

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY
COMM 5304.H01 Film Studies: Global Cinema

Fall 2025
Monday/Wednesday
11:00am – 12:15pm
BAB 304

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Regular Office Hours:
10-11 AM MWF, on walk-in basis
All others by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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.

Further, this class has as its goal a survey of cinema offerings from around the world. Too often, we define our tastes in a narrow “amero-centric” window. While Hollywood is exceeded in output only by Bollywood, many nations around the globe have vibrant, valid, and interesting cinema cultures. This class is an attempt to broaden both the idea of what a movie can be and your own personal tastes.

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. In every single case, we are just barely scratching the surface of the national output of each of these countries – can you think of a single film that, by itself, represents the totality of American film culture? Ridiculous. – so the selection of each film presented this semester 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?
- 4) Is the film in English? Then we’re not showing it.

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

NONE. The films and the lectures and discussions are your textbook. But you must see all the films. All of them. Every single one. And you gotta stay awake.

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, 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

None.

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.

Communication Program Marketable Skills

1. Informative and Persuasive Speaking
 2. Audience-centered Writing
 3. Critical Analysis
 4. Research
 5. Effective Message Construction Using Technology
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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.
- Recognize and define elements that belong to individual national cinematic tradition – EG: French New Wave, Italian Neo-realism.
- Synthesize the elements of cinema critique into an individuated point-of-view in written form.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

- 1) Weekly written journal response to the screening
- 2) Mid-Term Paper
- 3) Mandatory attendance at screenings
- 4) Full participation in class discussion / critique
- 5) Final Paper

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	TOPIC
8/25	Review syllabus. Topic: Formal Qualities
8/27	Setup: Swedish film and <i>Let The Right One In</i>
	SCREENING: <i>Let The Right One In</i> – Dir: Tomas Alfredson (115 min, Sweden, 2008)
9/1	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS
9/3	Review: <i>Let The Right One In</i> – Response answers due. Setup <i>Bicycle Thieves</i> – Dir. Vittorio de Sica (89 min, Italy, 1948)
	SCREENING: <i>Bicycle Thieves</i> , Dir. Vittorio De Sica (121 min, Italy, 1948)
9/8	Review <i>Bicycle Thieves</i> – Response answers due
9/10	Setup: Forman and <i>Firemen's Ball</i>
	SCREENING: <i>Firemen's Ball</i> , Dir. Milos Forman (71 Min, Czechoslovakia. 1967)
9/15	Review <i>Firemen's Ball</i> – Response answers due
9/17	Setup: The unusual case of: <i>Battle of Algiers</i>
	SCREENING: <i>Battle of Algiers</i> , Dir. Gillo Pontecorvo (121 min, Algeria, 1966)
9/22	Review: <i>Battle of Algiers</i> – Response answers due
9/24	Setup: French film, the French New Wave, and <i>The 400 Blows</i>

	SCREENING: <i>The 400 Blows</i> , Dir: Francois Truffault (99 min, France, 1959)
9/29	Review: <i>The 400 Blows</i>
10/1	Setup: Italian film after Neo-realism, <i>8 + 1/2</i>
	SCREENING: <i>8 + 1/2</i> , Dir. Federico Fellini (138 min, Italy, 1963)
10/6	Review: <i>8 + 1/2</i>
10/8	Setup: Indian film, (briefly, Bollywood) and <i>The World of Apu</i>
	SCREENING: <i>The World of Apu</i> – Satyajit Ray (105 min, India, 1959)
10/13	Review: <i>The World of Apu</i>
10/15	Setup: German film (Briefly, German expressionism) and <i>Lives of Others</i>
	SCREENING: <i>Lives of Others</i> , Dir: Friedrich Von Donnersmarck (136 min, Germany, 2006)
10/20	Review: <i>Lives of Others</i>
10/22	Setup: South African cinema and <i>Tsotsi</i>
	SCREENING: <i>Tsotsi</i> , Dir. Gavin Hood (91 min, South Africa, 2005)
10/27	Review: <i>Tsotsi</i>
10/29	Setup: Mexican cinema and <i>Amores Perros</i>
	SCREENING: <i>Amores Perros</i> , Dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu (154 min, Mexico, 2000)
11/3	Review: <i>Amores Perros</i>
11/5	Setup: Iranian film and <i>A Separation</i>
	SCREENING: <i>A Separation</i> , Dir. Asghar Farhadi (123 min., Iran, 2011)
11/10	Review: <i>A Separation</i>
11/12	Setup: Chinese cinema and <i>Eat, Drink, Man, Woman</i>
	SCREENING: <i>Eat, Drink, Man, Woman</i> , Ang Lee (124 min., China, 1994)
11/17	Review: <i>Eat, Drink, Man, Woman</i>
11/19	Setup: <i>Seven Samurai</i> – Dir. Akira Kurosawa (3h27m, Japan, 1954)
	Screening: <i>Seven Samurai</i>
11/24	Research day – class does not meet.
11/26	THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS
12/1	REVIEW for FINAL PAPER
12/3	REVIEW for FINAL PAPER
12/9	FINAL PAPER DUE via email by 11:59pm 12/9

GRADING

Assignments are valued as follows:

1) Weekly written responses to screening	25%
2) Mid-Term Paper	20%
3) Mandatory attendance at screenings	15%
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

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. Any student who because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements. If an accommodation is needed, students must present their accommodation letter, obtained from Accessibility Services, as soon as possible. Please note that instructors are not permitted to provide classroom accommodations to a student until the appropriate verification has been received. Accessibility Services is in Ferguson Hall room 112. You can make an appointment by calling Mary Schwartze Grisham at 432 837-8203.