

Introduction to Film (COM 234)

County College of Morris
Randolph, NJ
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Instructor Contact Information:

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Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 12:30-1:30pm, Tues. 11am-12pm

Course Description:

Through the study of representative major works of world cinema, students are introduced to the history and development of film as a creative medium of artistic expression and mass communication. Topics include production practices, cinema as an industry, the relationship between history and cinema, the psychology of cinema, and socio-cultural factors related to cinema. Students are encouraged to approach film analytically and critically, to consciously examine the language and aesthetic forces of cinema, and to expand cinematic interest into realms beyond Hollywood mainstream productions.

Course Objectives:

1. To expose students to a broad range of historically important films.
2. To provide students with a better understanding of how film operates on technical, industrial, historical, psychological and sociological levels.
3. To introduce students to the basic aspects of history, theory, and criticism as they relate to film.
4. To improve students' analytical skills through writing and discussion.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will come away with a broader knowledge of the historical development of film as an art form.
2. Students will gain an awareness of the technical processes of filmmaking.
3. Students will learn about the industry, history, psychology and sociology of film.
4. Students will leave this course with improved analytical skills.

Required Tools:

Bordwell, D. & Thompson, K. (2013). *Film Art: An Introduction* (10th Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Netflix streaming capabilities.

Additional Reading:

<http://www.mattsmediaresearch.com/IntroFilm.html>: Any additional material will be announced in class and linked to this page.

Course Expectations:

1. *Attendance*: Students are expected to attend all class meetings.
2. *Reading and Participation*: Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the topic described in the course schedule based on the assigned reading from the textbook.
3. *Preliminary Exam*: Students are expected to be able to demonstrate basic knowledge of theoretical and technical aspects of film production and appreciation on an in-class preliminary examination.
4. *Thesis Statement Project*: Students are expected to demonstrate analytical proficiency through ten written thesis statements that are based on the films discussed in class.

Evaluation and Grading

1. *Attendance Policy*: Students are entitled to one unexcused absence from class. Beyond this single absence, half of a grade will be deducted from the final grade for each additional unexcused absence. Excused absences are accepted only if accompanied by documentation relating to the nature of the excuse (e.g. auto repair receipt, accident report, doctor's note, affidavit, funeral documentation).
2. *Informed Participation*: Students are expected to demonstrate informed participation during class discussion. Informed participation counts as a verbal contribution to class discussion based on concepts, theory, or terminology learned in class, from the textbook, or from another valid academic source (e.g. from another class or from outside reading). Every student is expected to make a minimum of one verbal contribution to each class session. Students who exceed that amount will have a half-point added to their final grade for every additional contribution. Students who have a deficit of contributions will have a half-point deducted from their final grade for every missing contribution.
3. *Preliminary Exam*: A preliminary examination will be used to ensure students comprehend the basic technical and theoretical language of film.
4. *Thesis Statement Project*: By our last class session, students must submit a physical copy of ten thesis statements based on the films discussed in class. These theses should be retained and used as potential starting points for future analytical essays. Each thesis statement should be one declarative sentence that addresses a rhetorical point about the film under consideration and refers to how some aspect of production relates to any of the other perspectives discussed in class: industrial, historical, psychological, or social.

Grade Calculation Chart

Preliminary Exam	Divided evenly and averaged.
Critical Response Outlines	Divided evenly and averaged.
Participation	See above.
Attendance	See above.

Grade Calculator

A (93-100)	C (73-76)
A- (90-92)	C- (70-72)
B+ (87-89)	D+ (67-69)
B (83-86)	D (63-66)
B- (80-82)	D- (60-62)
C+ (77-79)	F (below 60)

Course Calendar

Week 1 (1/13, 1/14)

Introduction:

Complete index cards for class participation.

Das Gesamtkunstwerk (Synthesis of the Arts)

The Five Perspectives (production, industry, history, psychology, sociology)

The Pervert's Guide to Cinema (Slavoj Žižek)

Week 2 (1/20, 1/21)

A comparison of early movies:

Eadweard Muybridge

A Trip to the Moon (Georges Méliès, 1902)

The Great Train Robbery (Edwin S. Porter, 1903)

Week 3 (1/27, 1/28)

Early Experimental Film:

Man Ray, Hans Richter, Marcel Duchamp, Fernand Léger

Free Radicals: A History of Experimental Film (Pip Chodorov, 2012)

Week 4 (2/3, 2/4)

Early Narrative:

To be announced.

Home Screening: *The Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915)

Week 5 (2/10, 2/11)

Soviet Montage:

Battleship Potemkin (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)

Week 6 (2/17, 2/18)

German Expressionism:

Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1927)

Week 7 (2/24, 2/25)

Animation and adaptation:

Snow White and the Seven Dwarves (Walt Disney, 1937)

Week 8 (3/3, 3/4)

Preliminary Examination

Cinematography

Citizen Kane (Welles, 1941)

Week 9 (3/10, 3/11)

Italian Neorealism

Bicycle Thieves

Spring Break (3/17, 3/18)

Week 10 (3/24, 3/25)

The French New Wave

The 400 Blows

Week 11 (3/31, 4/1)

Alfred Hitchcock

Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

Week 12 (4/7, 4/8)

Japanese Horror Cinema

Onibaba (Kaneto Shindo, 1964)

Week 13 (4/14, 4/15)

John Boorman

Deliverance (John Boorman, 1972)

Week 14 (4/21, 4/22)

Ingmar Bergman

Persona (Ingmar Bergman, 1966)

Week 15 (4/28, 4/29)

Martin Scorsese

Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976)