it disrupts both other students and the professor as well as showing disrespect and 2) you may miss valuable information. **Therefore, please do not enter the classroom if you are more than 5 minutes late.** You may enter at break. Students should not leave class early unless they have a compelling reason and should, if at all possible, notify the instructor prior to class and sit near the doors. Students who use electronics in class or are otherwise disruptive will be asked to leave.

Coursework: There will be two exams, one paper, and multiple quizzes. There also will be a discussion list on the SacCT site set up for this course.

Participation: **See above.** This class depends upon the full engagement of students with the material and the class itself. I expect students to participate in discussions on a regular and informed basis. Participation depends on positive contributions to class meetings. Simply being in attendance does not qualify as participating in the class. You **CAN** receive a failing participation grade even if you attend every class. Disruptive (and rude) behavior works against you in your participation grade.

Discussion list: To enhance participation and discussion of films, there will be a discussion board available on SacCT. **Posts must be made within one week after viewing, or they will not be accepted as enhancing class participation.** I will delete any messages posted after the due date. Students will be expected to respond in an intelligent manner to films shown in and/or readings assigned for the class. Responses should show an understanding of class materials as well as some analysis of them. Brief summaries without analysis will not be counted, nor will responses that don’t follow the rudiments of grammar and mechanics: this is not text messaging. Simply stating whether you liked the film is not considered useful participation. Try to analyze some cinematographic aspect of the film – how did it work? This is good practice for the essay. **Adequate responses should probably be at least a good-sized paragraph.** Respect of other students is also mandatory, so flaming will be counted against your participation grade. Students should show original thought and depth in their response. All students should read these posts, since students often post excellent points about the films in question. More guidelines may be posted on SacCT.

Attendance Policy: It is very important to be present for a class such as this since we rely so much upon visual texts presented in the classroom with commentary. I will not take attendance after the second week of classes, however. Quizzes and in-class assignments may not be made up.

Academic Integrity: Please turn in work that is solely your own. Appropriate credit must be given to the work of others, including DVD commentary. Credit includes the proper use of paraphrasing and quoting as well as citations within and at the end of the paper. If you are unsure about what this means, please come and speak with me. **PLAGIARISM HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES, INCLUDING THE FAILURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT, FAILURE OF THE COURSE, AND/OR EXPULSION FROM THE COLLEGE.** **YOU WILL RECEIVE A ZERO FOR THE ESSAY AND THUS**
LIKELY FAIL THE COURSE IF YOU PLAGIARIZE. REWRITES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED.

**Formatting of Essays:** Essays should be typed, double-spaced, and have 1" margins with Times New Roman 12 font and black ink. Please staple your essays PRIOR to class. Don't use a cover or a folder. At the top of the first page, single-spaced, include a descriptive title for your paper in addition to tagging information (your name/my name/the date). Essays may be turned in via the online course delivery system.

**Grading:** The course syllabus indicates the dates of exams and due dates of papers. 100 points available for the course. See below for grading rubric. Neither the course nor the assignments are graded on a curve.

Midterm: 25 points; Essay: 30 points; Final: 25 points; Discussion: 10 points; Quizzes: 10 points (all scores will be recorded out of 100, however, for ease of understanding: ex. a 24/25 on the midterm will be recorded as a 96/100)

**Due Dates:**

**Tests:** Tests are scheduled as indicated on the class calendar. Make-ups are not permitted unless a compelling and verifiable emergency interferes, ex. death or severe illness. Make-ups are given at the convenience of the test giver. **CSUS IDs are required to take all exams in the course;** said exams will be signed in. The CSUS calendar, which lists exam week, is available far in advance of classes: [http://www.csus.edu/acaf/calendars/](http://www.csus.edu/acaf/calendars/). **DO NOT SCHEDULE VACATIONS DURING EXAMS.** If you have done so, please drop the class. Also, be sure that your employer is willing to work with you re: exams.
Papers:
1. Your essay must be turned in prior to the beginning of class on the date it is due via the online course delivery system. I must be able to open any attachments (must be in MS Word). If you are late to class, turn the essay in at break rather than disrupting the class.
2. Late papers will be penalized 5 points if they come in after 6pm and 5 points for every day thereafter (including weekends \( \Rightarrow \) 10 points). If you have problems completing an assignment, you must talk to me BEFORE it is due so that we may work out an alternative.
3. Late essays will not be accepted unless the instructor has approved an extension in writing.

Paper Assignment: (see next page as well)

Assignment Length: 4 (full)-6pp. The analysis should be such and NOT a summary of the film. In essay format, analyze your film, showing comprehension of issues/terms we have discussed in class (there should be no bulleting for an essay of this length). The realist-formalist continuum is a means to structuring your essay, including your thesis. The paper is neither a movie review nor an analysis of themes. In addition, it should not be merely a listing of techniques; *it should be clear what the effect and/or importance of the techniques are to making meaning in the movie.* Give a sense of the film’s techniques overall and then discuss particular examples in more depth. See sample essays on SacCT. Additionally, do not write your essay on a film discussed in class or one covered in a sample essay. If you watch a DVD commentary on your film, you must cite it every time you use ideas from it (parenthetical citation and Works Cited). If you use any other sources beyond your film, you must cite them in the body and at the end of the essay.

Elements that must be included in this paper (see below as well): an analysis of the functions of editing and composition/mise-en-scene and the realist-formalist continuum á la Giannetti. Such a discussion must include consideration of: pacing, compression of time, whether the editing is realist, formalist, or classical (or a combination and what this means); angles, shot lengths, proxemic distances (see below), lighting. Terminology should be used as appropriate (ex. terms for different proxemic distances, key lighting). You’ll probably find that the cinematographic elements are used in support of the narrative of the film. Your demonstrated proficiency in writing will be taken into account in the grading of your papers. There may be a brief discussion of narrative as well, since the story is the reason many people like a particular film. A brief (1 paragraph) synopsis of the film should be included, probably after the introductory paragraph.

Check-Off List: The best essays will discuss a variety of uses of each technique. Your thesis will be a statement about your chosen film’s position on the RFC, and you will support your thesis with evidence from the film. How does your film use the techniques below? Also include the film’s credits, attached to the essay.

1. Angles (high, low, eye level, bird’s eye view)
2. Lighting (low key, high key, high contrast, natural)
3. Proxemics (intimate, personal, social, public). Discuss the *physical proximity of characters*, or you will not receive credit.
4. Framing (position in frame, tight and loose framing, open and closed form)
5. Realist-formalist continuum (RFC): how does each technique listed here relate to the RFC as it’s used in your film?
6. Editing (cutting to continuity, jump cuts, parallel editing, etc.; dissolves, wipes, split screen). Pacing (the length of takes) might be discussed as well. How are shots joined?
7. Shot lengths (extreme close, close, medium, long, extreme long/establishing)
8. Correct and appropriate use of terminology (ex. in discussing lighting, use key terminology)
9. Check grammar, mechanics, sentence structure, spelling, paragraphing (1 idea per paragraph)
Basic parameters for grading:** (see bottom of next page)
A: Excellent. Paper should be well written with a clear sense of purpose and unity. Will demonstrate clear knowledge and understanding of cinematography without error and be able to tie this knowledge into a discussion of the film itself. Will consider each of the cinematographic elements listed above, as well as their roles in the film, using examples from the film as support. Different types of each technique will be discussed (ex. high, low, and natural lighting), illustrating depth of knowledge. Will use correct terminology and definitions without error. At least 3 different examples of variations on each technique will be discussed accurately.

B: Above average. Paper will be generally a bit less successful than the above, with perhaps less comprehensive discussion, clarity, accuracy or thoroughness. The paper still will be well written with a clear sense of purpose and unity. Will demonstrate clear and more than basic knowledge and understanding of cinematography and be able to tie this knowledge into a discussion of the film itself. Discusses all required elements in a way that illustrates above average understanding. At least 2 different examples of variations on each technique will be discussed accurately.

C: Satisfactory. Will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of cinematography and be able to tie this knowledge into a discussion of the film itself. Will consider most of the cinematographic elements listed above, their function, and use examples from the film to support the thesis. Will show basic understanding of cinematography. At least 1 example of each technique will be discussed accurately.

D: Less than satisfactory. Will likely demonstrate a bit of knowledge (i.e. less than basic) about cinematography. May have too much plot summary, incorrect understanding of cinematographic elements, missing elements, and/or too little analysis.

F: Fail. Does not show understanding of cinematography. Fails to use key concepts to discuss film.
0: Plagiarized or not turned in.

A few pet peeves: 1. Keep it real. Avoid talking about how this class has changed your perception of film. 2. The actor is playing a character. Keanu Reeves did not do the things Neo did in The Matrix. When talking about the character, use the character’s name (not that of the actor). 3. You should know and use the names of characters and of the director. 4. Film titles should be underlined or italicized.
Schedule of Readings and Films (may change at discretion of instructor). All assignments refer to Giannetti unless otherwise noted. NB: Some of these films/TV shows contain adult themes and situations. I recommend viewing these films at home as well as in class. Dependent upon time constraints, we may not watch films in their entirety in the class.

- 8/30 Introduction. Discussion of syllabus, SacCT, realist-formalist continuum (discussion will continue throughout course). Early Narrative Film/early shorts: Bitzer’s Actualities, Edison’s “The Kiss,” Keystone Kops, Lumiere shorts, Muybridge motion studies and “Serpentine Dances,” Méliès’ “Voyage to the Moon,” and Porter’s “The Great Train Robbery.” See notes on SacCT for week one. Take quiz prior to 6pm next week! (and each week)
- 9/06 Chapter 1: Photography: Amelie.
- 9/13 Watch The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari before class. Clipfest!
- 9/20 Chapter 2: Mise-En-Scene: The Usual Suspects. Watch before class.
- 9/27 Chapter 3: Movement. 4 Little Girls in class.
- 10/04 Chapter 4: Editing: Firefly: “Serenity, Part 1&2”; “Out of Gas” and “Objects in Space” (view prior to class) Also: discuss TV v. Film
- 10/11 Chapter 5: Sound: Buffy: “The Body” and “Hush” (view prior to class). Also: discuss auteur theory.
- 10/18 Midterm
- 10/25 Chapter 6: Acting. Clipfest!
- 11/01 Chapter 7: Drama: Rashomon; A-F papers due** (see below)
- 11/08 Chapter 8: Story: TBA G-L papers due**
- 11/15 Chapter 9: Writing: Pan’s Labyrinth M-R papers due**
- 11/22 Chapter 10: Ideology: Antonia’s Line S-Z papers due**
- 11/29 Chapter 11: Theory: Citizen Kane
- 12/06 Chapter 12: Synthesis: Kane, cont
- 12/13 Final Exam. 5:15-7:15pm NOTE change in time

Due Dates for Papers (by surname):

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Papers may be turned in as early as 10/18. I cannot read drafts due to large enrollments, but I am happy to discuss your essay in office hours prior to your due date.

** Please note: I spend a lot of time on grading/commenting in the hope that I can help you improve your writing and teach you more about film. It is thus my expectation that you will read and reflect upon the comments on your essays and come in and discuss them should you not understand any of them.