

**SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY
COMM 1325 Intro to Film Studies**

Spring 2023 MWF 11am – 11:50AM BAB 304	Bret Scott, Assoc. Professor Office: FAB 208 432/837-8794 bscott@sulross.edu Regular Office Hours: 10-11AM MWF, on walk-in basis All others by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Movies – good ones, anyway – are about more than the story on the surface. A well-directed movie has *subtext* - 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.

COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT Student Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to meet one or more of the program learning outcomes applied to all Communication majors.

At the end of this course:

- 1: Students will be able to analyze communication content for argument, including identification of major elements, such as claim, warrants, and data.

2: Students will be able to effectively construct messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context; including electronic media technologies.

3: Students will be able to apply Communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts to the analysis of communication situations.

REQUIRED TEXT

Understanding Movies; Louis Gianetti

ISBN-10: 0205856160 | ISBN-13: 978-0205856169 | Edition: 13th

Available at the Sul Ross Bookstore or on Amazon

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- 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 are MANDATORY. Whether you've already seen the movie or not, attendance is 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. As a mass entertainment, movies are meant to be seen in groups, on a large screen. Watching on a laptop, or worse, a phone, is not an acceptable substitute, as the viewer misses the scale and the subtleties of composition, design, and screen movement. Also, laptop and phone sound SUCKS, and sound is at least half of a movie.

PREREQUISITES

None.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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:

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

Materials Required:

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
1/18	Syllabus. Expectations. What is a movie? Jobs within the industry – who does what	Gianetti, Chapter 1
1/20	Email Quiz Chapter 1 Setup <i>Working Girl</i> Dir. Mike Nichols, 1988 1h53m	
1/23	Finish: <i>Working Girl</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 2
1/25	Review: <i>Working Girl</i> Setup: <i>Trainspotting</i>	
1/27	Screening: <i>Trainspotting</i> , Dir. Danny Boyle, 1996. 1h33m	Gianetti, Chapter 3
1/30	Finish / Review: <i>Trainspotting</i>	
2/1	Setup/ Screening: <i>When We Were Kings</i> , Dir. Leon Gast, 1974/1996. 1h28m	Gianetti, Chapter 4
2/3	Finish / Review: <i>When We Were Kings</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 5
2/6	Setup/ Screening: <i>Lost in Translation</i> , Dir. Sofia Coppola, 2003. 1h42m	
2/8	Finish: <i>Lost In Translation</i> EMAIL QUIZ	Gianetti, Chapter 7
2/10	Review: <i>Lost In Translation</i> .	

Also 2/10	Setup: <i>Cool Hand Luke</i> Dir. Stuart Rosenberg, 1967. 2h7m	
2/13	Screening: <i>Cool Hand Luke</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 8
2/15	Finish / Review: <i>Cool Hand Luke</i> Setup: <i>Good Night and Good Luck</i> , Dir. George Clooney. 2005. 1h33m	

2/20	Screening: <i>Good Night and Good Luck</i> , Dir. George Clooney	Gianetti, Chapter 10
2/22	Finish / Review: <i>Good Night and Good Luck</i>	
2/24	Setup/ Screening: <i>Blade Runner (the final cut)</i> , Dir. Ridley Scott, 1982/2007. 1h57m	
2/27	Screening: <i>Blade Runner</i>	
3/1	Finish / Review: <i>Blade Runner</i>	Gianetti, Chapter 11
3/3	Setup/ Screening: <i>The Godfather</i> , Dir. Francis Coppola, 1972. 2h55m	"From One Critic to Others" Handout
3/6	Screening: <i>The Godfather</i>	
3/8	Screening: <i>The Godfather</i>	
3/10	Finish / Review: <i>The Godfather</i>	

3/13-17	SPRING BREAK. DON'T GET ARRESTED.	
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3/20	Setup/ Screening: <i>Seven Samurai</i> , Dir. Akira Kurosawa, 1954. 3h27m	
3/22	Screening: <i>Seven Samurai</i>	
3/24	Screening: <i>Seven Samurai</i>	
3/27	Screening: <i>Seven Samurai</i>	
3/29	Review: <i>Seven Samurai</i> .	
3/31	Setup: <i>North by Northwest</i> , Dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1959. 2h16m	
4/3	Screening: <i>North by Northwest</i>	
4/5	Screening: <i>North by Northwest</i>	
4/7	GOOD FRIDAY HOLIDAY NO CLASS	
4/10	Finish: <i>North by Northwest</i>	

4/12	Review: <i>North by Northwest</i> Setup: <i>The Lives of Others</i> Dir. Florian Von Donnersmarck, 2006. 2h17m	
4/14	Screening: <i>The Lives of Others</i>	
4/17	Finish: <i>The Lives of Others</i>	
4/19	Review: <i>The Lives of Others</i>	
4/21	OUTSIDE VIEWING PAPERS DUE	
4/24	Setup/Screening: <i>The Big Short</i> , Dir. Adam McKay, 2015 2h10m	
4/26	Screening: <i>The Big Short</i>	
4/28	Finish / Review: <i>The Big Short</i>	
5/1	Setup / Screening: <i>Lawrence of Arabia</i> , Dir. David Lean, 1962. 3h38m	
5/3	Screening: <i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	
5/5	Screening: <i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	
5/8	Screening: <i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	
5/10	Finish / Review: <i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	
	FINAL EXAM DATE AND TIME TBA	

GRADING

Assignments are valued as follows:

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| 1) Weekly quizzes on assigned reading and screening | 25% |
| 2) Mid-Term Paper | 15% |
| 3) Mandatory attendance at screenings | 10% |
| 4) Full participation in class discussion / critique | 5% |
| 5) Outside Viewing Paper 1 | 10% |
| 6) Outside Viewing Paper 2 | 10% |
| 7) Final Paper | 25% |

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

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

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.