

Film Studies (FILM) 331 L01
Film Theory to 1950
Fall 2012
Screenings (Labs): Tuesdays 11:00 - 13:45
Lectures: Thursdays 12:00 - 13:45

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Web Page: on Blackboard
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12-2PM

Additional Information

As a course with a prerequisite, (FILM 201), this class assumes and requires your familiarity with **basic film terms**. For your reference, a 6-page *Glossary of Formal Terms* is provided on Blackboard, under 'Course Documents.' You are expected to use this vocabulary correctly in class discussion and in your written assignments. The terms will also be **tested** as part of the first **Quiz** (details below).

Course Description

From the course calendar: an introduction to theoretical perspectives on film before the mid twentieth century. This course connects film with broader debates on aesthetics, medium specificity, genre, and realism, and includes theories developed in the first half of the 20th century related to silent film, Formalism, Montage, Critical Theory, and Auteur theories.

This course surveys the first broad phase of theoretical writings on cinema, sometimes referred to as 'classical film theory.' As such, we will examine an extensive range of critical commentary, engaging with fundamental questions about the film medium: what is the proper material, or 'essence' of cinema? What are its key methods and techniques? Is it an art equal to the other arts? What forms can cinema take, and what are the medium's possibilities? What can be considered the purpose or value of cinema? How do films affect individual viewers and culture at large? By taking this course, students will become familiar with the significant concepts and debates that constitute early film theory, while fulfilling the course objectives outlined below.

Objectives of the Course

This course asks you to pursue four overlapping aims:

1. To become familiar with the *core issues* of early film theory.

2. To become a sophisticated *reader*, engaging closely and critically with film-theoretical texts.
3. To discern relationships between the course readings and the weekly *film screenings*: what does each text reveal about the other?
4. To *write* clearly and authoritatively about films and film-theoretical issues, and thus to share in ongoing debates about the medium.

Internet and electronic communication device information

This course observes a **strict laptop and cell phone policy**. Laptops are for note-taking only: anyone found using their laptop for email, unauthorized browsing, etc. during class time will jeopardize their participation grade. Likewise, texting and cell phone use is not permitted: turn off these devices when you arrive at the classroom to avoid embarrassment, annoyance, and irreversible participation grade penalties.

Viewing Requirements

Students are required to attend *all* the screenings. If you miss one, it is your responsibility to view the film(s) at the Media Library (3rd floor, TFDL) as soon as you are able. Certain titles (though not all) may be available at local video stores, as well. These resources are *not* a substitute for the scheduled screenings, but may prove helpful for review purposes.

Reading Requirements

The reading materials of this course are challenging and cannot be mastered quickly or superficially. You will need to set aside sufficient time to complete the readings every week and to reflect upon their content. If you find the texts difficult (and you will—theoretical writings are by nature ‘tricky’), *highlight the specific words and/or passages in question and raise these issues in class*. Other students will have similar questions, and will benefit from hearing yours. With consistent time and effort, completing the readings every week and engaging in discussion about them, the material will become more accessible. If your schedule doesn’t permit this kind of focused commitment, however, *FILM 331 is not for you*.

Participation Requirements

Attendance and informed participation are essential components of this course and will determine your final grade. To succeed in the course, you must complete the assigned reading *before* class every week, so as to make informed contributions to discussion. There is also a simple task to be completed on a weekly basis, as follows:

After the Tuesday screening, but *before* the Thursday lecture (cut-off time is Wednesday at 10PM), go to the Blackboard site to submit a **brief response to the film + weekly reading**. There will be a general question or prompt there for you to work with: in order to receive marks, your post must answer the question specifically and substantially. About a paragraph or so in length, your response should focus on a detail or raise a specific issue that you’d be willing to say more about in class. Please note that cursory, vague, or irrelevant commentary will not be credited.

Textbooks and Readings

The course textbook is *Film Theory and Criticism* (Seventh Edition), edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford U.P., 2008). This text is available for purchase at the campus bookstore; readings from this text are designated as 'FTC' on the weekly schedule below. A series of **additional online readings** —also **required**— will be specified when classes begin.

Assignments and Evaluation

Grades will be determined as follows:

- **Quiz:** week 4 / Oct. 4th (no alternate dates) 10%
(Short answer questions on readings + select terms)
- **Midterm Exam:** week 8 / November 1st 25%
(Mix of multiple choice + short answer questions covering readings + films to this point)
- **Close Reading Exercise** week 12 / November 29th 10%
(In-class, short answer questions analyzing the assigned reading)
- **Final Exam** scheduled by registrar 40%
(Mix of multiple choice, short answer + one essay question, covering all course materials)
- **Participation** weekly 15%
(Online + In-class)

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission at SS110. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: YES

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will

be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/info. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture: (Revised, effective September 2008)

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a **serious academic offense**. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. *A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.* This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see

<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see

<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site: <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics> or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/compliance/ethics/info/undergrad/>

**A COMPLETE LIST OF LECTURES, SCREENINGS AND READINGS
WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE WHEN CLASSES BEGIN.**