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MART 300.01: Visions of Film

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Media Arts 300 Visions of Film: Light of the Centuries

Spring 2016

Thursdays 2:10 PM – 5:00 PM

The Roxy Theater

718 S Higgins Ave.

Professor Talena Sanders

Email: talena.sanders@umontana.edu

Office: McGill Hall 230

Office Hours/Open Studio Fridays, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Graduate Teaching Assistant/Projectionist: Saif Alsaegh

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Course Description

This film studies course in the context of the School of Media Arts will explore the film form as a powerful medium for expressing the experiences and values of life in our time. Students will gain a foundational understanding of film history and theory through viewing, reading about and analyzing significant works of cinema from around the world. The course is designed to highlight works that have influenced the development of the cinematic arts in a variety of ways, rather than provide a chronological historical overview.

We will focus our studies predominantly on international cinemas, though the influence of Hollywood will often be acknowledged in relation to cinematic innovations in other countries. Accordingly, a significant portion of our discussions will focus on the cultural

contexts of film storytelling in relationship to the role of film artists in society. Formal attributes and their impact on concept and meaning in film form will be an important focus for our analyses.

This course is a focused film studies experience, and does not include film production assignments. Each week in class, we will watch 1 – 3 (sometimes more) full films together; you will take detailed notes, and participate in discussions about films and assigned readings. Typical weekly homework will consist of assigned readings, structured notes on readings and short essays. Major assignments include developing a personal artist statement, an academic research paper on a film studies topic, and peer review feedback on your classmates' writing.

Intellectual and artistic curiosity, willingness to engage with challenging film works, development of research method skills and focused study of assigned texts are key to your experience in this course.

This course will demand your full participation, engagement and considerable dedicated time. Students are expected to engage their critical analysis skills to understand key concepts of the film form, and consider how these concepts might influence their own creative practice.

Required Materials

Dedicated notebook/sketchbook/binder for taking and storing notes

Required Text

A variety of film history, theory, and primary document texts will be provided on Moodle or in class

Recommended Texts

Andre Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* Vols. 1 & 2, University of California Press, 2004 (Second Edition)

Jean-Pierre Geuens, *Film Production Theory*, SUNY Press, 2000

Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses*, Routledge, 2015 (Second Edition)

Outcomes: At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to -

- 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

- Understand and correctly utilize film terminology to analyze formal and conceptual elements in a filmic text
- Understand the relationship between formal attributes, story, and meaning in film
- Understand the possibilities for employing creative formal risk-taking in their own film productions
- Understand the influence of film history on the development of contemporary cinema
- Apply foundational film theory in their own film art practice

Course Policies

Moodle

You will turn in assignments on Moodle unless otherwise directed, and will also refer to Moodle for weekly assignment details and materials. Be sure to check the Moodle shell each week to be sure you don't miss part of an assignment and are aware of all assignment details.

Attendance Policy

One free pass absence allowed, after that there will be a 2-point deduction to overall attendance/participation grade per absence. Students who accrue 4 or more absences will receive a failing grade in the course.

Tardiness: Arriving to class on time demonstrates your respect for your fellow students and the instructor. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will be marked absent. Excessive tardiness (4 or more) will result in absences. ***Plan to stay for the entirety of the scheduled class meeting time.*** Leaving class early during our scheduled class time will result in being marked absent for the class.

PLEASE NOTE if you will be absent, you must arrange to turn in material prior to the class in which assignment is due. Contact a classmate as soon as possible to find out what you missed, get notes, and also refer to Moodle for assignment information. **It is your responsibility to catch up on missed work.** Many films we watch in class are not widely available, so you will often not be able to access work that you miss due to absences. Make your best efforts to attend the course.

Contact me as soon as possible if you will be absent and feel that you might qualify for an excused absence.

Excused absence terms include, but are not limited to: documented or contagious sickness, death or emergency in family, absence due to disability status, artistic opportunities.

For artistic opportunities: If you have an artistic opportunity that can only possibly occur during a class meeting, you may potentially be excused from class. Examples include

screenings in film festivals, exhibitions of work, one time events that you will be recording for projects, access to a subject that is only possible at a certain time, travel for shooting a project, or other professional development opportunities. **Do not schedule shoots or group meetings for other classes' projects during our class meeting time.** Anything that could be scheduled at another time will not qualify for an excused absence. Be sure to discuss with me in advance if you will miss class for an artistic opportunity.

Communication

All communications for the course must take place **in person (strongly preferred!)** or via your **University of Montana email address**. I do not accept assignments via email, ever.

Let's focus on talking to each other in person as much as possible, and avoiding the email chain runaround. Drop by during my office hours!

Email turnaround time is 24 hours for all emails sent between 9 AM– 5PM, and emails sent after 5PM on Fridays may not receive a response until the following Monday afternoon.

Please respect common courtesies in communication with your professor. This is good practice for your quickly approaching professional future, where email tone can mean the difference between. All email correspondences must begin with some form of salutation ('Hi Prof. Sanders', 'Hello Saif', etc.) and sign-off ('Best, Student', 'See you soon, Student', etc.).

Time & Effort

Students are expected to put forth an appropriate effort to earn upper division coursework credits. When you successfully complete the course, you will earn 3 university credits. The time & effort it takes each of you to complete your assignments will vary. You may find that some weeks require more effort, but if you put in that effort, it will be noticed and rewarded.

Assignments & Projects

Media Arts 300 is a designated Intermediate Writing Course, and as such much of your effort in the course will be focused on analysis and expressing your ideas and values in writing. As media artists, so much of our success in this field depends upon the ability to express information about our ideas in writing. The writing you will complete in this course is designed to reflect the skills you will need for success in your film art career.

****The Writing Center****

The Writing Center is an excellent resource for support on writing – a major part of your university experience should be devoted to sharpening your writing capabilities. If you find assignments for the course challenging, please seek out support from The Writing Center.

Informal Writing Assignments

-Short Essays: Throughout the course you will write six short essays on a variety of topics relating to the cinematic arts, from examining your personal values to theoretical discourse. These papers must be single space, in size 12 serif font, utilize Chicago Style citations, no images included, no tricks for taking up space (I know them all from teaching freshmen). These should be academic papers, written with an appropriate academic tone.

Formal Writing Assignments

-Artist Statement (1st draft, peer review, Revised 2nd draft)

You will complete an artist statement describing your film artistic practice. In small groups, you will provide feedback notes to each other, and do one revision based on feedback notes from your classmates and the instructors.

-Academic Research paper (1st draft, peer review, Revised 2nd draft)

You will complete an academic research paper on a film studies topic to be announced later in the semester. This paper must meet appropriate academic standards of research, including correct citation in Chicago Style. More details and guidance will be provided later in the semester. This paper will be turned in as a first draft for review and feedback from a small group of peers and the instructor, and as a final draft for your final grade in the course.

Structured Notes

The structured notes detailed below are a key element of your work for the course. Please be prepared to put forth an appropriate effort in completing, organizing, and keeping the notes on hand. You will be graded on notes throughout the semester, and they will assist you in your essay and academic research paper assignments.

-Viewing Notes: During each class meeting, we will watch full films together. You will be required to take structured notes on formal and conceptual aspects of the films. These notes will be checked every 3 – 4 weeks, and the note checks will comprise part of your participation grade. Be sure to keep all of your viewing notes throughout the semester.

-Readings & Reading Notes: Each week, you will be assigned a variety of texts to read from film history, theory, and film artist's own writings and interviews (primary documents). These readings are carefully selected to complement and enrich your course of study in Media Arts. Film theory and history are as important for a filmmaker to know and understand as production methodology. You will take notes on these readings utilizing Ann Lauterbach's QCQ (Quotation-Comment-Question) format. You must bring these notes to the following class, so you have them on hand for participation during the in-class discussions. The QCQ notes will be collected weekly in class, and will comprise part of your participation grade. Be sure to keep all of your reading notes throughout the semester.

Participation

During each class meeting, we will discuss assigned readings and the films we watch together. Your active participation in these discussions will comprise part of your participation grade. I understand that some students are more reserved, and thus my definition of participation is broad – taking active notes, watching films and listening to discussions with your full attention, and your respectful, alert presence will also contribute to your participation grade.

Final Project – Academic Research Paper

See details above, and more information provided later in the semester. This paper will be due during finals week. The Academic Research Paper is worth 20% of your overall grade.

Grading

Written Assignments – 68% of overall grade

Essays: 10 points each (50 points total)

Mid-term Essay: 15 points

Artist Statement: 20 points

Artist Statement Peer Review Participation: 5 points

Academic Research Paper (Final Assignment): 40 points

Research Peer Review Participation: 6 points

135 points total

Participation & Attendance – 32% of overall grade

-QCQ/reading completion: 3 points each (39 points total)

-in-class participation & attendance – 2 points per class (28 points)

Total points participation: 64 points

Intermediate Writing Course – Other Information

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 (Chicago Style for the arts)
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university. Here's the [rubric](#) that will be used to score the papers.

Late Submission Policy

Don't plan to turn in late assignments, as there is no guarantee late assignments will be accepted. In fairness to those students who meet deadlines, if you turn in an assignment late, 1 letter grade will be deducted per week that the assignment is late. If you will be absent the day an assignment is due, make arrangements to submit the assignment before you will be absent.

Excused Late Submissions

In some rare cases, late work will be accepted without penalty. Email me as soon as possible and provide documentation associated with your reasoning for requesting an excused late submission. **Broken computers and lost project files are never an excuse for a pass on late submission – always back up your work!**

Policy on Electronic Devices, Food and Drink

No electronic devices of any kind are permitted in the classroom at any time. If you must bring them with you, they must be turned off and stored in your bag. They must not be visible at any point during our course meeting time, including during breaks. I am happy to discuss accommodating any accessibility needs for electronic devices in the classroom.

Eat before (or after) you come to class, or very quickly during a break. Drinks allowed in lidded bottles. Please respect the Roxy Theater's willingness to host our class by cleaning up any trash or spills.

After a first warning, any student who violates these policies will be marked absent for the class meeting and lose points on their attendance/participation grade.

How to Earn the Grade That You Want

- Arrive to class on time, and don't miss class.
- Arrive to class ready to watch and listen with your full attention.
- Take notes during class and during films, participate in discussions.
- Schedule regular time to work on the course throughout the week.
- Thoroughly read all assignment info and be sure to meet all requirements.
- Turn your assignments in on time.
- Start your work early so you can ask questions before the deadline.
- Communicate with the professor. Ask for clarifications, ask for help. Come to office hours.
- Read all assigned readings, every week. Research other writing about the films.
- Read and know the information on this syllabus! Refer back throughout the course.

Other Course Policies

Plagiarism, Cheating and Academic Dishonesty

I take academic dishonesty very seriously. Plagiarism means using any text, in whole or in part, that you did not write. This means – do not copy and paste anything, from anywhere, into your written assignments. Any written work I suspect may contain plagiarized material will be scanned with a plagiarism detection application. Any plagiarized work, in whole or in part, will result in a 0 grade with no option to make up those points. On second offense, the student will be reported to the Dean of Students for violation of the conduct code. The repercussions are serious – don't risk it.

Sensitive Subject Matter & Censorship

This course operates under a no censorship policy, and you should feel free to experiment with challenging topics in your projects. That said - if you submit work with violent or sexually explicit themes, containing hate speech, racial slurs or other sensitive subject matter, I might contact you to request more background information on your choices.

Be Kind

Be respectful to each other, help each other, and be considerate in your communications with everyone involved in the course. No trolling shared work and ideas. Be constructive with any critical feedback you give. Interact with Roxy Theater staff members in a respectful manner.

Academic Misconduct and Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The code is available online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php

Accessibility

I am happy to work with you and provide reasonable accommodations for any accessibility concern. Be in touch with me as soon as possible.

Schedule

Week 1: 1/28 Foundations: Early Cinema

-Assignments: Essay #1: Why are you a film artist? Why do you care about film? (due 2/4), readings, vocabulary review, see Moodle

Week 2: 2/4 Foundations: Silents & Transition to Sound

Assignments: Reading, QCQ, see Moodle

Week 3: 2/11 Foundations: Italian Neorealism

Assignments: Essay #2 (due 2/18), Reading, QCQ, see Moodle

Week 4: 2/18 Documentary + Visiting Filmmaker

Visiting Artist Anna Kipervaser, Documentary Filmmaker *Cairo in One Breath*

Assignments: Big Sky Documentary Film Festival – You will choose a film from a list of selected films to attend, and report on that film in a short response paper (Essay #3 – due 2/25), Reading and vocabulary review, see Moodle

Week 5: 2/25 New Wave

Assignments: Reading – artist statement info and examples, QCQ, see Moodle, Artist Statement draft 1 (due 3/3)

Week 6: 3/3 – American Independents, Pt. 1

Assignments: Reading, QCQ, Artist Statement Peer Review feedback (due 3/10), Essay #4 (due 3/10), see Moodle

Week 7: 3/10 – American Independents, Pt. 2

Assignments: Midterm Essay #5 (due 3/24), Reading, QCQ, see Moodle

Week 8: 3/17 American Dreaming

Assignments: Reading, QCQ, see Moodle

Week 9: 3/24 The Imagination of Disaster, Pt. 1

Assignments: Reading, QCQ, see Moodle

Week 10: 3/31 The Imagination of Disaster, Pt. 2

ASSIGNMENTS: Artist Statement Draft 2 (due 4/14), Essay #6 (due 4/14), Reading, QCQ, see Moodle

Week 11: 4/7 Spring Break

Week 12: 4/14 Alienation and Industrialization

ASSIGNMENTS: Research paper draft 1 assigned (due 4/28), Paper outline (due 4/21), Reading, QCQ, see Moodle

Week 13: 4/21 Rhythm of My Life

ASSIGNMENTS: Research Paper outline due, Reading, QCQ, see Moodle

Week 14: 4/28 Light of the Century

ASSIGNMENTS: Research paper draft 1 due, Peer Review (due 5/5), Reading, QCQ, see Moodle

Week 15: 5/5 In the Mood

*Last regular class meeting

ASSIGNMENTS: finish Research Paper (due 5/9), Peer Review feedback due

Final Meeting: Monday, May 9 1:10 – 3:10 PM The Roxy Theater
Final Draft Academic Research Paper due **on Moodle Monday, May 9 at 10:00 PM**
No late papers accepted

Some Rules for Students and Teachers

By John Cage

RULE ONE: Find a place you trust, and then try trusting it for a while.

RULE TWO: General duties of a student - pull everything out of your teacher; pull everything out of your fellow students.

RULE THREE: General duties of a teacher - pull everything out of your students.

RULE FOUR: Consider everything an experiment.

RULE FIVE: be self-disciplined - this means finding someone wise or smart and choosing to follow them. To be disciplined is to follow in a good way. To be self-disciplined is to follow in a better way.

RULE SIX: Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail, there's only make.

RULE SEVEN: The only rule is work. If you work it will lead to something. It's the people who do all of the work all of the time who eventually catch on to things.

RULE EIGHT: Don't try to create and analyze at the same time. They're different processes.

RULE NINE: Be happy whenever you can manage it. Enjoy yourself. It's lighter than you think.

RULE TEN: "We're breaking all the rules. Even our own rules. And how do we do that? By leaving plenty of room for X quantities." (John Cage)

HINTS: Always be around. Come or go to everything. Always go to classes. Read anything you can get your hands on. Look at movies carefully, often. Save everything - it might come in handy later.