

Spring 2-1-2017

LIT 270L.01: Film as Lit

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LIT 270L: Film as Lit; Lit as Film

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M/W 11:40-2:00
NAC 009
Spring 2017

Course Description: We will study the relationship between literature and its cinematic adaptations. We will discuss their respective strengths and weaknesses in terms of character development, narrative techniques, and emotional impact. Readings will be a required number of short stories and novels that have been adapted into film. Selections will range over a variety of writing styles and topics and also different genres, from horror to epic/romance. Your full participation both in reading and discussion will be essential in making the course a success.

Texts:

<u>Don't Look Now</u> , Du Maurier	<u>Brokeback Mountain</u> , Proulx
<u>The English Patient</u> , Ondaatje	<u>No Country for Old Men</u> , McCarthy
<u>Fight Club</u> , Palahniuk	<u>Heart of Darkness</u> , Conrad
<u>Wise Guy</u> , Pileggi	<u>Maltese Falcon</u> , Hammett

Reading/Viewing Assignments:

- 1/23 Introduction to Course
- “Book is better than the film”
 - Renaissance art/drama
 - The novel and film
 - Translation or recreation?
 - Priority of the Word in Western tradition
 - Reign of the written word in the academy
 - Why adaptation?
- 1/25 Adaptations
- Technological influences
 - Problematic aspects
 - Types of adaptation
 - Censorship
 - Successful adaptations
 - Examples of successful adaptation
- 1/30 No Country for Old Men
1. What is the importance of the opening monologue?
 2. Describe the three main characters.
 3. Why is Chigurh “a living prophet of destruction”?
 4. What do we find out about Bell's past?
 5. What do you make of Bell's final monologues, his visit to Ellis and his dreams?
- 2/01 Introduction and showing of “No Country for Old Men”
1. Why does Bell feel that his soul is “at hazard”?
 2. Are there any significant changes in the main characters?
 3. How did the film explore the visual aspects of the novel?
 4. What is the significance of the “coin-toss” scene?
 5. Even though the novel and film end with Bell's dream, what were there main differences?
- 2/06 “No Country for Old Men” discussion
- 2/08 Brokeback Mountain
1. What do we learn in the first paragraph?

2. Describe the main characters.
3. What is the importance of nature/geography?
4. Where do we see the cause of Jack's death?
5. Why is the ending important?

2/13 Introduction and showing of “Brokeback Mountain”

1. Compare the beginnings of novel and film.
2. How does the film convey their characters?
3. How does Ennis respond to sex, during and after?
4. How does the film explore the influence of nature and geography?
5. Compare ending scenes with short story.

2/15 Discussion of “Brokeback Mountain”

2/20 Holiday

2/22 Heart of Darkness

1. Who is the narrator and whose story is he telling?
2. Why the reference to early English history?
3. Where *is* the “heart of darkness”?
4. Why the fascination with Kurtz?
5. What happens at the end? Why is it so ambiguous and murky?

2/27 Introduction and showing of “Apocalypse Now”

1. What is the effect of the opening scene? How does it set up the movie?
2. Is the jump to Vietnam a valid adaptation?
3. How does Willard compare to Marlow?
4. Why is Willard fascinated by Kurtz?
5. The novella exposes British culture. How does the film do this in terms of American culture?
6. What did you make of the ending?

3/01 Discussion of “Apocalypse Now”

3/06 Wise Guy (Chapters 1,2,5,6,10,11,13,17,19,21&22; including epilogue and introduction)

1. What was Henry Hill's background?
2. What is his relationship to Paul Vario and Jimmy Burke?
3. Why was Billy Batts' murder “a curse”?
4. Why did Karen almost kill Henry?
5. What does Henry suspect in his last meeting with Jimmy?

3/08 Introduction and showing of “Good Fellows”

1. How does the first scene change the emphasis and impact of the book?
2. How does the film introduce the various characters?
3. Does the film make Henry more or less sympathetic and why?
4. How does the film's casting influence your estimation of the characters?
5. Compare and contrast the endings. Which had a greater impact and why?

3/13 Discussion of “Good Fellows”

3/15 The English Patient, (Chapters 1 & 2)

1. Unpack the significance of the first scene. What themes does it set up?
2. Why does Hana feel a strong connection with the English Patient?
3. Why are books, journals, paintings so essential to story?
4. Describe the major characters and their relationships.

3/20-3/24 Spring Break

3/27 The English Patient (the rest of the novel)

1. What is solved by revealing the English Patient's identity?
 2. Why is Caravaggio so intent on revealing it?
 3. Why is Kip's story in chapter 7 so important?
 4. What is the importance of Herodotus and the Gyges tale?
 5. How satisfying was the ending for you?
- 3/29 Introduction and showing of "The English Patient"
1. Describe the difference between the two beginnings. Which do you prefer?
 2. What connections are made in the first few scenes?
 3. Look for instances of "the hidden bomb theme".
 4. How is the Gyges tale adapted?
 5. What is Caravaggio's motive for his arrival in the film?
 6. Which ending do you prefer?
- 4/03 Discussion of "The English Patient".
- 4/05 Fight Club
1. How do you interpret the first chapter?
 2. What do Marla and Tyler represent to Jack?
 3. Why does the fight club cure his insomnia?
 4. Why does it later lose its potency and lead to Project Mayhem?
 5. What happens at the end?
- 4/10 Introduction and showing of "Fight Club"
1. What is the significance of the opening credits? What does it suggest?
 2. What is "the love triangle"?
 3. What is the importance of Big Bob? What does he represent to Jack?
 4. Consider the film's casting: how does it influence your estimation of the characters?
 5. What changes were made in the film? Why?
 6. How does the ending affect your interpretation of the story?
- 4/12 Discussion of "Fight Club"
- 4/17 Don't Look Now
1. How does the first scene "set the stage"?
 2. What do we learn about the couple and the tension between them?
 3. How does Venice fit into their situation?
 4. Why doesn't John realize his psychic powers?
 5. How does the ending affect you?
- 4/19 Introduction and showing of "Don't Look Now"
1. How does the first scene frame the narrative visually?
 2. Try to unravel its additions and implications.
 3. What was the significance of the sexual scene?
 4. What is the significance of the two "accidents"?
 5. Which ending do you prefer and why?
- 4/24 Discussion of "Don't Look Now"
- 4/26 The Maltese Falcon
1. How can Spade be seen as one of the first anti-heroes?
 2. How is "Miss Wonderly" presented?
 3. What do you think of the characterization of Joel Cairo?
 4. What is the story of "the bird" and how are the various characters involved in its recovery?
 5. What do you think of Spade's justification for his final decision on Brigid?
- 5/01 Introduction and showing of "The Maltese Falcon"
1. How does the film differ in presenting Spade and "Wonderly"?

2. What does the film add to the story? Examples?
3. What is left out in the film?
4. How do the endings differ?

5/03 Discussion of “The Maltese Falcon” and final exam

Written Assignments:

1. Prepare short responses for questions on syllabus for each class. Be prepared both to give them during the class and turn them in at the end of the class.
2. After each film/lit pair has been discussed in class, compare the major strength and weakness of each medium in a short essay (2-3pp); due the next class.
3. Compose a term paper (8-10pp); topic to be discussed later. Due April 26
4. Final exam: Wednesday, May 10, 10:10-12:10. Topic to be discussed.

Grades:

Grading will be based on the four written assignments above and your attendance and participation according to the following percentages:

short responses—20%

short essays—30%

term paper—30%

final—20%

More than two absences and/or repeated tardiness will lower your grade.

This class is open to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request a reasonable modification of this syllabus, please consult with the instructor. For more information, go to <http://www.umt.edu/disability>.

Plagiarism Warning

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