

Dr. Buckman, Humanities and Religious Studies 180: The Film (C2), Fall 2009

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

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10:30-11:00am and 1:15-2pm; Tuesday 4:30-5pm and by appointment

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Required Texts and Materials:

- Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*. Any edition after the 8th. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- 2 scantron sheets (#882)
- Access to SacCT for discussion list and notes (online.csus.edu)
- Access to internet (ex. www.hulu.com) to watch select videos. You also may purchase the actual DVDs if you wish, of course. The Sacramento Public Library and Netflix are also good sources for video/DVD.

Catalog Description: Introduction to the aesthetics of cinema with special attention to the evolution of critical theories of cinema within the framework of twentieth 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.

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 regularly, pay close attention to the films, and complete reading and writing assignments, exams, and quizzes. Although we will not be able to fully cover a discussion of all the material in the text, you will be responsible for familiarity with the information presented in the text: bring any questions you have 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 classmates and professor is appropriate to the college environment. This includes being on time, **turning off all electronics**, and paying attention. Tardiness is not acceptable since 1) it disrupts both other students and the professor and 2) you may miss valuable information. Therefore, please do not enter the classroom if you are more than 5 minutes late. 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.

Coursework: There will be two exams and one paper. There also will be a discussion list on the SacCT site set up for this course. There may be pop quizzes in class as well.

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 (see behavior, above).

Discussion list: To enhance participation and discussion of films, there will be a discussion board available on SacCT. Posts must be made by the beginning of the next class session, 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. 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 other authors used; this 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. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.**

Formatting of Essays: Essays should be typed, double-spaced, and have 1" margins. The font and its size should be normal, generally Times New Roman 12. Please staple your essays PRIOR to class. Don't bother with plastic or cardboard covers. 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). Make sure my name is on it as well as your own. Essays will not be accepted via e-mail attachment.

Grading: The course syllabus indicates the dates of exams and due dates of papers. 100 points available for the course.

Midterm: 30 points; Essay: 30 points; Final: 30 points; Discussion (posts and in-class): 10 points
See below for grading rubric.

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. **DO NOT SCHEDULE FAMILY VACATIONS DURING EXAMS.**

Papers:

1. The paper must be in by the *beginning* of class on the date it is due. Turn it in to the teaching assistant or me.
2. Late papers will be penalized 5 points if they come in after 6pm and 5 points for every day thereafter (including weekends → 10 points). If you have problems completing an assignment, please talk to me BEFORE it is due. If you fail to complete the paper on time, you should still talk to me about it.
3. Papers turned in under my door will be counted as turned in on the day I receive it. Send me an e-mail with the essay cut and pasted into it, and I will count that as the turn in date and time. I will not print these off, however.

Paper Assignment:

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). You might use the realist-formalist continuum as 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 merely be 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: an analysis of the functions of editing and composition/mise-en-scene and the realist-formalist continuum á la Giannetti. Such a discussion should 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, 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: (while criteria are presented as a list, your essay should be such and not formatted as a list)

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)
4. Framing (position in frame, tight and loose framing, open and closed form) (CONT next page)
5. Realist-formalist continuum, illusionism
6. Editing (cutting to continuity, jump cuts, etc.; classical?; dissolves, wipes, split screen)
 - a. pacing (length of takes – time between cuts)
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 all of the cinematographic elements listed above, using correct terminology, as well as their roles in the film, using examples from the film as support.

B: Above average. Paper will be generally a bit less successful than the above, with perhaps less comprehensive discussion and/or not as clear or thorough as above. The paper still will be well written with a clear sense of purpose and unity. Will demonstrate clear knowledge and understanding of cinematography and be able to tie this knowledge into a discussion of the film itself.

C: Satisfactory. Will demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of cinematography and be able to tie this knowledge into a discussion of the film itself. Will consider many of the cinematographic elements listed above, their function, and use examples from the film to support the thesis. Will show **basic** understanding of cinematography.

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, and/or too little analysis.

F: Fail. Does not show understanding of cinematography.

0: Plagiarized or not turned in.

Due to mandatory faculty furlough days (9 days/semester), this syllabus may be adjusted. According to fair labor practices, I am restricted from doing CSUS-related work on those days. This includes grading, discussion posts, e-mailing and class preparation.

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. If you are concerned about the films being shown, please talk to the instructor.** I recommend viewing these films at home as well as in class. We may not watch films in their entirety in the class, dependent upon time constraints.

- 9/1 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.
- 9/8 Chapter 1: Photography: *Amelie* and clips from *The Graduate* and others.
- 9/15 Chapter 2: Mise-En-Scene; *The Usual Suspects*
- 9/22 *The Usual Suspects, cont.*
- 9/29 Chapter 3: Movement; *Firefly*: "Serenity, Part 1&2"; "Out of Gas" and "Objects in Space" (view these at www.hulu.com prior to class). May also watch documentary clips (TBA)
- 10/6 Chapter 4: Editing: *Memento*; *Battleship Potemkin* clips
- 10/13 Chapter 5: Sound: *Buffy*: "The Body" and "Hush"
- 10/20 **Midterm**
- 10/27 Chapter 6: Acting: *Rashomon*; **A-F papers due** (see below)**
- 11/3 Chapter 7: Drama: *A Beautiful Mind*; **G-L papers due****
- 11/10 Chapter 8: Story: *Antonia's Line* **M-R papers due****
- 11/17 Chapter 9: Writing: *Pan's Labyrinth* **S-Z papers due****
- 11/24 Chapter 10: Ideology; Chapter 11: Theory; *TBA* (possible furlough date)
- 12/1 Chapter 12: Synthesis: *Citizen Kane*
- 12/8 *Kane, cont.*

- 12/15 Final Exam. **5:15-7:15pm NOTE change in time**

Due Dates for Papers (by surname):

10/27: A-F

11/3: G-L

11/10: M-R

11/17: S-Z

Papers may be turned in as early as 10/13

** Please note: I do not post grades for essays on SacCT. You must come and pick your essays up (generally 1-2 weeks later and returned at the END of class). We spend a lot of time on grading/commenting, in the hope that we can help you improve your writing and teach you more about film. It is thus our expectation that you will read and reflect upon the comments on your essays and come in and discuss them with Dr. Buckman should you not understand any of them.