

FST 377: AMERICAN CINEMA SINCE 1961
SYLLABUS AND POLICIES

Screening and Lecture: Wednesday 12:30-3:45 pm (195 min) in KI 101
Discussion Section 1: Monday 12:30-1:45 pm (75 min) in KI 104
Discussion Section 2: Monday 2:00-3:15 pm (75 min) in KI 104

Professor Todd Berliner
Spring 2018

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the history and aesthetics of American cinema since the end of the Hollywood studio system. We will conduct an “historical poetics” of American cinema, as we seek to understand the historical conditions that enabled American films to assume their aesthetic design at the time they were made. 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,” indie filmmaking, home video, globalization, and other stuff like that. Throughout, we will study American 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

Plan to attend all of every class, even screenings of movies you have seen, even if you rented the same movie the night before. Please don't ask me if it's okay to miss class, arrive late, or leave early; it isn't.

You may not use electronics during class time; they're distracting.

Copies of the movies we are studying are available through Randall Library on DVD, Blu Ray, or streaming. Randall Library subscribes to two movie streaming services: [Kanopy](#) and [Swank](#).

The course has potentially upsetting material and trauma triggers; see me in advance of screenings if you have concerns.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

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

1. Quizzes (best nine scores) (30%)
2. Critical Reception Report (15%)
3. Film History Paper (35%)
4. Class Participation (20%): Class attendance is essential. Your class participation grade is based on attendance, punctuality, and preparedness for your individual conference with me, as well as, to a lesser degree, participation in discussion. More than four absences will cause you to fail class participation. Two tardies or early exits 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 sometimes 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 nine 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, as though you were the author: 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 30 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 film history research projects. A separate handout (FST377assignments.pdf) 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 University Studies Information Literacy requirement. In such courses, students learn to:

1. IL1. Develop an effective strategy to search for, identify, and retrieve information in order to fully address an information need. [Information Literacy; Inquiry; Critical Thinking]
 - Complete research assignments by identifying information needed, locating appropriate sources, and collating relevant material into evidence that supports satisfactory answers to questions in film history.
2. IL2. Analyze information in order to evaluate its currency, authority, accuracy, relevance, and purpose. [Information Literacy; Critical Thinking]
 - Conduct individual research projects using library and other resources that evaluate the reliability and accuracy of information in order to produce a historical or historiographic argument.
3. IL3. Synthesize and appropriately cite retrieved information in order to ensure information is utilized ethically and legally. [Global Citizenship; Information Literacy]
 - Collect data, documentation, and interpretative narratives regarding film history, and incorporate findings into research projects using proper citation and conscientious bibliographic practice.
4. IL4. Create a finished product (e.g. paper, presentation, data analysis, video, etc.) using retrieved information and reflect on the iterative processes used to find, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically and legally utilize information. [Critical Thinking; Thoughtful Expression; Information Literacy]
 - Write persuasive, cogent, and valid essays on topics in film history, informed and supported by critical, comprehensive, and responsible research methods.
 - Produce outlines, bibliographies, and/or oral presentations that demonstrate an understanding of the iterative processes required by scholarly research.

OFFICE HOURS, EMAIL, AND CONTACTING ME

I will hold office hours on Mondays 9:45-11:15 am., or by appointment, in King Hall 106D. I am typically available to make appointments on Mondays, Wednesdays, 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.

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, work 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 may not submit work that they have submitted or intend to submit for another course.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Writing and Research Resources

Randall has a webpage devoted to this course: https://library.uncw.edu/guides/american_cinema_1961

The Writing Center provides one-on-one consultations <http://www.uncw.edu/ulc/writing/center.html>, 962-7857, 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.

Violence and Harassment Resources

UNCW does not tolerate violent or harassing behavior. If you experience violence or harassment, contact the police at 911 (in an emergency) or UNCW CARE at 910-962-2273. 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*, 3rd Edition. New York: Norton, 1996. 919-33. Print.
 - **FST377syllabus.pdf**
Syllabus, Course Policies, Course Schedule, and References for Electronic Readings.
 - **FST377writing.assignments.pdf**
A handout describing all of the writing assignments for the semester.
 - **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 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 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. Print.
 - **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.

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SCHEDULE

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

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Discussion Section 1: Monday 12:30-1:45 pm (75 min) in KI 104

Spring 2018

Discussion Section 2: Monday 2:00-3:15 pm (75 min) in KI 104

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” at the end of their titles from the Blackboard website for this course (<https://learn.uncw.edu/>). Log into the course and click “Course Content.”
- “TWHTI” stands for David Bordwell's *The Way Hollywood Tells It*.

WEEKS 1-3: OLD HOLLYWOOD, NEW HOLLYWOOD AND UNDERGROUND CINEMA

1 Jan 8 Mon Introduction

Lecture: “The American Film Industry in the New Hollywood I: Industry Changes”

2 10 Wed **Screening:** 1) *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962, 122 min., John Ford).

2) *Scorpio Rising* (1963, 28 min., Kenneth Anger)

Reading: 1) FST377syllabus.pdf (this handout)

2) FST377writing.assignments.pdf

15 Mon *MLK Holiday*

16 Tue *Last day to add/drop a class*

3 17 Wed **Screening:** *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967, 111 min., Arthur Penn)

Lecture: “The American Film Industry in the New Hollywood II: Storytelling Practices”

22 Mon **Reading:** 1) Cook.Hollywood1965.pdf

2) FST377writing.assignments.pdf (p. 1-2)

WEEKS 4-6: AUTEURISM

4 Jan 24 Wed **Screening:** *Faces* (1968, 130 min., John Cassavetes)

Lecture: “John Cassavetes and Independent Filmmaking in the late Sixties and Seventies”

29 Mon **Reading:** 1) *TWHTI* (pp. 1-18 “Introduction”)

2) Monaco.Code.pdf

5 31 Wed **Screening:** *Nashville* (1975, 160 min., Robert Altman)

Lecture: “Stylistic Eccentricity in Seventies Hollywood”

Feb 5 Mon **Reading:** 1) King.Auteurs.pdf (pp. 85-105 only)

2) Cook.Altman.pdf

6 7 Wed **Screening:** *Taxi Driver* (1976, 113 min., Martin Scorsese)

Lecture: “*Taxi Driver*'s Narrative and Visual Perversity”

9 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_reception.doc”).

12 Mon **Reading:** 1) *TWHTI* (pp. 19-50 “A Real Story,” “Continuing Tradition”)

2) Cook.Auteur.pdf

WEEKS 7-8: CORPORATE HOLLYWOOD IN THE 1970s: THE BLOCKBUSTER SYNDROME

- 7 Feb 14 Wed **Screening:** *The Godfather* (1972, 175 min., Francis Ford Coppola).
19 Mon **Reading:** 1) Cook.Blockbuster.pdf
2) FST377writing.assignments.pdf (pp. 3-6)
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 25-minute conference with Professor Berliner to present your project. 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.
- 8 21 Wed **Screening:** *Star Wars* (1977/2015 “Despecialized Edition,” 121 min., George Lucas)
Lecture: “Genre Expertise and Aesthetic Pleasure (or Why Film Scholars Didn’t Like *Star Wars*)”
23 Fri *Last day to withdraw*
26 Mon **Reading:** *TWHTI* (pp. 115-138 “A Stylish Style” “Intensified Continuity”)

WEEKS 9-11: THE ENTERTAINMENT ECONOMY: HOLLYWOOD CINEMA IN THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES

- 9 Feb 28 Wed **Screening:** *Rocky III* (1982, 99 min., Sylvester Stallone)
Lectures: 1) “Hollywood Filmmaking Since the 1980s”
2) “*Rocky III: Rocky Again and Again*”
- Mar 5-9 *Spring Break!*
- 12 Mon Library Instruction Session—*Meet in RL 1022.*
Reading: Prince.ancillary.pdf
- 10 14 Wed **Screening:** *Die Hard* (1988, 131 min., John McTiernan).
Lecture: “Ideology and Aesthetic Pleasure in Hollywood Cinema”
19 Mon **Reading:** 1) Thompson.Bordwell.Entertainmenteconomy.pdf
2) *TWHTI* (pp. 104-114 “A Certain Amount of Plot”)
- 11 21 Wed **Screening:** *Jerry Maguire* (1996, 139 min., Cameron Crowe).
Lecture: “How to Develop a Strong Thesis and Organize a Paper”
26 Mon **Reading:** 1) *TWHTI* (pp. 51-71 “Pushing the Premises”)
2) Balio.globalization.pdf

WEEKS 12-13: THE SUNDANCE-MIRAMAX ERA: INDEPENDENT CINEMA IN THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES

- 12** 28 Wed **Screening:** *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (1989, 100 min., Steven Soderbergh)
Lecture: “Independent Cinema: Production, Distribution, and Exhibition”
- Apr 2 Mon **Reading:** 1) Schamus.indieeconomics.pdf
2) *TWHTI* (pp. 139-157 “Some Likely Sources”)
3) Sample Papers (Blackboard)
- 13** 4 Wed **Screening:** *Magnolia* (1999, 188 min., Paul Thomas Anderson)
9 Mon **Reading:** *TWHTI* (pp. 72-103 “Subjective Stories and Network Narratives”)

WEEKS 14-15: RETHINKING CLASSICAL GENRES: THE WESTERN AND THE MUSICAL

- 14** Apr 11 Wed **Screening:** *Unforgiven* (1992, 131 min., Clint Eastwood)
Lecture: “*Unforgiven* and the Evolution of the Western”
16 Mon **Reading:** 1) *TWHTI* (pp. 158-179 “Style, Plain and Fancy”)
2) Schatz.Western2.pdf
- 15** 18 Wed **Screening:** *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996, 101 min., Woody Allen)
Lecture: “Bursting into Song in the Hollywood Musical”
20 Fri **Due by email (MS Word attachment) by noon:** Film History Project Abstract, Paper, and Works Cited. The title of your attachment should start with your last name (e.g. “yourlastname_essay.docx”).
23 Mon **Reading:** 1) *TWHTI* (pp. 180-189 “What’s Missing”)
2) Allen.technology.pdf

WEEK 16: SOME RECENT EXPERIMENTS

- 16** Apr 25 Wed **Screening:** *Chi-Raq* (2015, 127 min., Spike Lee)
- 30 Mon 3:00-6:00 pm KI 101. Final Exam Time (no exam, just screening and discussion).
Screening: *Coherence* (2013, 89 min., James Ward Byrkit)