

APPROACH: As Christian Metz, a major theorist of film studies, put it, "A film is difficult to explain because it is easy to understand." The various technologies of that *understanding* – related both to film and to electronic media – will be the subject of this course. The field of film and media studies is enormous, including potential topics in history, cultural diversity, production, theory, genres, music, art, writing, acting, equipment technology, economics, philosophy, social science, optics, and so on. Although we shall refer to perspectives and practices drawn from all of those contexts, the principal goal of this course is to introduce students to current language and thinking applied to the study of film and media. In order to fashion a selective, but inclusive, approach to this goal, I have avoided organizing the syllabus according to historical chronology or dividing its material into separate components on film studies and media studies. Instead, we shall shape our examination of film and media studies by looking at key issues in production, *texte*, and reception. Because the images produced by cameras (and even to some extent by digitally-generated effects) engage us by exciting the pleasures of verisimilitude, we shall consider how production and reception participate in eliciting, contouring, naturalizing, and sometimes disrupting our *understanding* of "truth."

Within the confines of a one-semester introductory course, screenings and readings will provide a sample of the range of material (historical, cultural, genre-identified, "classical" Hollywood, independent, documentary, animated, experimental, televisual, cyberspatial etc.) in this field. Because film and media operate powerfully in the inscription of ideology, including constructions of gender, race, sexuality, and class, materials will foreground those themes. The methods, materials, and problems associated with the study of film and media will also be ongoing subject matters of this course. Materials will include screenings as well as readings in film and media studies, cyberculture, and cultural studies. Instructional methods will include lectures, discussions, electronic assignments, presentations, writing assignments, and examinations.

REQUIREMENTS:

- **Attendance:** Course goals and methods necessitate conscientious class attendance. Excessive absences (more than 3), tardiness, or repeated violations of viewing protocols (see below) will adversely affect your final grade.
- **Preparation:** The quality and alacrity of your participation in classroom discussions, of your preparation of various assigned readings and projects, and of your execution of occasional in-class or electronic writing assignments will determine 15% of your final grade.
- **Essays:** Each student will post one 500-word essay on the Blackboard site for the course during the semester. (See below for a fuller explanation of this assignment and its due dates) This essay will compute as 15% of your final grade.
- **Electronic Assignments:** Due to the large enrollment in this course and to the limited time for in-class discussion, we shall rely in part on Blackboard to follow up issues introduced by screenings, readings, and meetings. All students are required to check the Blackboard site for the course *daily* and to keep up with assignments, materials, and discussions posted to the site. Over the period of the semester, each student is required to post a minimum of 2 thoughtful responses to discussions, readings, student essays, or other course materials. You must post at least once during the first 3 weeks of classes. Students will also have the opportunity to serve as discussion "mods". Electronic participation will determine 10% of your final grade.
- **Presentations:** During the last 2 weeks of the semester, each student will deliver a brief (10-minute) presentation of a reading from the Dines and Humez collection. Students will have an opportunity to select their topic from the last three sections (TV by Day, TV by Night, and The Internet) of the book. The presentation will determine 15% of your final grade.
- **Examinations:** Midway through the semester, students will have a midterm exam that will test all course coverage to that point. During the last week of the semester, students will take an examination covering all the material on the syllabus. The exams will test your command of material in both factual and analytical capacities. The midterm will figure as 20%, and the final will figure as 25% of your final grade.
- **Screenings:** Films and videos will be screened in class, necessitating absolute promptness and other viewing protocols, as described below. Occasionally run times, as noted on the syllabus, will result in an extended class period to accommodate their length. All materials (VHS or DVD) will also be on limited library reserve for students who wish to view or review them in the library at alternative times. Students are required to view all assigned video recordings before they are scheduled for in-class discussion.
- **Late or Missing Work:** If approved in advance, I shall accept late work, but it will be penalized one letter grade. Otherwise, assignments are due for the class period as scheduled. *Students must submit all assignments to pass the course.*
- **Incompletes:** Grades of "Incomplete" will be assigned only by approval of a written petition from the student. This petition must explain the reasons for the request, and must be accompanied by documentation of either medical or personal emergency. All "Incompletes" must be converted according to the schedule in the College Catalog.
- **Events:** Students are required to attend each of the events included specifically on the attached syllabus. Additional (optional) events may be announced during the semester.
- **Readings:** Your syllabus contains an enumeration of the assigned readings and their due dates. The texts are available from the College Bookstore, and other readings are accessible by e-reserves or Web sites.
- **Honor Code:** Students must abide by the "Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities" in the *Student Handbook*.

OFFICE HOURS/ELECTRONIC ACCESS:

T, 12:00 - 1:15 PM

W, 1:00 - 2:15 PM

and by appointment

MH 179C; ext. 4251

jrklein@smcm.edu (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

<http://faculty.smcm.edu/jrklein/>

SOME RELATED INTERNET LINKS:

Online syllabus (for links and current information): <http://faculty.smcm.edu/jrklein/220.02.F09.pdf>

Department of Theater, Film, and Media Studies: www.smcm.edu/tfms/

Bordwell and Thompson text Online Learning Center: http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0073535060/student_view0/index.html

News and Resources: <http://iwantmedia.com/resources/index.html>

Ifilm (Digital Movies on the Web): <http://ifilm.com/>

Yahoo's Film Theory/Criticism Index: http://dir.yahoo.com/Entertainment/Movies_and_Film/Theory_and_Criticism/

Internet Movie Database: <http://us.imdb.com/>

British Film Institute: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/>

Links to Performance and Gender sites: <http://faculty.smcm.edu/jrklein/Linkspage.htm>

All-Movie Guide Glossary of Film Terms: http://www.allmovie.com/avg_glossary.html

Words of Art Online Film Studies Glossary: http://www.ouc.bc.ca/fina/glossary/f_list/filmstudieshome.html

Words of Art Online Theory and Criticism Glossary: <http://www.ouc.bc.ca/fina/glossary/gloshome.html>

Voice of the Shuttle (Humanities Resources site): <http://vos.ucsb.edu/>

Resources for film and cultural studies: <http://www.ejumpcut.org/currentissue/links.html>

TEXTS:

Bordwell and Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*

Dines and Humez. *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

also, electronically accessible materials, as assigned

e-reserves password: 3mCB

ESSAY ASSIGNMENT:

The Online Learning Center for the Bordwell and Thompson textbook

(http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0073535060/student_view0/index.html) poses essay questions for each chapter, and I have placed a copy of those questions in the Assignments folder on the Blackboard course site. Early in the semester, we shall divide up the questions so that each student is responsible for answering one question. All essays pertaining to material covered before the midterm will be due by 5pm on **9 October**, and all essays pertaining to material covered after the midterm will be due by 5pm on **4 December**. All students are required to read all essays, which should be approximately 500 words in length. I shall grade the essays based on their success at using chapter information to address the question in a cogent, well-written essay. (Note: post your essays to the appropriate folder in Blackboard. Avoid posting them as attachments.)

VIEWING PROTOCOLS:

- ▶ Several of the films we shall be watching in class are nearly 2 hours in length. Therefore, I shall start the films promptly at 2:40pm. Because of the particular significance of beginnings and endings, you will need to arrange your lives so that you can arrive promptly and remain through the end. *Note that screenings take place in MH 111.*
- ▶ Before the films start, get yourself situated so that you will not need to leave the room, rustle your belongings, or pant from the exertion of stair-climbing during the screening. Do not distract others by making unnecessary noise or conversation. Turn off cell phones and pagers. Arrive in time to sign the roll sheet.
- ▶ Do whatever you need to do (get sufficient sleep at night, for example) in order to avoid sleeping during screenings.
- ▶ If something in a film offends you, close your eyes and/or cover your ears. If you are easily offended, drop the course. You are welcome to raise this issue – like any other issue related to the films – in class discussion or privately with me.
- ▶ If you MUST leave or enter the room during a screening, please avoid throwing light on the screen and distracting others.
- ▶ If you have extenuating circumstances that make it difficult for you to comply with any of these protocols, let me know.

| <u>WEEK</u> | <u>DISCUSSION TOPIC</u> | <u>(ASSIGNMENTS DUE)</u> | <u>(**SPECIAL EVENTS**)</u> |
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| 31 Aug | M | Course Introduction: Production, Reception, and Attractions of Screen Media | |
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RE-PRESENTING “REAL”: PRODUCTION

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| | W | Truths, Meanings, and Ideologies: The Cultural Studies Model (Dines/Humez, pp. 1-39; Bordwell/Thompson, Part One) (**TFMS Open House, 7:30PM, Theater**) | |
| 7 Sept | M | <i>The Thin Blue Line</i> (103 min): Troubled Documentary (due to Labor Day, screening time TBA) | |
| | W | Documentary and the Discourses of Truth (Bordwell/Thompson, Chapter 10 plus pp. 413-19) | |
| 14 Sept | M | Codes of Genre (Bordwell/Thompson, Chapter 9) | |
| | W | Media and Constructions of Self and Other (Dines/Humez, selections from Part One: chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 14; deadline for first Blackboard posting) | |
| 21 Sept | M | <i>Kiss of the Spiderwoman</i> (120 min): “Lying in Two Styles” (essay topics and presentation topics due) | |
| | W | Propaganda: Visible/Invisible (e-reserves reading, from <i>Protocols of Reading</i>) | |

PRACTICES OF LOOKING: RECEPTION

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| 28 Sept | M | <i>Special Bulletin</i> (103 min): Cuing Authenticity (e-reserves reading, from “TV News Personality and Credibility”) | |
| | W | Covering the News (e-reserves reading, from “The Trials and Tribulations of Rodney King”) | |
| 5 Oct | M | <i>Citizen Kane</i> (120 min): Shaping the Quest for Truth | |
| | W | Film Forms and Structuring Desire (Bordwell/Thompson, Part Two; first-round essays due Friday by 5:00 PM) | |
| 12 Oct | M | Fall Reading Day | |
| | W | Midterm Examination | |
| 19 Oct | M | <i>Apocalypse Now</i> (153 min): The Uses of Mise-en-Scene, Cinematography, and Editing (Bordwell/Thompson, chapters 4-5) | |
| | W | <i>Apocalypse Now</i> (con’t): Screen Media and the Subjectivities of Postmodernism (Bordwell/Thompson, chapter 6) | |
| 26 Oct | M | <i>The Piano</i> (121 min): Subjectivities of Feminism and Post-Colonialism (e-reserves reading, from “Woman is an Island”) | |
| | W | Issues and Components of Visual Style and Sound (Bordwell/Thompson, chapters 7-8) | |
| 2 Nov | M | Discussion of midterms/In-class group projects on <i>Apocalypse Now</i> and <i>The Piano</i> | |
| | W | The Presence (Presents?) of Absence: Simulacra (Dine/Humez, pp. 155-170, 245-257, and 333-358) | |

PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF DISRUPTION

- 9 Nov M *Girl 6* (101 min): Dismantling the Master's Narrative (Bordwell/Thompson, Part Five)
W Brecht, Apparatus, and Making the Invisible Visible (e-reserves reading, from "Good Girls Look the Other Way")
(**Arms and the Man* opens tomorrow at 8PM, Bruce Davis Theater*)
- 16 Nov M *Adaptation* (114 min): Doing and Undoing the Technologies of Film Narrative
W WYSIWYG: Looking and Legibility (read online user reviews of *Adaptation* in Amazon.com [www.amazon.com] and Internet Movie Database [<http://us.imdb.com/>])

(BE)COMING ATTRACTIONS

- 23 Nov M Short Films by Lumière, Méliès, and Others (Bordwell/Thompson, Part Six; e-reserves reading, from "Aesthetic of Astonishment")
W **Thanksgiving Break**
- 30 Nov M TV by Day (presentations due; e-reserves reading, from "Television/Sound")
W TV by Night (presentations due; second-round essays due Friday by 5:00 PM)
- 7 Dec M The Internet (presentations due)
W Conclusion and Review
- 16 Dec W **FINAL EXAMINATION, 2:00–4:15 PM**