

**Film Studies (FILM) 403 - 01**  
**TOPIC IN THE DIRECTOR'S CINEMA:**  
***STEVEN SODERBERGH***  
**Winter 2011**  
**Screenings (Labs): Tuesdays, 18:00 - 20:50**  
**Lectures: Thursdays, 18:00 - 19:50**  
**Location: PF 126**

**Instructor:** Dr. Lee Carruthers  
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**Web Page:** on Blackboard  
**Office Hours:** TBA

**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 these terms accurately in all components of the course in order to analyze directorial style.** If you have any questions about this vocabulary (large or small), do not hesitate to ask! But do not ignore this essential requirement: it will *directly impact* your grade.

**Course Description**

This course examines the distinctive style and concerns of Steven Soderbergh, approached as a director engaged in a creative refashioning of older film traditions. Beginning with the critical acclaim of *Sex, Lies and Videotape* through to the commercial success of the *Ocean's Eleven* series, we will identify the key stylistic and thematic preoccupations of his work from 1989 to the present. Significantly, however, this course situates Soderbergh's directorial style and achievements within the wider framework of international film history. To this end, we will view his films specifically in relation to important cinematic antecedents and/or influences, screening titles from diverse directors such as Michelangelo Antonioni, John Boorman, Richard Lester, Ken Loach, Terrence Malick, Alain Resnais and Andrei Tarkovsky.

**Objectives of the Course**

This course has three main objectives:

1. Generally, to examine a range of films by director Steven Soderbergh so as to identify the stylistic and thematic preoccupations evidenced across his work.
2. Specifically, to develop and utilize keen film-analytical skills that will allow us to approach these films as complex, aesthetic objects.

3. Finally, to understand Soderbergh's work as reflexive and historical— that is, as responsive to older film traditions, precedents and practices.

### Viewing Requirements

This course has *one weekly screening time* (Tuesdays, 18:00 - 20:50). You are required to attend the screening so as to be prepared for the Thursday lecture and discussion. For repeat viewings and/or close analysis, the films are held at the Media Library; additionally, some titles are available for rental at local video stores, such as Bird Dog Video and Casablanca Video. These resources are *not* a substitute for the scheduled screenings, but may prove helpful for successfully completing assignments.

### Participation Requirements

Regular attendance and informed participation are essential components of this course that will determine your final grade. You are expected to come to class having completed the assigned readings, and thus prepared to discuss these materials specifically. Please note that a significant percentage of your grade is based on participation. If you do not make an informed contribution to in-class discussion on a weekly basis, you can expect to receive **zero** for participation: there is no other basis for this part of your grade.

Besides the weekly readings + screenings, there is a simple task to be completed every week, as follows:

After the Tuesday screening, go to the Blackboard site to submit a **brief response to the film and/or weekly reading**. There will be a general question or prompt there, for you to work with. Your response should be a paragraph or so in length; it should focus on a detail or raise a specific issue that **you plan to talk about in class**. These responses are mandatory and must be submitted every week by **Wednesday at 8PM** (no later) to serve as a cue for Thursday's discussion.

Posts that do not respond to the prompt in a thoughtful manner will **not** contribute positively to your Blackboard grade and will be discounted from consideration.

### **Internet and electronic communication device information**

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

### **Textbooks and Readings:**

The course readings can be found on the Blackboard course webpage, under 'Course Documents.' All of these readings are required, unless otherwise specified by the instructor. Please note that the readings are directly tied to the tasks of the course; if you have not completed the reading you will not succeed in this course.

## Assignments and Evaluation

Grades will be determined as follows:

Reading Quizzes (5 dates: 4 will count for marks)	weekly	20%
Midterm Exam (film analysis)	week 8	25%
Final Essay	week 13	40%
Blackboard posts & In-class discussion	weekly	15%

Please note that the **Reading Quizzes**, listed above, are designed to confirm your familiarity with the weekly reading. As such, **they will not be scheduled in advance** but rather will happen on 5 separate occasions throughout the semester, either before the film on Tuesdays or during the Thursday lecture. **Reading Quizzes cannot be re-scheduled or 'made-up'; if you miss a quiz, the marks are forfeited.** Only 4 out of 5 quizzes will count for marks, however: so, you can miss one, or discount one.

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

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your 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. 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: NO**

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 <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. 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: [www.efwr.ucalgary.ca](http://www.efwr.ucalgary.ca)

## 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 (MacEwan Student Centre 4<sup>th</sup> floor, [efwr.ucalgary.ca](http://efwr.ucalgary.ca)) 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/cfreh>

### **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

*A complete schedule of screenings, lectures and readings will be made available via Blackboard when classes begin.*