

FILM HISTORY AND CRITICISM

Syllabus

Course Description

This course uses the film medium to integrate cinematic history and criticism. Production elements such as lighting, sound and character development, as well as genres, themes and narrative pattern will be analyzed. Emphasis is placed on writing critically about the film. The course is organized into three units that survey the historical development of silent, sound, and post-new wave cinemas. Mast and Kawin's book provides a central axis, introducing important filmmakers and movements.

Course Objectives

Students completing the course will be able to:

1. Identify major works, movements, styles and production elements in the history of film
2. Differentiate works by period, genre, and culture
3. Interpret individual works with a critical focus on social context and stylistic elements

Required Materials

Mast, Gerald and Bruce Kawin. *A Short History of the Movies*. Abridged 11th edition. NY: [Pearson](#), 2012. ISBN-10: 0205210627 (older editions are okay for the most part)

Some films can be streamed through the [library](#) and others are available on the consumer market (FilmStruck, Netflix, Hulu, iTunes, Amazon Video, Vudu, Google Play, Youtube)

Coursework

Each week you will read the textbook, watch lectures and films, complete quizzes and responses to the course content. The short weekly quizzes, typically due Tuesday, consist of multiple-choice type and short answer questions covering that week's lectures, reading, and first film. Weekly response assignments, typically due Thursday, vary in nature from video blog reviews to group wiki projects. Exams at the end of each unit are cumulative—they build on the quizzes by covering all course material presented. Work submitted after a deadline will be marked down, but should be completed nevertheless. I will drop one low quiz and one low assignment score. Attendance is required at two special screenings held at the Old Town Theatre, *indicated below.

Grading

40% Assignments and attendance

40% Quizzes

20% Exams

Units & Weekly Schedule

(subject to change)

Unit 1: Silent Cinema (1895-1928)

Unit 1 Objectives:

1. Define basic terms of film analysis and recall major figures of the period
2. Describe the conditions for the development of narrative, art, avant-garde forms
3. Appreciate artistic play with the specific medium of cinema

Week 1 August 23 (Weds.) Origins

Read syllabus and M&K (Mast & Kavin) chapters 1-2

For Wednesday watch Getting Started and Lecture.1a

Quiz.w1 due Thursday midnight

For Thursday watch Lecture.1b and short film playlist

Assignment.w1 due Friday midnight

Week 2 August 28 A Mass Medium Matures

Read M&K chapter 3-4

For Tuesday watch lecture.2a and *Before the Nickelodeon* (Dir. Charles Musser, USA, 1982)

Quiz.w2 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch lecture.2b and short film playlist

Assignment.w2 due Thursday midnight

Week 3 September 5 (Tues.) Silent Studio-Era Hollywood

Read film terminology article and M&K chapter 5-6

For Tuesday watch lecture.3a and short comedies by Chaplin, Lloyd, and Keaton

Quiz.w3 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch lecture.3b and *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, USA, 1922)

Assignment.w3 due Thursday midnight

Week 4 September 11 German Golden Age

Read M&K chapter 7

For Tuesday watch lecture.4a and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Dir. Robert Wiene, 1920)

Quiz.w4 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch lecture.4b and *The Last Laugh* (Dir. F.W. Murnau, Germany, 1924)

Assignment.w4 due Thursday midnight

Week 5 September 18 Soviet Montage

Read Vertov 1922 *We: Variant of a Manifesto* and M&K chapter 8

For Tuesday watch lecture.5a & 5b, and *Man with a Movie Camera* (Dir. Dziga Vertov, USSR, 1929)

Unit 1 exam due Tuesday midnight

*Thursday 6pm Old Town Theatre screening of *Safety Last!* (Prod. Hal Roach, USA, 1923)

Assignment.w5 due Thursday midnight

Unit 2: Sound Cinema (1928 - 1975)

Unit 2 Objectives:

1. Divide Hollywood Cinema into periods and explain the changes that occurred to industry and culture
2. Compare the styles afforded by new sound and camera technologies to silent era styles
3. Summarize the development of New Wave cinemas with a consideration of historical context

Week 6 September 25 Interwar France and the idea of the 7th art

Read M&K chapter 10

For Tuesday watch lecture.6a, *Autumn Mists* (dir. Dmitri Kirsanoff, France, 1929), *Un Chien Andalou* (dir. Luis Buñuel, France, 1929), and the first third of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (Dir. Carl Dreyer, France, 1928)

Quiz.w6 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch lecture.6b and *The Grand Illusion* (Dir. Jean Renoir, France, 1937)

Assignment.w6 due Thursday midnight

Week 7 October 2 Sound Film and Studio-Era Hollywood 1930-45

Read M&K chapters 9 and 11

For Tuesday watch lecture.7a and *Singin' in the Rain* (Dirs. Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen, 1952)

Quiz.w7 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch lecture.7b and *Citizen Kane* (Dir. Orson Welles, USA, 1942)

Assignment.w7 due Thursday midnight

Week 8 October 9 Hollywood 1946-65

Read M&K chapter 12

For Tuesday watch lecture.8a and *His Girl Friday* (Dir. Howard Hawks, USA, 1940)

Quiz.w8 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch lecture.8b and *Vertigo* (Dir. Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1958)

Assignment.w8 due Thursday midnight

Week 9 October 16 Neorealism and Japanese Cinema

Read M&K chapter 13 (221-231) and chapter 14 (271-278)

For Tuesday watch lecture.9a and *Bicycle Thieves* (Dir. V. De Sica, Italy, 1948)

Quiz.w9 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch lecture.9b and *Tokyo Story* (Dir. Yasujiro Ozu, Japan, 1953)

Assignment.w9 due Thursday midnight

Week 10 October 23 New Waves and Auteur Cinemas

Read M&K chapter 13 (231-250) and chapter 14 (251-282)

For Tuesday watch lecture.10a and *The 400 Blows* (Dir. François Truffaut, France, 1959)

Quiz.w10 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch lecture.10b and *Persona* (Dir. Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1966)

Assignment.w10 due Thursday midnight

Week 11 October 30 Hollywood Renaissance

Read M&K chapter 15

For Tuesday watch lecture.11a and *Bonnie and Clyde* (Dir. Arthur Penn, USA, 1967)

Assignment.w11 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch *Chinatown* (Dir. Roman Polanski, USA, 1976)

Unit 2 exam due Thursday midnight

Unit 3: Cinema after the New Waves

Unit 3 Objectives:

1. Explain the infrastructure that cultivates a global circulation of cinema
2. Distinguish art, mainstream, and world categories, and contrast the intended experience for each
3. Differentiate analog and digital audiovisual technologies and identify key dates and films in their development
4. Discuss the meaning and context of works from different cultures

Week 12 November 6 New German and Iranian Cinemas

Read M&K chapter 16 (first half)

For Tuesday watch lecture.12a and *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (Dir. R.W. Fassbinder, Germany, 1974)

Quiz.w12 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch lecture.12b and *Close-Up* (Dir. Abbas Kiarostami, Iran, 1990)

Assignment.w12 due Thursday midnight

Week 13 November 13 China's Fifth Generation and the New Internationalism

Read M&K chapter 16 (second half)

For Tuesday watch lecture.13 and *Yellow Earth* (Dir. Chen Kaige, China, 1984)

Quiz.w13 due Tuesday midnight

For Thursday watch *In the Mood for Love* (Dir. Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong, 2000)

Assignment.w13 due Thursday midnight

Week 14 November 20 New Hollywood

Read M&K chapter 17

For Tuesday watch lecture.14a and *Star Wars* (Dir. George Lucas, USA, 1977)

Quiz.w14 due Tuesday by 5:00pm

Week 15 November 27 Independent Film

Read M&K chapter 18-19

For Tuesday watch lecture.15a & 15b, and *Boyz in the Hood* (Dir. John Singleton, USA, 1991)

Quiz.w15 due Tuesday midnight

*Old Town Theatre screening 6pm Thursday Nov. 30 *Pan's Labyrinth* (Dir. Guillermo del Toro, Spain-Mexico, 2006)

Assignment.w15 due Thursday midnight

Final Exam due Tuesday December 5 at midnight

Academic Community Engagement

This is an Academic Community Engagement (ACE) course in which you will not only learn knowledge and skills, but also actively use them as you collaborate with the Friends of Old Town Theatre and their partners. Our class screenings there will engage discussion on cultural issues relevant to the film and its audiences. You will be required to attend these screenings, participate in discussion, and reflect on your experience in a written assignment. This experience, it is hoped, will help you see yourself as a positive force in this world to make a difference

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of

academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see [Dean of Student's Office](#).

Copying and Pasting is a form of plagiarism. All writing for this class must be your original composition, quoting and citing other sources when used.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf

Students with Disabilities Policy

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/811006.pdf>