

Dr. Buckman

HRS 180: The Film (GE C2)

Spring 2008

R 6-8:50, MND 1003

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and by appointment

**Required Texts and Materials:**

- Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*.
- 2 scantron sheets (#882)
- Access to WebCT (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 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. Included in our 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 (although I hope that you will enjoy most of them). 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 regularly attend, pay close attention to the films, and complete reading and writing assignments, exams, and any 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.

**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:

*Classroom Etiquette:* Tardiness is not acceptable since 1) it disrupts both other students and the professor and 2) you may miss valuable information. Please make every effort to be on time. 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. Cell phones should be turned off or set to silent/vibration mode. \*Due to the recent proliferation of inappropriate use of laptops, students may not use laptops in class without prior instructor approval. Abuse of said approval will result in the loss of the privilege.\*

*Additional Resources:* Accommodations will be made for recognized disabilities, provided the student notifies the instructor of all requirements and provides certification of said disability.

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

*Participation:* 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 points depend 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, students must prepare four posts. For credit: **two posts must be completed prior to March 13; two must be completed by May 8**, although they may be completed sooner than that. **Posts must be made within one week of watching** the film; they are due by **9:00am** on Thursdays, or they will not be accepted as enhancing class participation. 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. 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. In order to receive an 'A' on a discussion posting, students must 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.

*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. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet each class; it may not be done at a later date. In addition, attendance may be taken more than once per class period. If you miss class, it is YOUR responsibility to get notes from a classmate and any information that you missed. Multiple absences will count against you in your grade. 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. See also the library's page on plagiarism: (<http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353>). *Plagiarized essays will receive a "0"*, meaning that you will fail the course as well. Other consequences may include expulsion from the college. 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 Courier or Times New Roman 10 or 12 if you are using a word processor. Please staple your essays. 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). Please note: All papers should be saved in 2 locations to prevent computer problems. You should back up your papers in both locations at least every 30 minutes while you work on them.

**Grading:** The course syllabus indicates the dates of exams and due dates of papers.

*Percentages:*

Midterm	25%	Final	25%
Essay	35%	Discussion (posts and in-class)	15%

As you see above, the essay is worth 35% of your grade. The essay is your main demonstration of your ability to apply the information you have learned, while the exams merely test your comprehension. Since the exams do not have a writing component, the essay also accounts for the majority of your writing. 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. Make-ups are given at the convenience of the test giver. Quizzes may not be made up without compelling and verifiable reasons (ex. death or severe illness).

*Papers:* When you turn something in to an instructor, you should **always keep a copy for yourself** -- just in case. Following these guidelines can prevent A LOT of stress.

1. The paper must be in by the *beginning* of class on the date it is due.
2. The paper must be turned in to me.
3. 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.

### **Paper Assignment:**

Assignment Length: 4 (full)-6pp. The analysis should be such and NOT a summary of the film. Analyze your film, showing comprehension of issues/terms we have discussed in class. 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* and creating enjoyment for you as viewer.

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 classical or not; angles, shot lengths, proxemic distances, lighting. Include a consideration of the primary modus operandi of the film – is it basically a mise-en-scene film or one which depends upon editing for meaning? Is illusionism important to it? If so, how is this illusionism created? 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:**

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)
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:

A: 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 as well as their roles in the film, using examples from the film as support. It will also be clear why this film was enjoyable to the viewer. There will be few, if any, grammatical errors.

B: paper should be well written with a clear sense of purpose and unity. Will demonstrate generally clear 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 and their function and will use examples from the film as support. It will also be clear why this film was enjoyable to the viewer.

C: 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. It will also be clear why this film was enjoyable to the viewer. Will show basic understanding of cinematography.

D: 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: does not show understanding of cinematography.

0: Plagiarism

**Schedule of Readings and Films** (may change at discretion of instructor). All assignments refer to Giannetti unless otherwise noted. **NB: Some of these films contain adult themes and situations. If you are concerned about the films being shown, please talk to the instructor.**

1/31: Introduction. Discussion of syllabus, WebCT, 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 WebCT for week one.

2/7 Chapter 1: Photography: Film: *Wordplay*

2/14: TBA. I will be at a conference

2/21 Chapter 2: Mise-En-Scene: *Amelie*

2/28 Chapter 3: Movement; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

3/6 Chapter 4: Editing: *Memento*

3/13 **Midterm**; *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*

3/20: PCA/ACA

3/27 Chapter 5: Sound: *Buffy*: "The Body" and "Hush"; **A-F papers due**

4/3: Spring Break

4/10 Chapter 6: Acting; Chapter 7: Drama: *Rashomon* ; **G-L papers due**

4/17 Chapter 8: Story; *Firefly*: "Serenity, Part 1&2"; **M-R papers due**

4/24 Chapter 9: Writing: *Firefly*: "Out of Gas" and "Objects in Space"; **S-Z papers due**

5/1 Chapter 10: Ideology: *Antonia's Line*

5/8 Chapter 11: Theory, Hitchcock (TBA)

5/15 Chapter 12: Synthesis; *Citizen Kane*

5/22 **Final** 5:15-7:15 (please note change in class time)

Due Dates for Papers (by surname):

March 27: A-F

April 10: G-L

April 17: M-R

April 24 S-Z

Papers may be turned in as early as March 13