

**SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY  
FA 2301 Intro to Film Studies**

FALL 2014  
Tuesday/Thursday  
11:00am – 12:15pm  
BAB 305

Bret Scott, Asst. Professor  
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Regular Office Hours:  
9-10AM MWF, on walk-in basis  
All others by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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Movies – good ones, anyway – are about more than the story on the surface. A well-directed movie has subtextual ideas embedded in images, patterns, compositions, sounds, and thematic constructions. This class is about learning to recognize these elements and their use. In this class, the goal is to learn to “read” a film in the same way one might understand the allegory in a well-written piece of literature.

The films selected for this semester are a tiny fraction of the outstanding output of these directors – and dozens more (both directors and films) were contenders. The selection of each film was made using the following criteria:

- 1) Does the film have theme beyond the entertainment value of the story? (in other words, is this film about “something more?”)
- 2) Is the film recognized within the canon of film criticism as defining in its particular genre?
- 3) Does the film have a particular strength or element suited to a lecture topic in this class?

Reading a film is an acquired skill, and it takes some time and effort to develop your “cinema muscles.” Some of the titles we’re screening may be films you’ve already seen. Some may be completely new. In either case, I think you’ll see films in a whole new way by the end of this class. I hope you do.

**REQUIRED TEXT**

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Understanding Movies; Louis Gianetti  
ISBN-10: 0205856160 | ISBN-13: 978-0205856169 | Edition: 13<sup>th</sup>  
Available at the Sul Ross Bookstore or on Amazon

## **COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

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- 1) Your positive attitude is the difference between success and failure in art, life, and this class.
- 2) You will be on time. Which means, at minimum, five minutes before start of class.
- 3) Screenings, whether you've already seen the movie or not, are NOT optional. Much the same way you have to read the book to succeed in a literature class, you have to have seen the movie to participate in the class discussion.

## **PREREQUISITES**

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None.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this class, students will:

- Demonstrate a working vocabulary of terminology of film criticism
- Articulate the component elements of cinema
- Evaluate and critique cinematic works from the standpoints of both art and craft.
- Synthesize the elements of cinema critique into an individuated point-of-view in written form.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

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- 1) Weekly quizzes on assigned reading
- 2) Mid-Term Paper
- 3) Mandatory attendance at screenings
- 4) Full participation in class discussion / critique
- 5) Final Paper

## **Materials Required:**

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None

## CLASS DATES: Assignments and Deadlines

Note that these dates and the details of each class are subject to change at the instructor's discretion, as class progress warrants.

DATE	LECTURE/DISCUSSION	READING
8/26	Syllabus. Expectations. What is a movie?	Gianetti, Chapter 1
8/28	Quiz How movies get made	
9/2	Jobs within the industry – who does what	Gianetti, Chapter 2
9/4	Quiz Setup: <i>Working Girl</i>	
9/8	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>Working Girl</i> , Dir. Mike Nichols	
9/9	Review: <i>Working Girl</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 3
9/11	Quiz Setup: <i>Trainspotting</i>	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>Trainspotting</i> , Dir. Danny Boyle	
9/16	Review: <i>Trainspotting</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 4
9/18	Quiz Setup: <i>When We Were Kings</i>	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>When We Were Kings</i> , Dir. Leon Gast	
9/23	Review: <i>When We Were Kings</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 5
9/25	Quiz Setup: <i>Moulin Rouge</i>	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>Moulin Rouge</i> , Dir. Baz Luhrmann	
9/30	Review: <i>Moulin Rouge</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 7
10/2	Quiz Setup: <i>Cool Hand Luke</i>	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>Cool Hand Luke</i> , Dir. Stuart Rosenberg	
10/7	Review: <i>Cool Hand Luke</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 8
10/9	Quiz Setup: <i>Fireman's Ball</i> and <i>Dr. Strangelove</i>	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening:	

	<i>Fireman's Ball</i> , Dir. Milos Forman <i>Dr. Strangelove</i> , Dir. Stanley Kubrick	
10/14	Review: <i>Fireman's Ball</i> and <i>Dr. Strangelove</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 10
10/16	Quiz Setup: <i>Blade Runner</i>	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>Blade Runner</i> , Dir. Ridley Scott	
<b>10/21</b>	<b>MID-TERM PAPERS DUE AT START OF CLASS</b> Review: <i>Blade Runner</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 11
10/23	Quiz Setup: <i>The Godfather</i>	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>The Godfather</i> , Dir. Francis Coppola	
10/28	Review: <i>The Godfather</i>	"From One Critic to Others" Handout
10/30	Quiz Setup: <i>Lives of Others</i>	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>The Lives of Others</i> , Dir. Florian Von Donnersmarck	
11/4	Review: <i>Lives of Others</i>	
11/6	Setup: <i>Seven Samurai</i>	"Kurosawa On Directing" handout
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>Seven Samurai</i> , Dir. Akira Kurosawa	
11/11	Quiz Review: <i>Seven Samurai</i>	
11/13	Setup: <i>Rear Window</i>	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>Rear Window</i> , Dir. Alfred Hitchcock	
11/18	Review: <i>Rear Window</i>	
11/20	Setup: <i>Butch Cassidy</i>	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid</i> , Dir. George Roy Hill	
11/25	Review: <i>Butch Cassidy</i>	
11/27	NO CLASS - HAPPY FOOD COMA DAY	
	6:30pm Monday Night Screening: <i>Lawrence of Arabia</i> , Dir. David Lean	
12/2	Review: <i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	
12/4	Dead Day - No Class	
<b>12/9</b>	<b>10:15AM FINAL EXAM - Final Papers Due</b>	

## **GRADING**

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Assignments are valued as follows:

1) Weekly quizzes on assigned reading	30%
2) Mid-Term Paper	20%
3) Mandatory attendance at screenings	10%
4) Full participation in class discussion / critique	10%
5) Final Paper	30%

### **Grading Criteria:**

A = Exceptional. Demonstrates mastery of material beyond expectation. Professional quality of work. Highest level of scholarship.

B = Above average. Demonstrates mastery of material. Work is of better-than-expected quality, but not quite professional. High level of scholarship.

C = Average. Demonstrates proficiency with material. Work is of amateur quality. Ordinary level of scholarship.

D = Below Average. Less than proficient with material. Work shows errors, careless mistakes, or is just plain wrong. Poor scholarship.

F – Failure. Material incomplete. Work grossly negligent or incomplete. No evidence of scholarship present.

### **LATE PAPERS**

Deadlines are an inescapable part of responsible, professional, adult life. Late papers will lose a letter grade for each day that the paper is late.

If you discover, *a week or more in advance*, that you have multiple deadlines converging on the same day, you may request a change in deadline. Such a change may be granted at the instructor's discretion. Once the deadline has passed, it's too late to ask for exceptions. Manage your time and deadlines wisely.

### **TARDINESS / ABSENCE POLICY**

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Attendance is 25% of your grade. That's the difference between an "A" and a "C"...or a really easy way to earn an "F."

### **TARDINESS**

Class **BEGINS EXACTLY AT THE APPOINTED TIME**. It is your responsibility to be prepared to begin **BEFORE** the class starts.

Three instances of tardiness is equivalent to one absence. See below for the class absence policy.

**THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO DENY ENTRY TO STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT PRESENT AT THE START OF CLASS\* – ON THE HOUR. PLAN ACCORDINGLY. ON-TIME is EARLY!**

\*Exceptions will be made only for those with classes located in RAS whose end time makes on-time arrival impossible.

Punctuality is essential in this business. Tardiness will not be tolerated.

Absence Policy, from the Sul Ross State University 2012-2014 Course Catalogue:

### **CLASS ATTENDANCE**

Regular class attendance is important to the attainment of the educational objectives of the University. Each instructor will keep class attendance records, and the instructor's policy on class attendance will be explained at the beginning of the semester or term.

The instructors will drop a student from a course when the student has a total of nine absences. A student will be dropped for excessive absences in remedial courses after nine absences.

An absence is defined as non-attendance in fifty minutes of class; for example, non-attendance in a one and one-half hour class will constitute one and one-half absences and non-attendance in a three hour class will constitute three absences. An absence because of participation in an official University activity is considered to be an authorized absence.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

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*Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1973. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for accessibility services. Students seeking accessibility services must contact Counseling and Accessibility Services, Ferguson Hall, Room 112. The mailing address is P.O. Box C-171, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832. Telephone: 432-837-8203.*