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FILM 103L.H01: Introduction to Film - Hamilton

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FILM 103L - Introduction to Film

Instructor: Matthew Kaler



Email: matthew.kaler@mso.umt.edu

Class Dates and Location: This course runs August 29 – December 15. Final Exam week runs from December 12 – December 16.

The class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. MST in classroom 119 on the Bitterroot College (BC) campus in Hamilton, MT, under the supervision of Bitterroot College – University of Montana.

Most Thursdays we will screen our weekly film and **this will be a two (2) hour class on average.** An in-person screening will be held at our Bitterroot College classroom on these days. Online screening details will be provided when applicable for those who miss a screening.

Office Hours: schedule an appointment with me in class or by email. I will respond to most emails within a 48-hour period, Monday-Friday.

Texts and Readings

- *Understanding Movies* by Louis Gianetti. Published by Pearson Education. 13th Edition (other editions are allowed).
- Selected readings on Moodle.

Course Notices for All Course Modalities (different ways to be in class):

- **Stay home if you feel sick** or display COVID-19 symptoms; in this case, please contact your primary care physician, or get COVID-19 test at the Curry Health Center (406.243.4330) or the Ravalli County Public Health Department (406.375.6670)

- **Stay up-to-date on COVID-19 information** from the University of Montana
 - UM Coronavirus Website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus>
 - **If you are required to isolate or quarantine**, I will support your continued academic progress through our remote learning option on Zoom and Moodle. Please schedule email me to schedule a meeting for questions and guidance.
 - **UM recommends all get a COVID-19 vaccine**; direct questions or concerns about vaccines to the Curry Health Center

Assignments

Weekly quizzes and take home essays, a mid-term, and comprehensive final exam and essay.

Grading and Evaluation

Your work and progress in the class will be measured in several ways:

- Participation (in class, answering questions, asking questions, group discussion)
15% of the final grade
- Mid-term (15%) and Final Exam / Essay (20%)
35% of the final grade
- Quizzes and short essays
50% of the final grade

A student who executes all of the aforementioned with excellence and top-level effort, with brains and sensitivity, will receive an “A”.

Grading Scale:

94-100 A
 93-90 A-
 87-89 B+
 86-83 B
 82-80 B-
 77-79 C+
 76-73 C
 72-70 C-

Description and Goals:

This course is designed to introduce students to both a range of films and various perspectives from which to assess the visual media. We will compare certain central approaches to film production, and learn how to analyze the ethical, political, and aesthetic dimensions of film, themes and ideas in subtext, as well as the potentially problematic nature of the medium itself. The course also introduces students to the vocabulary of cinematic/visual language and to critical thinking methods for close readings of films-as-texts and ways to write about cinema.

Course Goals/Objectives

This class requires students to assess film from three different perspectives:

- 1) **Aesthetics:** Students will learn to effectively identify the tools involved in putting together a film, as well as the visual commitments expressed in adopting these conventions.
- 2) **Ethics:** Many films, if not most, have at the center some ethical issue or dilemma. Students will

learn to identify, characterize and write clearly about the filmic expressions of these dilemmas.

3) **Analysis of Film:** Students will become critical viewers of film by exploring and clearly articulating the possible social significance and underlying thematic concerns of visual narrative.

Learning Outcomes

Regardless of your history with cinema as an art form when starting this course, you will end it with a strong foundation in the study of cinema with the following outcomes:

- knowledge of the basic vocabulary of the film and the elements of film technical form and style
- introduction to the art form's history, key figures, film, movements, and theories of the Classical Hollywood, Formalism, Realism and other cinemas (i.e., International Cinema)
- writing critical film analyses—technical and thematic— of scenes, shots, sequences, and films

Adult Content Disclaimer:

This course contains adult content, including potentially offensive adult language, acts, and themes found in movies rated “R”. If a film’s language or subject matter is offensive to you and you prefer not to study or discuss it, please contact me as soon as possible. Alternative films will not be offered as substitutes for multiple course selections. Therefore this class might not be the right fit for you if multiple selected films are not palatable.

Attendance Policy:

There is no official attendance policy. But please plan to attend class whenever possible on our scheduled days and times to get the most out of your academic investment.

Participation counts for 15% of your final grade and you cannot participate without regularly attending class.

How to be absent:

If you must be absent for a class, follow the Weekly Plans. Additionally, email one of your classmates, (even if you don't know them very well) with specific questions. I may not have time to, or may not respond to general student inquiries about course content during absences because the Weekly Plans provide your “Homework” directions. **You are responsible for all missed material and the homework assigned during your absence.** Please make an appointment with me to go over any information. Unless we have previously agreed to some other arrangement (i.e., an “extension” is granted), all assignments are due on the announced due dates regardless of your class presence.

Registration Issues

If you miss the first two (2) class meetings (and haven't communicated with me in advance about extenuating circumstances), you need to drop the course on Cyberbear and enroll another semester. The reason for this policy is that important groundwork for the semester is put in place in the first week of class, and students without that foundational framework are better served by taking the course when they can give it the attention it deserves.

Note: Important UM academic calendar dates can be found on Cyberbear.

Late Work Policies

Writing Assignments turned in after their due date will be deducted **one full letter grade**, from the Final Draft grade, per day until received. The option for revision cannot redeem a late essay deduction. Assignments turned in more than three days late will be given an “F”. I also reserve the right not to accept any late assignment after its due date.

Late Paper Extensions

Extensions on assignment due dates will only be granted for good reason (I reserve the right to determine this) **and** if you contact me prior to the due date. No extensions will be granted if you fail to communicate with me prior to the assignment due date.

Late Work

Unless communication between us had happened and an extension granted, *late work is unacceptable*. Deadlines are not negotiable after you’ve missed them.

Communication

I am available to speak with you and answer questions after class, by scheduled appointment in person (or via Zoom), and through email. By University policy, all email communication must be conducted to my UM email account through your UM email account. I will only communicate with registered members of this course.

I am available to discuss any problems or needs for accommodation, but you need to come and talk to me beforehand. That includes letting me know if you have children or any obligations outside of class that will affect your presence in the class. Please also contact me for a grade status meeting.

Required Technology: Campus E-mail Accounts and Moodle:

Please activate your campus e-mail account right away. Every student is issued a university e-mail account, and there is no cost. Go to any technology help desk on campus for assistance. *You will need to activate your email before you can access Moodle.*

This course requires essential computer skills so that you can access email and negotiate Moodle. *Early in the semester, UM offers a number of Moodle workshops. If you are unfamiliar with Moodle or if you have limited computer experience, please attend these workshops.* You will be expected to work with computers for appropriate class assignments, and most correspondences will be conducted via email/Moodle. Most class materials and instructions will be posted in Moodle. *With the exception of some initial explanations during our first classes, please do not expect extra time in class for any learning curve you might face with technology.* Likewise, please do not expect any extensions on due dates for an assignment because of any technical difficulties you have not conquered. Backup all work.

Civility Clause

I will tolerate neither disruptive language nor disruptive behavior. Disruptive language includes, but is not limited to, violent and/or belligerent and/or insulting remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic or anti-ethnic slurs, bigotry, and disparaging commentary, either spoken or written (offensive slang is included in this category).

While I do not disagree that you each have a right to your own opinions, inflammatory language founded in ignorance or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately. **And while the films we watch will portray language, images, and actions that are offensive to some, it’s important to note that depiction is not endorsement.**

There is a clear difference between disruptive in-class language and behavior and narrative content.

Disruptive behavior includes whispering or talking when another member of the class is speaking or engaged in relevant conversation (remember that I am a member of this class as well). This classroom functions on the premise of respect, and you will be asked to leave the classroom and a formal process of Student Conduct Code violation will be pursued, if you violate any part of this statement on civility.

Academic Honesty

In this class, we function as a community of writers and thinkers, sharing ideas and critiquing each other's work. So while no one goes through an assignment completely alone, it is important that you experience writing as a personalized, individual learning objective. If you are feeling overwhelmed, come see me.

UM's official policy on Plagiarism (from UM Course Catalogue):

"Plagiarism is the representing of another's work as one's own. It is a particularly intolerable offense in the academic community and is strictly forbidden. Students who plagiarize may fail the course and may be remanded to Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion.

Students must always be very careful to acknowledge any kind of borrowing that is included in their work. This means not only borrowed wording but also ideas. Acknowledgment of whatever is not one's own original work is the proper and honest use of sources. Failure to acknowledge whatever is not one's own original work is plagiarism."

In cases where plagiarism has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course grade is the standard practice. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

Course Accommodations Statement (ODE): Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations in this course. To request course modifications, please contact me as soon as possible. I will work with you and Disability Services in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website (<https://www.umt.edu/disability/>) or call 406.243.2243.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

This course requires an electronic submission (via Moodle) of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the university's writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from the following writing learning outcomes.

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions (largely style conventions like APA or MLA)
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

Disclaimer

Please be advised that I reserve the right to change and/or modify any of the aforementioned points within this Syllabus, details of the Papers and Projects, Important Due Dates, and the course Weekly Plans. If I do, I will verbally announce any changes in class as well as post them to Moodle immediately.