

**FST 377: AMERICAN CINEMA SINCE 1961**  
**SYLLABUS AND POLICIES**

*Screening and Lecture:* Thursday 12:30-3:45 pm (195 min) in KI 101  
*Discussion:* Tuesday 12:30-1:45 pm (75 min) in KI 104

Professor Todd Berliner  
Fall 2015

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The course introduces students to the history and form of American cinema since the end of the Hollywood studio system. We will conduct an “historical poetics” of contemporary American cinema, as we seek to understand the historical conditions that enabled modern American cinema to assume the form it has. We will consider the major topics discussed by historians of the period, including the break-up of the motion picture studios, demographic changes, the film ratings system, the “blockbuster syndrome,” the “event film,” independent filmmaking, home video, market globalization, and other stuff like that.

Throughout, we will study movies *as* movies—as experiences for spectators—and we will never stray far from our central question and the only question about the cinema that I care much about: What is it about the movies people enjoy that makes people enjoy them?

**CLASS MEETINGS, SCREENINGS, AND FILMS**

You should plan to attend all of every class, even screenings of movies you have already seen, even if you rented the same movie the night before. Don’t ask if it’s okay to come late or leave early; it isn’t.

You may not use laptops during class time.

Video copies of the movies we are studying are on reserve for this course. The course has controversial and potentially upsetting material. See me if you have concerns.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES**

I will calculate your final grades according to the following percentages:

1. Quizzes (best eight scores) (30%)
2. Critical Reception Report (10%)
3. Detailed Outline and Bibliography for Final Paper (20%)
4. Final Paper (25%)
5. Class Participation (15%): Primarily attendance, punctuality, and preparedness for your individual conference with me, but also, to a lesser degree, participation in discussion. More than three absences will cause you to fail class participation. Two tardies equals an absence.

Grade scale (minimums): A (93.3), A- (90), B+ (86.7), B (83.3), B- (80), C+ (76.7), C (73.3), C- (70), D+ (66.7), D (63.3), D- (60).

*Readings and Quizzes*

The reading is at times dense. You’ll want to read carefully and take notes on what you read. At the very beginning of at least ten class meetings, without warning, you will take a short quiz on the week’s reading and lecture material. Quizzes are perfunctory, designed merely to make sure that you have done the reading, that you are understanding what you read, and that you are attending screenings and lectures. They are your opportunity to score points for diligence and dutifulness. Quizzes cannot be made up or taken late, so arrive to class on time. I can sometimes arrange for you to take a quiz early; you can do that once in the semester. If you miss a quiz, you get a zero on it. But, no matter how many quizzes I give, I will count only your best eight scores.

### *Optional Reading Summaries (Extra Credit)*

You may write a brief summary of the readings each week, paraphrasing (putting in your own words) the main points of each assigned chapter or article so that I know you understand them. Summaries condense and distill the authors' main points: State the author's *points* (arguments/conclusions), not just the topics of article. *Write your summaries so that the authors themselves would agree with what you have written.*

Write separate summaries for each reading. Each summary should be no longer than 1½ pages. I will add up to 25 percentage points to your week's quiz grade (even if the added points bring your score over 100%), depending on the strength of your summary and the clarity of your writing. A reading summary is entirely optional, and, if there is no quiz, you get no points for writing one. Summaries are due at the very beginning of the discussion section meeting.

### *Writing Assignments*

The first writing assignment is a report on the critical reception of an American film released between 1961 and 1980. During the second half of the semester, students will work on individual research projects. A separate handout (FST377assignments.doc) has detailed instructions for the writing assignments, and the course schedule below indicates due dates.

### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

This course satisfies the Film History requirement in the Film Studies major and the Information Literacy requirement in University Studies. Students in Film Studies history courses learn to:

- Conduct individual research projects, using library and other resources.
- Complete research assignments that establish the scope of information needed to answer a question pertaining to film history, as well as a method for answering the question.
- Master bodies of research on discrete topics in film history and critically analyze information pertaining to those topics.
- Find, use, and critically analyze information for the purpose of writing persuasive, cogent, and valid essays, informed by historical research, on topics in film.

### **OFFICE HOURS, EMAIL, AND CONTACTING ME**

I will hold office hours on Tuesdays 2-3:30 p.m., or by appointment, in King Hall 106D. I am typically available to meet on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.

My campus mailbox is located in the Film Studies Department office in King Hall. My office phone number is 962-3336. Email is the best way to reach me: [berlinert@uncw.edu](mailto:berlinert@uncw.edu). If I need to reach you, I'll use your campus email address.

### **UNCW STUDENT ACADEMIC HONOR CODE**

UNCW students are subject to the Student Academic Honor Code, which says, "UNCW students are committed to honesty and truthfulness in academic inquiry and in the pursuit of knowledge."

Plagiarism is a form of academic corruption in which you cause or allow your reader to believe that another person's words or ideas are yours. If you plagiarize, I will give you an F in the course and report you to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. Always cite your sources, whether it is a book, a website, an article, another student, one of your other professors, or the source of any ideas that are not common knowledge and that didn't originate in your own brain.

Students in this course may not submit work that they have submitted or intend to submit for another course.

## CAMPUS RESOURCES

### *Writing and Research Resources*

Randall library's webpage devoted to film studies resources: <http://library.uncw.edu/subjects/film-studies>.

The Writing Center provides one-on-one consultations <http://www.uncw.edu/ulc/writing/center.html>, 962-7857, [ulc@uncw.edu](mailto:ulc@uncw.edu)). You may make an appointment to see a tutor, drop in at the Writing Lab (DE 1003), or use their Online Writing & Learning (OWL) program that allows you to receive personal responses to your developing papers. Tuition and taxes pay for these services; you might as well use them.

### *Students with Disabilities*

Students with disabilities should supply me with a letter from the Office of Disability Services (962-7555) that details any necessary class accommodations. If you require accommodation for test taking, please make sure I have the referral letter at least a week before the test.

### *Violence and Harassment*

UNCW does not tolerate violent or harassing behavior. If you experience violence or harassment, contact the police at 911 (in cases of emergency) or UNCW CARE at 962-2273. Resources for individuals concerned with a violent or harassing situation can be located at <http://www.uncw.edu/wsrc/crisis.html>.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2006). There is a Kindle version, but you must bring it to class every week.
- **Electronic Readings.** The electronic readings may be downloaded from the Blackboard Learn website at <https://learn.uncw.edu/>. After logging into the course, click "Course Content." Contact TAC (962-4357) if you need help with Blackboard.
  - **Allen.technology.pdf**  
Michael Allen. "From *Bwana Devil* to *Batman Forever*: Technology in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema." *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*. Ed. Steve Neale and Murray Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. 109-129. Print.
  - **Balio.globalization.pdf**  
Tino Balio. "'A Major Presence in All of the World's Important Markets': The Globalization of Hollywood in the 1990s." *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*. Ed. Steve Neale and Murray Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. 58-73. Print.
  - **Cook.Altman.pdf**  
David Cook. "Robert Altman." *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000. 89-98. Print.
  - **Cook.Auteur.pdf**  
David Cook. "The Auteur Cinema." *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000. 67-72. Print.
  - **Cook.Blockbuster.pdf**  
David Cook. "Manufacturing the Blockbuster: The Newest Art Form of the Twentieth Century." *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000. 25-51. Print.
  - **Cook.Hollywood1965.pdf**  
David Cook. "Hollywood, 1965-Present." *A History Of Narrative Film*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. New York: Norton, 1996. 919-33. Print.
  - **FST377assignments.doc**  
A 5-page handout describing all of the writing assignments for the semester.

- **FST377syllabus.doc**  
Syllabus, Course Policies, Course Schedule, and References for Electronic Readings.
- **Gomery.corporate.pdf**  
Douglas Gomery. "Hollywood Corporate Business Practice and Periodizing Contemporary Film History." *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*. Ed. Steve Neale and Murray Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. 47-57. Print.
- **King.Auteurs.pdf**  
Geoff King. "From Auteurs to Brats: Authorship in New Hollywood." *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. 85-115. Print.
- **MLAStyleGuide2.pdf**  
A reference guide for formatting your papers and bibliographies.
- **Monaco.Code.pdf**  
Paul Monaco. "The Waning Production Code and the Rise of the Ratings System." *The Sixties: 1960-1969*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2001. 56-66. Print.
- **Prince.Ancillary.pdf**  
Stephen Prince. "The Brave New Ancillary World." *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2000. 90-141. Print.
- **Sample outlines and papers.**  
Exemplary work by students in previous courses.
- **Schamus.indieeconomics.pdf**  
James Schamus. "To the Rear of the Back End: The Economics of Independent Cinema." *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*. Ed. Steve Neale and Murray Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. 91-105. Print.
- **Schatz.Western2.pdf**  
Thomas Schatz, "The Western" in *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 45-80.
- **Thompson.Bordwell.Entertainmenteconomy.pdf**  
Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell. "American Cinema and the Entertainment Economy: The 1980s and After." *Film History: An Introduction*, Second Edition. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003. 679-704. Print.
- **Thompson.Christie.TaxiDriver.pdf**  
David Thompson and Ian Christie, ed. "*Mean Streets—Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore—Taxi Driver.*" *Scorsese on Scorsese*. London and New York: Faber and Faber, 1996. 38-67. Print.

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### SCHEDULE

*Screening and Lecture:* Thursday 12:30-3:45 pm (195 min) in KI 101

Professor Todd Berliner

*Discussion:* Tuesday 12:30-1:45 pm (75 min) in KI 104

Fall 2015

#### Notes:

- Study the readings before the class meeting for which they are listed.
- Bring the week's readings with you to class, including print-outs of the PDF files.
- You can download readings with ".pdf" or ".doc" at the end of their titles from the Blackboard website for this course (<https://learn.uncw.edu/>). Log into to the course and click "Course Content." Contact TAC (962-4357) if you need help with Blackboard.
- "TWHTI" stands for David Bordwell's *The Way Hollywood Tells It*.

#### WEEKS 1-3: AMERICAN FILMMAKING IN THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES

- 1 Aug 20 Thu **Screening:** *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962, 122 min., John Ford).  
**Lecture:** "The American Film Industry in the New Hollywood: Industry Changes"
- 25 Tue **Reading:** 1) Cook.Hollywood1965.pdf  
2) FST377syllabus.doc (this handout)  
3) FST377assignments.doc (familiarize yourself with the writing assignments)
- 2 27 Thu **Screening:** *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967, 111 min., Arthur Penn)  
**Lecture:** "The American Film Industry in the New Hollywood: Storytelling Practices"
- Sep 1 Tue **Reading:** 1) Monaco.Code.pdf  
2) TWHTI (pp. 1-18 "Introduction")
- 3 3 Thu **Screening:** *Faces* (1968, 130 min., John Cassavetes).  
**Lecture:** "John Cassavetes and Independent Filmmaking in the late Sixties and Seventies"
- 8 Tue **Reading:** 1) TWHTI (pp. 19-50 "A Real Story" and "Continuing Tradition")  
2) FST377assignments.doc (p. 1)

#### WEEKS 4-5: SEVENTIES AUTEURISM

- 4 Sep 10 Thu **Screening:** *Nashville* (1975, 160 min., Robert Altman)  
**Lecture:** "Stylistic Eccentricity in Seventies Hollywood"
- 15 Tue **Reading:** 1) King.Auteurs.pdf (pp. 85-105 only)  
2) Cook.Altman.pdf  
3) TWHTI (pp. 115-120 "A Stylish Style")
- 5 17 Thu **Screening:** *Taxi Driver* (1976, 113 min., Martin Scorsese)  
**Lecture:** "*Taxi Driver*'s Narrative and Visual Perversity"
- 22 Tue **Reading:** 1) Cook.Auteur.pdf  
2) Thompson.Christie.TaxiDriver.pdf (pp. 53-67 only)  
3) TWHTI (pp. 121-138 "Intensified Continuity")

## WEEKS 6-7: 1970S CORPORATE HOLLYWOOD, GENRE FILMMAKING AND THE BLOCKBUSTER SYNDROME

- 6 Sep 24 Thu **Screening:** *The Godfather* (1972, 175 min., Francis Ford Coppola).  
25 Fri **Due by email (MS Word attachment) by noon:** Critical Reception Report. The title of your attachment should start with your last name (e.g. “yourlastname\_outline.doc”).  
29 Tue **Reading:** 1) Cook.Blockbuster.pdf  
2) Gomery.corporate.pdf  
**Due:** If you want to write on your own paper topic, come to my office hours by today prepared to present your topic (including a written description) and obtain my approval.  
**Due:** Sign up for a 15-minute conference with Professor Berliner to discuss your paper. Sign-up sheets are outside my office door (KI 106D). Come to your conference prepared to answer the five questions indicated in the Writing Assignments handout.
- 7 Oct 1 Thu **Screening:** *Star Wars* (1977/2015 “Despecialized Edition,” 121 min., George Lucas)  
**Lecture:** “Genre Expertise and Aesthetic Pleasure, or Why Film Scholars Don’t Like *Star Wars*”  
6 Tue **Reading:** 1) *TWHTI* (pp. 139-157 “Some Likely Sources”)  
2) Balio.globalization.pdf  
3) FST377assignments.doc (pp. 2-7)  
4) Sample Outlines (Blackboard)  
**Workshop:** How to Develop a Strong Thesis and Organize a Paper  
7 Wed *Last day to withdraw*

## WEEKS 8-9: HYPER-CLASSICISM AND THE ENTERTAINMENT ECONOMY

- 8 Oct 8 Thu **Screening:** *Die Hard* (1988, 131 min., John McTiernan).  
**Lecture:** “Ideology and Aesthetic Pleasure in Hollywood Cinema”  
13 Tue *Fall Break!*
- 9 15 Thu **Screening:** *Jerry Maguire* (1996, 139 min., Cameron Crowe).  
**Lecture:** “Hollywood Filmmaking in the 1980s and Beyond”  
20 Tue **Reading:** Reading is heavy this week because fall break caused us to miss last week’s discussion meeting. We will have a quiz this week worth twice as much as the others, and it will cover both this week’s lecture and readings and last week’s lecture. For extra credit this week, each reading summary is worth as much as 12% points (36% points maximum).  
1) *TWHTI* (pp. 51-71 “Pushing the Premises”)  
2) *TWHTI* (pp. 104-114 “A Certain Amount of Plot”)  
3) Thompson.Bordwell.Entertainmenteconomy.pdf

## WEEKS 10-11: INDEPENDENT CINEMA SINCE THE 1980S: FORM AND ECONOMICS

- 10 22 Thu **Screening:** *Do the Right Thing* (1989, 120 min., Spike Lee).  
**Lecture:** “Contemporary American Independent Cinema: Production, Distribution, and Exhibition”  
1 Tue **Reading:** 1) Prince.ancillary.pdf  
2) Sample Papers (Blackboard)
- 11 29 Thu **Screening:** *Magnolia* (1999, 188 min., Paul Thomas Anderson)  
Nov 3 Tue **Reading:** 1) *TWHTI* (pp. 72-103 “Subjective Stories and Network Narratives”)  
2) Schamus.indieeconomics.pdf

### WEEKS 12-13: RE-IMAGINING HOLLYWOOD GENRES: THE WESTERN AND THE MUSICAL

- 12 Nov 4 Wed **Due by email (MS Word attachment) by noon:** Detailed Outline and Bibliography. The title of your attachment should start with your last name (e.g. “yourlastname\_outline.doc”).
- 5 Thu **Screening:** *Unforgiven* (1992, 131 min., Clint Eastwood)  
**Lecture:** “Unforgiven and the Evolution of the Western”
- 10 Tue **Reading:** 1) Schatz.Western2.pdf  
2) Allen.technology.pdf
- 13 12 Thu **Screening:** *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996, 101 min., Woody Allen)  
**Lecture:** “Bursting into Song in the Hollywood Musical”
- 17 Tue **Reading:** *TWHTI* (pp. 158-189 “Style, Plain and Fancy” “What’s Missing”)

### WEEKS 14-16: SOME RECENT EXPERIMENTS

- 14 19 Thu **Screening (Complex Storytelling Double Feature):** *Timecode* (2000, 97 min., Mike Figgis) and *Primer* (2004, 77 min., Shane Carruth)
- 24 Tue *No reading, just come to class*
- 25-27 *Thanksgiving Break!*
- 15 Dec 1 Tue *No reading; just come to class*
- 16 9 Wed **Due by email (MS Word attachment) by noon:** Abstract, Final Paper, and List of Works Cited. The title of your attachment should start with your last name (e.g. “yourlastname\_essay.doc”).
- 10 Thu 11:30-2:30 in KI 101. Final Exam Time (no exam, just screening and discussion).  
**Screening:** *United 93* (2006, 111 min., Paul Greengrass)