

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Film Studies (FILM) 405-01

Advanced Topic in Film Genre: *Film Noir*

Fall 2015

Screenings (Labs): Mondays 1:00PM - 3:45PM

Lectures: Wednesdays 2:00PM - 3:50PM

Instructor:	Lee Carruthers
Office Location:	SS 232
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Web Page:	D2L
Office Hours:	Fridays, 2-4PM

Course Description

This course focuses on the enduring appeal of *film noir*, taken as a complex filmic phenomenon that opens up compelling issues related to film aesthetics, theory and history. To this end, we will examine a range of Hollywood films produced during the 1940s and 1950s to discern their distinct formal and thematic features; further, we will grapple with the idea of *film noir*, acknowledging its richness and resistance to unified definition. Finally, the course is concerned to situate the films and criticism historically, and thus analyzes the cycle's literary and cinematic antecedents as well as more recent instances of 'neo-noir' via contemporary directors such as Robert Altman, Martin Scorsese, and Joel and Ethan Coen.

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 D2L, under 'Course Documents.' *Students are expected to use this vocabulary correctly in class discussion and in all written assignments.*

Objectives of the Course

This course has three main objectives:

- To develop a nuanced understanding of *film noir* that considers its historical significance.
- To deploy nuanced film-analytical skills that allow us to approach these films as complex, aesthetic objects.

- To recognize the ways that *film noir* is a protean critical construct that has meant different things to different people over time.

Textbooks and Readings

For purchase at the University Bookstore:

- James Naremore's *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Second Edition, Revised, 2008), noted as **MTN** on the schedule.
- James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice, Double Indemnity, Mildred Pierce, and Selected Stories* (Everyman's Library Classics, 2003)

Additional **required readings** can be accessed via D2L, and are designated as '**B**' on the schedule below.

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 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

Be sure to set aside enough time to complete the assigned readings every week. The **Reading Quizzes** are designed to confirm your preparedness for class: see the information provided under 'Assignments and Evaluation,' below.

Participation Requirements

Attendance and informed participation are essential components of this course and will determine your final grade. There is also a simple task to be completed on a weekly basis, as follows:

Each week you are required to post a brief **screening note** on the assigned materials. There will be a general question or prompt to get you started: in order to receive marks, your post should address the question specifically and substantially. About a paragraph or so in length, your response should discuss the weekly screening and assigned reading in a precise, analytical, and

thoughtful manner. **Please note that cursory, vague, or superficial commentary will not be credited.**

Assignments and Evaluation

Grades will be determined as follows:

Reading Quizzes (5 dates: 4 count for marks)*	weekly	20%
D2L + In-class discussion	weekly	15%
Midterm (short film analysis, applying readings)	Week 7, Oct. 21 st	25%
Final Essay	Week 13, Dec. 7	40%

A paper that deploys the available scholarly literature and performs film-textual analysis, 2500 words in length, on one of the central films or issues of the course. Detailed instructions for the successful completion of this essay will be distributed by November 11, 2015.

* The **Reading Quizzes**, listed above, are designed to confirm your familiarity with the weekly readings. As such, they will not be scheduled in advance but rather will happen on 5 separate occasions throughout the semester, usually during the lecture period. **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.

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 instructor. 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 final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. 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/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's

responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline will 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/. 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_0.pdf .

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. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. 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 Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

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

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments, exams, and other work in this course will be graded using

- letter grades for the Midterm and essay
- percentage grades
- raw scores for quizzes (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade)
- GPA values (using any value on the 0 to 4.0 scale, including, e.g., 3.2 or 2.8)

X a combination of the above: letter grade for Midterm and essay; raw scores for quizzes and participation values.

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department. If letter grades are used for an assignment or other course component, the percentage equivalent in the final column will be used for calculating the final grade:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	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. 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> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <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 (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 <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
<p>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	<p>https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</p>
<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <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 Lectures and Readings

A complete schedule of screenings + readings will be available when the course begins.