

Introduction to Film: “Behind-the-Scenes”

ENGFLM 0400 Summer 6wk1

University of Pittsburgh
T/Th 12-3:50 PM
CL244A

Instructor: Katie Bird
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Office:
T/Th 11-12, & by appointment

Course Website: <http://0400summer.wordpress.com>

Course Description

Introduction to Film will acquaint students with various critical and cultural topics in film and media studies. The course will ask students to think about film as art, film as culturally situated and socially consumed, and the media industry as it relates to a broader historical context. We will watch films, television, and other media with an eye to the various institutional and social formations that alter how we watch and what we feel about what we see and hear on screen. In approaching these topics, we will watch a diverse range of media made by Hollywood, international filmmakers, independent companies, and amateur makers across film history from the silent period to contemporary productions. We will ask how questions of ideology and identity (race, gender, class, sexuality, disability), determinants of quality (auteurism, awards, film criticism, festivals, distribution source), and categories surrounding consumption (genre, nation, star image, and fandom) shift our viewing perceptions and choices in what we consume on a day-to-day basis. Throughout the course, we will continually reframe our critique and analysis of the cultural and social significance of film and media products in relationship to the economic, political, and artistic goals of the individuals and institutions who work in the entertainment industries with special attention to behind-the-scenes production culture hierarchies and craftsmanship. In this short summer session, we will focus our attention on media that is self-reflexive about its own history and making, in other words, movies about the movies.

As a beginning course, this class will provide the tools to understand how films have been and are still made, analyzed, and situated in our world. Introduction to Film is designed as a collaborative lecture and student-driven discussion course in which students will be familiarized with new tools of historical, critical, cultural, and industrial analysis to bring to the table in class conversations, written responses, and multi-media projects. Increasingly, media scholars and film critics must address traditional written forms of scholarship and criticism while also navigating the changes in cloud-based viewing platforms and online digital remediation of media via YouTube, Gifs, and Twitter. Similarly, students will engage with topics in film and media scholarship by reading and writing traditional academic papers and by watching, listening, and experimenting with creating new models of media scholarship in podcasts, online criticism, and video essays.

Assignments

Discussion Leader Presentation: For one class this semester, you will introduce the class to an assigned figure in the film industry. You will do a small amount of research on the requirements of their job description, the background and filmography of the individual in question, and their contributions to the film in discussion. You will present your findings to the class in a short five-minute introduction with three accompanying discussion questions (to be emailed to me by 11AM on the day of your presentation).

Blog: 5 posts, 5 comments. Each week, you will write a short blog post (250-300 words) about one in-class viewing and one short comment on another classmate's post. These posts should synthesize some aspect of the film's formal or narrative components with the readings, class discussion, or lecture. Your comments should move beyond agreement or disagreement and instead seek to expand or add additional insights or details to the ideas discussed in your classmate's post.

All blogging due Friday. All responding due Sunday

Group one (blogs about Tuesday films, Group two (blogs about Thursday films):

Project #1 Watching Film History: You will research and watch a film from 1927 using resources from The Media History Digital Library and then write a 500 blog post with images from your research. (See Full Assignment on Course Website)

Project #2 Behind-the-Scenes: You will watch a film AND its Behind-the-Scenes feature or featurettes. The film is your choice provided I have access to it at Stark Media Services or through an accessible online platform. You will write an 750 word blog post with images that reviews these BTS features (from a DVD, or available on YouTube). (See Full Assignment on Course Website)

Final Project (in-class reflection essay & final project): You will have a two-part final. The first will be a short, written in-class reflection on the last day of class. The second part will be either be a final research paper (1,200-1,400 words, MLA/Chicago format) OR a creative project of your choice (a video essay, an audio essay, a podcast, a short film screenplay, etc). (See Full Assignment here)

Final Project proposal due: Sunday, June 11 (by email). Describe your topic, 3 research questions, and 3 possible sources.

Grading

Discussion Leader & Participation 15%

Blog 15%

Project #1 15%

Project #2 20%

Final (part 1) 10%

Final (part 2) 25%

Policies

The 'R' Rating

Some of the assigned media is rated 'R' or unrated: there is violence, language, and sexuality that could be considered objectionable. If a film makes you uncomfortable, you're free to leave the room, but be aware that "mature content" will often become part of our discussions. I also advise that you read-up on the film ahead of time and speak to me about your concerns so we can discuss viewing options.

Attendance

Because this is a seminar, discussion is central to the work of the course. Come to class on time, prepared to take part in conversation. You are allowed one absence during the summer term, though it is strongly recommended that you strive for perfect attendance. A second will affect your grade, and a third is grounds for failure. Students in this situation may want to consider withdrawing from the course and taking it again under better circumstances. You're responsible for finding out about and making up any work you miss. You'll be considered late to class if you arrive more than five minutes after the start of the class period. Three late arrivals count as one absence.

Participation

For this class, your participation is measured by your willingness to engage with all the course material in a given day: including lecture, the screening, course readings, and the class discussion. I am especially interested in fostering roundtable discussions and dialogue as an entire class conversation.

Late/Missing Work

As this is a condensed class, you'll be turning in assignments every week. If you submit something late, your grade on it drops by a full letter. You also won't get feedback on that assignment.

Technology

Under no circumstances may you use a laptop, tablet, or phone during screenings as they distract from everyone's viewing and listening experience. If I see you using one of these devices during a screening, you will be counted as absent for that day.

At other times, I recognize that using these devices during discussion and lecture can be helpful for reviewing course reading and materials, referencing sources, and taking lecture notes. I encourage you to use your discretion in utilizing these technologies in a way that helps you participate more fully in the course rather than as a distraction from it.

Email Communication Policy

Each student is issued a University email address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. Students are expected to read email sent to this account on a regular basis. Here's the University's full Email Communication Policy. I check my email a couple times a day (usually in the morning) and rarely after 6 PM. Keep this in mind while working on

assignments the night before they are due and be sure to contact me or set up an in-person meeting in advance.

University Policy on Plagiarism

The English department offers this helpful guide to defining and avoiding plagiarism. Most importantly, the department's guideline states that plagiarism occurs when:

1. "You quote directly from a source without using quotation marks and adequately acknowledging the source. "Sources" include books, magazines, newspapers, journal articles, Web pages, lectures, notes, letters, movies, musical lyrics. In some cases, even a single word, if it's distinctive, constitutes plagiarism if not properly attributed with quotation marks and some sort of citation.
2. You paraphrase a source without acknowledging it.
3. You paraphrase too closely to the original (substituting synonyms for some of the original words), even if you do acknowledge the source.
4. You use someone else's idea, argument, interpretation, facts or supporting evidence without indicating your dependence on it (with a footnote or textual citation), even if you modify or elaborate the idea or argument.
5. You fabricate a source or quotation to give the appearance of having done required research.
6. You turn in someone else's work, in whatever form, as your own." All instances of plagiarism will result in no credit for the assignment and a report to the Dean. See the Dietrich's school policy on plagiarism [here](#)

The Writing Center

Located in 317-B Student Center, 4024 O'Hara St., the Writing Center is an excellent resource for working on your writing with an experienced consultant. Although you should not expect consultants to correct your papers for you, they can assist you in learning to organize, edit, and revise your essays. Their services are free, but you should call ahead (412-624- 6556) or make an appointment online

Other Services

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both me (your instructor) and the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, 412-228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Pitt offers free personal and academic counseling at the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930). Specialized counseling services are available to victims of sexual assault; you can contact the sexual assault services coordinator via the main UCC phone line during weekday business hours or at 412-648-7856 (after 5 pm, Monday-Friday or on weekends). In a crisis situation, university police can also connect you with an on-call counselor affiliated with the UCC.

Schedule (use course website for up-to-date readings, screenings, etc)

*All readings are subject to change, please check this schedule often for updates

Week One: Introduction to Film Studies|Narrative & Form

May 16: Contemporary Debates in Film Studies

Screening: *La La Land*

Set up a free WordPress blog. Email me the link by Thursday morning, so I can add it to our course blog.

Read (during class): Girish Shambu, *La La Land and its discontents*; Guy Lodge, *Hollywood's Everlasting Love Affair with Itself*; Sara Preciado, *La La Land's Movie References* (video); SNL, *La La Land interrogation* (video)

Group one blogs, Group two responds

May 18: Narrative & Form

Screening: *Sullivan's Travels*

Read: Susan Speidel, "Film Form and Narrative," from *Introduction to Film Studies*, ed. Jill Nelmes, pp. 79-85, 87-102, Greg W. Smith, "'It's Just a Movie': A Teaching Essay for Introductory Media Studies Classes"

suggested materials: Chloé Galibert-Lainé, *Why Framing Matters in Movies*

Group two blogs, Group one responds

Presentation: Writer & Director

Week Two: Silent Film Culture and Film History

May 23: Early Cinema & Silent Film

Screening: Selections from Early Cinema (16mm) & *Sherlock Jr*

Read: *You Must Remember This: Buster Keaton's Biggest Mistake* (podcast), Searle Kochberg, "*The Industrial Contexts of Film Production*" from *Introduction to Film Studies*, ed. Jill Nelmes, pp. 3-6; Patrick Phillips, "*Spectator, Audience, and Response*" from *Introduction to Film Studies*, ed. Jill Nelmes, pp. 114-126

Group one blogs, Group two responds

Presentations: Projectionist & Exhibitor

May 25: Film History (Preservation, Audiences, Exhibition)

Screening: *Forgotten Silver*

Read: David Pierce, The Survival of American Silent Films: 1912-1929 (LOC, pgs 1-8, 11-12); Jaimie Baron, The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History (pgs 53-56)

suggested materials: Rik Chaubet, Botanist or Electrician? Buster Keaton's relation to the mechanical: a critical analysis of some interpretations; Project Arclight: Analytics for the Study of 20th Century Media; Media History Digital Library

Group two blogs, Group one responds

Presentation: Distributor

Project #1 Due: Monday May 29, 5 PM

Week Three: Technological & Industrial Change

May 30: The Coming of Sound, Industrial Reflexivity

Screening: Selections from early film sound, *Singing in the Rain*

Read: Searle Kochberg, "The Industrial Contexts of Film Production: American Studio Era" from *Introduction to Film Studies*, ed. Jill Nelmes, pp. 6-9;

suggested materials: Tracy Cox-Stanton, Film Noise, Material Thinking, and Videographic Writing

Group one blogs, Group two responds

Presentation: Film Producer (Arthur Freed Unit)

June 1: Camera Movement, Case Study: Steadicam

Screening: Selections from early Steadicam/Panaglide, *Boogie Nights*

Read: "The Art of Steadicam" (Video), John Caldwell, "Steadicam", Kevin B. Lee, "Steadicam Progress: The Career of Paul Thomas Anderson in Five Shots";

suggested materials: Conor Bateman, Cameraperson to Camera (Video)

Group two blogs, Group one responds

Presentation: Director of Photography

Week Four: Production Cultures | Below-the-Line Labor

June 6: Sound

Screening: *Berberian Sound Studio*

Read: John Caldwell. "Cultures of Production." *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method*. (p. 199-212), Paul Arthur, "(In)dispensible: Confessions of a Making of Addict" in *Film Comment*; Foley Artists (video),

Group one blogs, Group two responds

Presentations: Foley & Sound Mixer/Sound Editor

June 8: Editing

Screening: *Hugo* & Harun Farocki

Read: Karen Pearlman, "Rhythmic Intuition"; interview with Thelma Schoonmaker
suggested materials: Tope Ogundare, [A Cut Above: Ten Women who Epitomise the Art of Editing](#)

Group two blogs, Group one responds

Presentation: Editor (Sally Menke)

Project #2 Due: Sunday June 11, 5 PM

Week Five: Identity and Representation

June 13: Stardom, Feminism

Screening: *Clouds of Sils Maria*

Read: Paul Watson, "[Star Studies: text, pleasure, identity](#)" from *Introduction to Film Studies*, ed. Jill Nelmes pp. 167-175; Jill Nelmes, "[Gender and Film](#)" from *Introduction to Film Studies*, ed. Jill Nelmes, pp. 263-268;

suggested materials: Kevin B. Lee, [The Good, Bad Acting of Juliet Binoche](#)

Group one blogs, Group two responds

Presentation: Agent/Publicist

June 15: Black, LGBTQ (rewriting film history)

Screening: *Illusion, Watermelon Woman*

Read: Tre'vell Anderson, "[Cheryl Dunye on her Groundbreaking LGBTQ film](#)" from Los Angeles Times; bell hooks, "oppositional gaze: black female spectators" pp. 127-130

Group two blogs, Group one responds

Presentation: Showrunner (TV)

Week Six: Contemporary Media & Television Industries

June 20: Reality TV & Contemporary Media Industries

Screening: *The Bachelorette* (select episode), *UnReal* (live-tweeting)

Read: Alisa Perren. "Creativity in the Contemporary Cable Industry." *Cinema Journal* (2011). (p. 132-138), TBD

June 22: Final (part one) & Wrap-Up: Hollywood Critique

Screening: *Bojack Horseman*, *Transformers: The Pre-Make*

Suggested materials: [Understanding a Box Office Failure](#) (video)

Final Project. Due Friday June 23, 5 PM