

University of Calgary  
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Film Studies (FILM) 403.24 L01  
Topic in the Director's Cinema: The Cinema of David Lynch

Fall 2018

September 10 - December 5

(excluding October 08 and November 12-14)

Screenings (Labs): Monday 5:00 – 7:45

Lectures: Wednesday 5:00 – 6:50

**Instructor:** Dr. Matthew Croombs  
**Office:** SS 216  
**Office Phone:** 1 (403) 220-7097  
**E-Mail:** Matthew.croombs@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** D2L  
**Office Hours:** Wednesday 3:00-4:45

### Course Description

Within the canon of Hollywood cinema, few directors have permeated the collective unconscious as definitively as David Lynch, so much so that the term “Lynchian” is today a household adjective to describe a range of affects, objects, and situations. Lynch’s ascension as a popular filmmaker was also contemporaneous with the rise of film theory, and has been deployed to illuminate psychoanalytic, phenomenological, and cognitive approaches to the cinema. And yet, while film scholars can agree upon the singularity of Lynch’s combination of Hollywood narrative with avant-garde aesthetics, the “Lynchian” has remained as easy to recognize as it is hard to define. This class will provide a comprehensive survey of the director’s filmography, from his early avant-garde shorts, to his major critical successes and failures in feature-length filmmaking, to his ground-breaking experiments with televisual narrative. We will use Lynch’s work to both illustrate and challenge some of the most influential concepts in critical theory over the 20th and 21st century, including: the abject, the uncanny, the postmodern sublime, the time-image, and the male gaze. In aiming a critical lens toward the director’s formal tendencies and ideological attitudes, we will further tease out the social implications of Lynch’s work, grappling with how his sustained obsession with the 1950s speaks to certain contradictions and anxieties surrounding class, sex, and race in American postmodernity.

### **Objectives of the Course**

Following the completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a comprehensive familiarity with the cinema of David Lynch and the broader discourses of authorship and art.
2. Perform close readings of film texts, which are informed by film theory.
3. Establish an understanding of major concepts in critical theory.
4. Draw connections between Lynch's cinema and the broader social contexts that have defined American postmodernity.

### **Textbooks and Readings**

All assigned readings for the course will be uploaded to D2L.

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

Laptops should be used for note-taking purposes only. Cell phones should be turned off during screenings and lectures to avoid deductions from your participation grade.

### **Viewing Requirements**

Students are required to attend all 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.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

10%	Participation	weekly
25%	First Response Paper	Oct. 1
25%	Second Response Paper	Nov. 5
40%	Final Assignment	Dec. 5

Reading Response Papers: 50% (25% each)

Students will submit two reaction papers throughout the semester (4 pages each). These papers will be handed in at the beginning of class on October 1<sup>st</sup> and November 5<sup>th</sup>, and can address any of the readings covered up until those dates. Students should provide a cogent and brief précis of their chosen reading followed by a critical analysis. Critical analyses might include situating the reading in relation to other arguments surveyed in the course, relating the reading to a film screened in class, or following a particular strand of the reading's argument in order to pursue it further. Ultimately, these reaction papers are an opportunity for students to work their thoughts into written form, and to develop their writing skills before the major research paper.

Participation: 10%

Since this class involves both challenging films and ideas, attendance, class participation, and completion of the readings are absolutely necessary. Lecture content will usually move beyond the week's assigned readings, so students will need to have read the required materials by the Thursday lecture in order for the class experience to remain meaningful.

Final Research Paper: 40%

An assignment sheet on the final paper will be given out November 5th.

Length: 6-8 pages, double-spaced

Due Date: Wednesday December 5th at the beginning of class.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** No

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

**Submission of Assignments:** 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. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

### **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.

### **Student Accommodations:**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.

- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

### Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades. In this course, letter grades will be used for all assignments. The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations**
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding performance	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent performance	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
<b>3.70</b>	Approaching excellent performance	<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
<b>3.30</b>	Exceeding good performance	<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good performance	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>	Approaching good performance	<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>	Exceeding satisfactory performance	<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory performance	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>	Approaching satisfactory performance	<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	0 - 49.99%	0%

\* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

\*\* These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

## **Writing Skills Statement**

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

## **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. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>. If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

## **Academic Misconduct**

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

## **Research Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

### Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Police Service</li> <li>• Emergency Text Messaging</li> <li>• Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>• Safewalk Program</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a> <p>If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (<b>220-5333</b>). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a></p>
<b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a> 403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Support Services</li> <li>• Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>
<b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>
<b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Services</li> <li>• Health Services</li> <li>• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</li> <li>• Online resources and tips</li> </ul>	<b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a> <b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>

## Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

### September 10

#### Introduction

Screening: *Six Figures Getting Sick* (USA, 1967)  
*The Alphabet* (USA, 1968)  
*The Grandmother* (USA, 1970)  
*Twin Peaks*, Season 3, Episode 8

Reading: Dennis Lym, "Weird on Top," in *David Lynch: The Man from Another Place*, pp. 1-15.

Kate Rennebohm, "A Little Night Music: *Twin Peaks: The Return*, Part Eight," *Cinema Scope* 72 (2017): <http://cinemascope.com/columns/a-little-night-music-twin-peaks-the-return-part-eight/>

### September 17

#### The Powers of Horror: Abjection

Screening: *Eraserhead* (USA, 1977)

Reading: Michel Chion, "A Film That Stays With You," in *David Lynch*, pp. 3-44.

Julia Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection," in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, pp. 1-18.

### September 24

#### The Grotesque and the Exhibition Complex

Screening: *The Elephant Man* (USA/UK, 1980)

Reading: Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, pp. 1-21.

Paul Anthony Darke, "The Elephant Man: An Analysis from a Disabled Perspective," *Disability & Society*, 9.3 (1994), pp. 327-342.

### October 1

#### \*FIRST READING ASSIGNMENT DUE

#### Postmodernism and the Logic of Late Capitalism

Screening: *Blue Velvet* (USA, 1986)

Reading: Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, pp. 111-125.

Laura Mulvey, "Netherworlds and the Unconscious: Oedipus and *Blue Velvet*," in *Fetishism and Curiosity*, pp. 137-154.

**October 10**                    **THANKSGIVING – MONDAY’S LECTURE CANCELLED, BUT THERE WILL BE A SCREENING ON WEDNESDAY**

Screening: *Dune* (USA, Mexico, 1984)

Reading: Michel Chion, "Immobile Growth," in *David Lynch*, pp. 59-77.

**October 15**                    **The White Male Gaze**

Screening: *Wild at Heart* (USA, 1990)

Reading: Sharon Willis, "Do the Wrong Thing: David Lynch's Perverse Style," in *High Contrast: Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood Film*, pp. 131-157.

**October 22**                    **The Puzzle Film**

Screening: *Lost Highway* (France/USA, 1997)

Reading: Warren Buckland, "Introduction: Puzzle Plots," and "Making Sense of *Lost Highway*," in *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, pp. 1-12; 42-61.

Recommended: Todd McGowan, "Finding Ourselves on a Lost Highway: David Lynch's Lesson in Fantasy," *Cinema Journal*, 39.2 (2000), pp. 51-73.

**October 29**                    **Authorship and the Question of the "Lynchian"**

Screening: *David Lynch: The Art Life* (USA, Barnes/ Neergaard-Holm/ Nguyen, 2016)

Reading: David Foster Wallace, "David Lynch Keeps His Head," in *A Supposedly Funny Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments*, pp. 146-212.



Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, pp. 561-564.

**November 5**                    **\*SECOND RESPONSE PAPER DUE**

**Desire, Fantasy, and the Femme Fatale**

Screening:                    *Mulholland Drive* (France/USA, 2001)

Reading:                    Todd McGowan, "Lost on Mulholland Drive: Navigating David Lynch's Panegyric to Hollywood." *Cinema Journal*, 43.2 (2004), pp. 67-89.

Recommended:            Frida Beckman, "From Irony to Narrative Crisis: Reconsidering the Femme Fatale in the Films of David," *Cinema Journal*, 52.1 (2012), pp. 25-44.

**November 12**                **READING WEEK - NO CLASSES HELD**

**November 19**                **The Time Image**

Screening:                    *Inland Empire* (France/Poland/USA, 2006)

Reading:                    Alanna Thain, "Into the Folds: David Lynch's Hollywood Trilogy," in *Bodies in Suspense: Time and Affect in Cinema*, pp. 100-130.

Recommended:            Gilles Deleuze, "Beyond the Movement Image," in *The Time-Image*, pp. 1-24.

**November 26**                **Welcome to *Twin Peaks***

Screening:                    *Twin Peaks*, Pilot (USA, 1990)  
*Twin Peaks*, Season 1, Episode 3 (USA, 1990)

Reading:                    David Lavery, "Introduction: The Semiotics of the Cobbler: *Twin Peaks*' Interpretive Community," and Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Bad Ideas: The Art and Politics of *Twin Peaks*," in *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*, pp. 11-21; pp. 22-30.

**December 3**

**\*FINAL ESSAY DUE on Dec. 5**

**The Return**

Screening:

Selected Episodes of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (USA, 2017)

Reading:

TBD