

**Film 405 L01/B01**  
**Advanced Topic In Film Genre: *The Biopic***  
**Fall 2010**  
**Screening: Tuesday, 14:00 – 16:50;**  
**Lecture: Thursday, 14:00 – 15:50, SS 541**

**Instructor:** Deidre Martin  
**Office Location:** SS209  
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**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Course Description**

Hollywood's fascination with great lives has a long history, as the expansive and ever popular biopic genre attests. Combining elements of the epic and dramatic film genres, biographical pictures represent the life of an important historical figure, past or present. Beyond the genre's heyday in the 1930s, biopics have continued to wet the cultural appetite for real life stories told on the silver screen. Our study will trace the origins, archetypes, and aesthetics, as well as the cultural and historical developments of this genre. We will explore issues of accuracy and veracity, as well as complex stylistic and structural changes that have underscored the biopic. Close attention will be paid to the genre's spotlight on acting and performance studies.

**Objectives of the Course**

This course aims to furnish students with a meaningful knowledge of the biopic genre.

**Internet and electronic communication device information**

Cell phone use is strictly prohibited during class time; lap tops may be used for purposes of note taking but must be turned off during screenings and presentations.

**Textbooks and Readings:**

*Whose Lives Are They Anyway?: The Biopic As Contemporary Film*

*Genre*. Dennis Bingham. Rutgers University Press, 2010.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Film Journal 25% Intermittently, commencing September 23, 2010.

Film Critique 40% November 4, 2010.

Take-Home Final Exam 35% To be distributed in class on December 9, 2010. \*Due in for evaluation on December 14, 2010.

### **Descriptions:**

#### *Film Journal*

Throughout the term students will be asked to complete a series of short, written critical response exercises (typically 2 – 3 paragraphs each, handwriting is acceptable) in a film journal. Each question will be focused around a specific film or set of films screened in class. I will ask students to submit their film journals periodically throughout the term for evaluation and feedback.

#### *Film Critique*

This exercise will focus students' knowledge, interest and appreciation of one biopic film into the format of a film critique. Essays should be 5 to 7 typed, double-spaced pages in length. Possible film choices and approaches to this essay assignment will be established in class. Students must clear their selection with me prior to commencing the research and writing of their film critique.

#### *Take-Home Final Exam*

The final examination will consist of a series of short essay-style questions designed to assess students' knowledge of terms, topics, issues, themes and theories of the biopic genre learned throughout the course.

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. 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
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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.

Letter Grade	Grading Scale	Grade Point Value (see <a href="#">U of C Calendar: Academic Standing</a> )
A+	96-100	4
A	90-95.99	4
A -	85-89.99	3.7
B+	80-84.99	3.3
B	75-79.99	3
B-	70-74.99	2.7
C+	65-69.99	2.3
C	60-64.99	2
C-	55-59.99	1.7
D+	53-54.99	1.3
D	50-52.99	1
F	0-49	0

## 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/cfieb>

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

To be distributed in class.