THEA 220: CINEMA: HISTORY AND AESTHETICS
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS, BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
FALL 2011

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Course Description: This Boise State University core class is designed as an introduction to an interrelated set of approaches to film study, all of them defined by their attention to both form and content. The class will familiarize the student with film history—artistic, technological, economic, and cultural—and examine some of the major conceptual models which have been applied to that history (i.e., the elements of film form and narrative, genres, cultural influences). The course will be made up of lecture/presentations, discussions, and film viewings. Students will be evaluated through exams and various written analyses of films.

Learning Outcomes: the following are the specific learning outcomes you can expect from this class, along with the means of assessing the successful completion of the class requirements necessary to achieve those outcomes.

- You will demonstrate a critical awareness and knowledge of the differences and relationship between film form and content, between specific filmmaking techniques and the artistic expression created by those techniques. Assessment: Exams and class discussion.
- You will be able to identify the specific components of cinematic narrative deserving of critical evaluation. Assessment: Exams.
- You will demonstrate familiarity with published materials related to cinematic study, including your textbook. Assessment: Exams class discussion.
- You will demonstrate in writing your own critical responses to assigned films. Assessment: Written essays.
- You will demonstrate familiarity with a wide variety of historically and critically important films. Assessment: Written essays and exams.
- You will be able to identify the influences of various filmmakers upon one another, influences that reach across national, ethnic and gender boundaries. Assessment: Written essays, exams.
- You will understand the various political and cultural contexts in which certain films were made. Assessment: Exams.
- You will be able to identify the formal conventions of film narrative, such as editing, camerawork and story structure, as well as the relationships between these components. Assessment: Exams.
- You will demonstrate a knowledge of the major advances, developments, events and individuals in the history of world cinema. Assessment: Exams and class discussion.

Grading: Students will be required to attend class regularly, to participate in class discussions, to attend required film viewings, to pass three exams, and to complete and submit a writing assignment at the required time.

Attendance and participation: Attendance effects your grade in two ways: 1) People who attend class regularly will tend to get higher grades; and 2) If your final grade averages out to within a point or two of a higher grade, you will receive the higher grade if you have not missed more than three classes.

Writing Assignment: Students are required to complete and submit a writing assignment based on a required film viewing. This is an approximately 750 to 1200 word essay, worth 25% of the final grade. Late papers are dropped one full letter grade for each day they are late. Papers are due at beginning of class on the deadline date (or before): NO EXCEPTIONS. Details of the assignment follow further down in this syllabus. Papers are due Nov. 17.

Exams: Students are required to pass three exams based on the required reading, lectures, and required films. Each exam is worth 25% of final grade. Make-ups are given only because of extraordinary circumstances with verifiable documentation and permission of instructor. Exams are scheduled September 22, October 25 and December 15.

Class Conduct: Oftentimes in large courses, we feel as students that we are almost completely anonymous and faceless and that our behavior has no impact on the class. I want to emphasize that I regard each of you as an intelligent individual who has something to offer. And your presence in this class is noticed. Therefore, I ask that you be aware of the following behaviors that detract from the class experience and show great disrespect to your peers. Please do not:

• Whisper or talk to your neighbor excessively;
• Eat breakfast or lunch during class;
• Sleep during class;
• Leave your cellphone on or text-message during class;
• Leave early without informing me before class begins;
• Cheat or plagiarize. This is very important. According to the BSU Code of Conduct, cheating and plagiarizing (which includes writing someone else’s words as your own or taking a paper right off the internet with your name on it) are simply unacceptable and can seriously jeopardize your final grade and your future at Boise State.
• Inappropriately surf the net on your laptop.

Course Breakdown (in weeks):

Aug. 30: Fundamental principles continued. Types of movies/In-class screening: Méliès Shorts (1903-4) and Edwin S. Porter’s Life of an American Fireman (1902) and The Great Train Robbery (1903).


Sep. 20: Mise en Scene continued.

Sep. 22: First Exam on required reading (assigned sections of chaps. 1, 2, 4, and 10), screenings, lecture notes.


Oct. 11: American Studio Years, 1930’s-1941.

Oct. 18: Studio Years continued.

Oct. 25: *Second Exam on required reading (assigned sections of chapters 5, 6, 8, and 10), lectures, and screenings.*

Begin Post-War International Cinema and the new Auteurs (Rossellini, deSica, Fellini, Truffaut, Godard, Bergman, Kurosawa)

Nov. 1: Post-War International Cinema continued. **Read Chapter 10: pp. 434-440.**

Film Acting. **Read Chapter 7: Acting, pp. 270-271, 277-278, 280-289, and 295-296.**

Nov. 8: Post-War International Cinema continued


Nov. 17: **Analytical Papers Due beginning of class period. Papers will be returned to you Thursday, Dec. 8.**

Nov. 29: Continue study of Post-War American filmmaking. **Read Chapter 11: Filmmaking Technologies and Production Systems, pp. 467-477.**

Dec. 6: 1980’s and beyond

Dec. 15: **FINAL EXAM THURSDAY, DEC. 15, 8 TO 10 AM. LATECOMERS WILL NOT BE ADMITTED TO THE CLASS.**

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**Critical Analysis Assignment**

**FOR THEA220 CINEMA**

**KLAUTSCH/SUMMER 2011**

**Paper**

The required paper is a critical/analytical essay based on a film viewing. This paper must be approximately 750 to 1200 words long, or about 3 full pages in length (not too much longer). The paper must include a separate title page (which does not count as one of the three pages!), be double-spaced with no more than one inch margins, and be carefully proofed for typos and grammatical errors. Please organize your paper coherently, with an introductory paragraph that includes the title of the film and your thesis (or principal argument), and a concluding paragraph. This essay is making an argument about a film. It requires an over-riding thesis and a series of subpoints supporting that thesis. For each subpoint, you must include examples which support your claims. Be as precise as possible in discussing these examples. Never assume that they speak for themselves. You may quote from the film or from other critiques, as long as you cite those references in MLA format. You may support your points using comparisons with other films or comparisons with the filmmaker’s other works.

**Choose a film to write about from the list at the end of this syllabus. NO EXCEPTIONS OR SUBSTITUTIONS**

**Paper (due November 17): Choose One of the Following Assignments**

**Major Themes:** In your opinion, what is the major theme, or idea, explored in this film? How is the theme integrated into the plot? What specific moments or actions in the film support this choice of theme? How is the theme supported by the subjects of the film, subjects such as revenge, addiction, courage, family, loyalty, betrayal, etc.? How is the theme represented by action or characterization? How relevant is the theme to contemporary audiences and to modern social issues?
Analyze Cinematography/Editing. Analyze the cinematography and editing in a brief sequence of the film. How does the cinematography and editing help to enhance or counter the main idea of the film? How do they reinforce the action of the sequence and its meaning? How do they help to motivate audience response? Do they work, or not?

What I want in your paper for THEA 220 Cinema History

Title Page
Create a title page for your paper that includes a title, your name, class section (THEA 220.001), and your seat number if you can remember it.

Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs
Introductory paragraphs give your reader a general understanding of your essay and the context for the subject of your essay. For instance, an intro paragraph identifies what you are writing about (the name of the movie, the year it was released, possibly the director and principal actors, the specific sequence or scene you are covering, etc.) and why you are writing about it. *This means you must include a thesis statement in your intro paragraph.* For instance, your intro paragraph might end in a thesis statement: “In the middle section of the movie an assassin attempts unsuccessfully to eliminate the detective, leading to a thrilling car chase that lasts over ten minutes and emphasizes the violence that the detective represents throughout the story.” (please note: this is an example of a thesis, not the exact way that I expect you to write yours).

A concluding paragraph summarizes your main points and restates your thesis.

A Clear and Specific Thesis Statement

In one sentence, what is your primary “argument” or point; what are you trying to say with this paper?

Note: be sure to identify what the paper is analyzing. Are you analyzing the editing in a particular sequence? If so, be sure to state that clearly in your paper and identify specifically the sequence itself. If you are analyzing theme, be sure to identify what you think the theme is very clearly.
ALSO: be sure to look over the handout once again that describes “theme.” Remember that theme is a MAJOR IDEA. It is NOT a one word condition of being such as “love,” “betrayal,” “revenge,” “disrespect,” “greed,” “jealously,” or using a whole bunch of similar words in a scattergun approach to trying to find an idea. For instance, writing that a movie is about “revenge, redemption, love, and guilt” will not work. Those are NOT ideas; they are qualities of being. Remember, a major idea requires some major thought.

BAD (actually, NONEXISTENT) THEME = “this movie is about revenge.”
GOOD THEME: “The story of the anguished and vengeful gladiator illuminates the primary theme of the movie, which is that popularity, or the power of celebrity, is as influential in the manipulation of the masses as any other political resource.”

**Avoid Too Much Plot Summary or…Not Enough**
Self-explanatory. A movie plot can be summarized in one paragraph. Many folks make the mistake of using the majority of their essay to write a detailed plot summary, so they include very little actual analysis which hurts their grade.

On the other hand, sometimes a writer will not include any plot summary, assuming that the reader knows the movie inside and out. That gives the reader no context for analysis.

Assume that your reader is not familiar with the movie, and that the most important ideas you want to share are your analysis of the movie, not your memory of the entire plot. Share enough of the plot to give your reader a background and then emphasize your own ideas.

**Organization**

Paragraphs focus on a particular topic or topics and logically lead to the next topic which launches your next paragraph. The first sentence of each paragraph should identify what the paragraph will be about and should draw the reader into your analysis. Topic sentences help your essay flow and keep your reader focused on the main points of your essay.
Mechanics

Edit, edit, edit. Check and double-check:
Spelling (especially the titles of films and names of directors or actors);
Grammar (no comma splicing, sentence fragments, inconsistent tenses, etc.);
Typos;
Margins (maintain consistent margins throughout, no more than 1” on all sides);
Font: no larger than 12-pt font.

THE THESIS: A one-sentence condensation of the main idea of an essay. It summarizes the main point of the paper and helps readers predict how the paper will be developed and organized.

MAJOR QUALITIES THAT MAKE THESIS STATEMENTS INTERESTING:

Complexity: The thesis is not just an easy truism (“I have chosen to write about a scene that helps the plot and develops character…”). It accepts and embraces the messy complexities potentially present in any subject. (“This scene may seem to contribute nothing to the development of the Little Tramp or to the story itself, but after a closer examination you begin to realize how vulnerable and desperate Chaplin’s character really is and how much the plot actually depends on this event to make sense.”)

Edge: A good thesis is in some way controversial, surprising, or even troubling. If you turn your subject around to look at all sides of it, you can usually push an ordinary idea until it reaches an edge—until it becomes more than just an easy truism that nobody would ever disagree with. But it takes some real hard thought.
MISCONCEPTIONS

1. The thesis of the paper is just a statement of the subject. Wrong. The thesis has to be a claim. For instance, a bad thesis is “This paper is about term limits.”

2. The thesis is merely a general statement, one the writer agrees or disagrees with. Wrong. You can’t just say “Term limits are wrong.” You must address some questions that narrow and focus the issue. Wrong for whom? In which government, federal, state, local? And so on.

3. You have to have the thesis nailed down before you start writing. Wrong. Use your writing to discover ideas and to start thinking things through. In most cases, the act of writing itself will help you think more deeply about what you are trying to say.

4. There are absolute rules about the form and placement of the thesis. There are exceptions.

THEME

Theme is the central or dominating or major idea, the “message” implicit in an artistic narrative or other work. The theme of a work is very seldom stated or depicted directly. It is an abstract concept indirectly expressed through recurrent images, actions, characters, and symbols, and must be inferred by the reader, listener, or spectator.

Theme is not the same as SUBJECT (a topic or thing described in the work); theme is a comment, observation, or insight about the subject.

For instance, the subject of a poem may be a flower; its theme, a comment about the fleeting nature of existence.

The subject of a movie might be revenge (such as Gladiator); its theme, a comment on the intoxicating power of celebrity.

Theme is NOT a SUBJECT: examples of subjects are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love</th>
<th>Happiness</th>
<th>Revenge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greed</td>
<td>Addiction</td>
<td>Lust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Evil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redemption</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>Self-sacrifice</td>
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Basically, if you can say it in one word it’s **NOT a theme**.

Also, theme is not a cliché, saying, maxim, proverb, adage, epigram, or dictum. So “You can’t judge a book by its cover” is **NOT a theme**.

**THEME** is a major idea that says something profound and meaningful about the subject of the movie. It is difficult to find and to put into words. Do not be satisfied with your first choice. **Think about it!!** Sometimes the more profound the theme the harder it is uncover.

**Movie List for Analytical Paper Assignment THEA 220 Cinema History**

**Richard Klautsch**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Silents</strong></th>
<th><strong>1930’s</strong></th>
<th><strong>1940’s</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intolerance 1916</td>
<td>All Quiet on the Western Front 1930</td>
<td>The Grapes of Wrath 1940</td>
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<td>Way Down East 1920</td>
<td>M 1931</td>
<td>Sullivan’s Travels 1941</td>
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<td>Broken Blossoms 1919</td>
<td>It Happened One Night 1934</td>
<td>Citizen Kane 1941</td>
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<td>Nosferatu 1922</td>
<td>The 39 Steps 1935</td>
<td>Casablanca 1942</td>
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<td>Greed 1924</td>
<td>Grand Illusion 1937</td>
<td>The Ox-Bow Incident 1943</td>
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<td>The Big Parade 1925</td>
<td>Stagecoach 1939</td>
<td>Obsession 1943</td>
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<td>The Last Laugh 1925</td>
<td>Rebecca 1939</td>
<td>Double Indemnity 1944</td>
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<td>Mother 1926</td>
<td>Gone With the Wind 1939</td>
<td>The Best Years of Our Lives 1946</td>
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<td>Sunrise 1927</td>
<td>Wizard of Oz 1939</td>
<td>El Gallo Giro 1948</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>1950’s</strong></th>
<th><strong>1960’s</strong></th>
<th><strong>1970’s</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Olvidados 1950</td>
<td>Breathless 1960</td>
<td>Little Big Man 1970</td>
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<td>Rashomon 1950</td>
<td>A Raisin in the Sun 1960</td>
<td>The Conformist 1970</td>
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<td>Born Yesterday 1950</td>
<td>To Kill a Mockingbird 1962</td>
<td>A Clockwork Orange 1971</td>
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<td>High Noon 1952</td>
<td>Harakiri (Seppuku) 1962</td>
<td>Harold and Maude 1971</td>
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<td>On the Waterfront 1954</td>
<td>Lawrence of Arabia 1962</td>
<td>The Last Picture Show 1971</td>
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<td>Diabolique 1955</td>
<td>Dr. Strangelove 1964</td>
<td>The Godfather 1972</td>
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<td>The Searchers 1956</td>
<td>Closely Watched Trains 1966</td>
<td>Deliverance 1972</td>
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<td>The Seventh Seal 1957</td>
<td>The Graduate 1967</td>
<td>Mean Streets 1973</td>
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<td>Paths of Glory 1957</td>
<td>Bonnie and Clyde 1967</td>
<td>The Conversation 1974</td>
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<td>Hiroshima, Mon Amour 1959</td>
<td>Easy Rider 1968</td>
<td>Seven Beauties 1976</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ben Hur 1959</td>
<td>The Wild Bunch 1969</td>
<td>Annie Hall 1977</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some Like it Hot 1959</td>
<td>Midnight Cowboy 1969</td>
<td>Apocalypse Now 1979</td>
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1980's
Raging Bull 1980
The Gods Must Be Crazy 1980
Ordinary People 1980
Fanny and Alexander 1982
The Big Chill 1983
The Killing Fields 1984
Ran 1985
The Breakfast Club 1985
Brazil 1985
Hannah and Her Sisters 1986

1990's
Ju Dou 1990
Goodfellas 1990
Raise the Red Lantern 1991
Europa Europa 1991
Unforgiven 1992
The Player 1992
Reservoir Dogs 1992
In the Name of the Father 1993
Blue 1993
Like Water for Chocolate 1993

2000's
Memento 2000
Amores Perros 2000
Requiem for a Dream 2000
You Can Count on Me 2000
Amelie 2001
Frida 2002
Mystic River 2003
Lost in Translation 2003
Good Night and Good Luck 2005
Babel 2006