

FST 377: AMERICAN CINEMA SINCE 1961
SYLLABUS AND POLICIES

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

Professor Todd Berliner
Spring 2020

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 modern 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 think much about: What is it about the movies people enjoy that makes people enjoy them?

CLASS MEETINGS AND SCREENINGS

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. If you do come in late, write me a note saying so, so that I mark you late rather than absent.

You may not use electronics during class time; they're distracting. If you have a special reason for using electronics, see me before you do.

Copies of the movies we are studying are available through Randall Library on DVD, Blu Ray, or streaming. The course has potentially upsetting material and trauma triggers; see me if you have concerns.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

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

1. Quizzes (best eleven scores) (30%)
2. Critical Reception Report (15%)
3. Film History Project (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 five 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

At the very beginning of discussion section meetings, without warning, you might 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. 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. If you miss a quiz, you get a zero on it. However, no matter how many quizzes I give, I will count only your best eleven 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 distill the authors' *points* (arguments/conclusions), not just the topics of article. Your first paragraph summarizes the author's main point, and each additional paragraph summarizes one of the author's chief supporting points. *Write your summaries so that the authors themselves would agree with your summary.* Write separate summaries for each reading. Each summary

should be 1-2 pages. I will add up to 50 percentage points to your week's quiz grade (even if the added points bring your score over 100%), depending on the validity and completeness of your summary and the clarity of your writing. A reading summary is 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. They must be typed.

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 work on independent 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:

- IL1. 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.
- IL2. 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.
- IL3. Collect data, documentation, and interpretative narratives regarding film history, and incorporate findings into research projects using proper citation and conscientious bibliographic practice.
- IL4 (1). Write persuasive, cogent, and valid essays on topics in film history, informed and supported by critical, comprehensive, and responsible research methods.
- IL4 (2). 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 Wednesdays 3:30-4:45pm., 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

Click [here](#) to go to Randall Library's webpage for this course.

[The Writing Center](#) provides one-on-one consultations by trained writing tutors (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.

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 ensure I have the referral letter at least a week before a test or quiz.

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

1. **David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies*** (Berkeley: U of California P, 2006). There is an electronic version.
2. **Electronic Files** may be downloaded from the Canvas website for this course. Contact TAC (910-962-4357) if you need help with Canvas.

Handouts

- **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.
- **FST377SuggestedBooksList.pdf**
A list of books (along with call numbers) in Randall Library that may help you with your research projects.

Electronic Readings

- **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.
- **Cook.Horrorexploitation.pdf**
David Cook. "Horror and the Mainstreaming of Exploitation." *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000. 220-238. 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.

- **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.
- **Schamus.indieconomics.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.

Sample papers.

Exemplary work by students in previous courses.

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Notes:

- Screenings take place during class.
- Study the readings *before* the class meeting for which they are listed and bring them to class when they're due.
- "TWHTP" stands for David Bordwell's *The Way Hollywood Tells It*.
- You can download readings with ".pdf" at the end of their titles from the course Canvas website.

WEEKS 1-3: OLD HOLLYWOOD, NEW HOLLYWOOD, AND THE SIXTIES UNDERGROUND

- 1** Jan 13 Mon **Screening:** *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962, 122 min., John Ford)
Lecture: "The American Film Industry in the New Hollywood, Part I: Industry Changes"
15 Wed **Reading due:** 1) FST377syllabus.pdf (this handout)
2) FST377writing.assignments.pdf
- 2** 20 Mon *MLK Holiday*
22 Wed **Screening:** *Scorpio Rising* (1963, 28 min., Kenneth Anger)
Reading due: Cook.Hollywood1965.pdf
Last day to add/drop a class
- 3** 27 Mon **Screening:** *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967, 111 min., Arthur Penn)
Lecture: "The American Film Industry in the New Hollywood, Part II: Storytelling Practices"
29 Wed **Reading due:** 1) TWHTI (pp. 1-18 "Introduction")
2) Monaco.Code.pdf

WEEKS 4-6: AUTEURISM IN THE NEW HOLLYWOOD

- 4** Feb 3 Mon **Screening:** *Faces* (1968, 130 min., John Cassavetes)
Lecture: "John Cassavetes and Independent Filmmaking in the late Sixties and Seventies"
5 Wed **Reading due:** 1) TWHTI (pp. 19-50 "A Real Story," "Continuing Tradition")
2) Cook.Auteur.pdf
- 5** 10 Mon **Screening:** *Nashville* (1975, 160 min., Robert Altman)
Lecture: "Stylistic Eccentricity in Seventies Hollywood"
12 Wed **Reading due:** 1) King.Auteurs.pdf (pp. 85-105 only)
2) Cook.Altman.pdf
13 Thur **Due by email (MS Word attachment) by 11:59 pm:** Critical Reception Report.
- 6** 17 Mon **Screening:** *Taxi Driver* (1976, 113 min., Martin Scorsese)
Lecture: "*Taxi Driver's* Narrative and Visual Perversity"
19 Wed **Reading due:** 1) TWHTI (pp. 115-138 "A Stylish Style" "Intensified Continuity")
2) FST377writing.assignments.pdf (pp. 3-6)
3) Sample Prospectuses on Canvas
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 to present your project. The sign-up sheet is on Canvas: Click "edit" and add your name to the slot you want. Come to your conference in KI 106D with written answers to the five questions indicated in the Writing Assignments handout.

WEEKS 7-8: LOW-BUDGET AND BIG-BUDGET EXPLOITATION CINEMA / THE BLOCKBUSTER SYNDROME

7 Feb 24 Mon **Screening:** *Shaft* (1971, 100 min, Gordon Parks)
Lecture: “Low-Budget Exploitation Cinema and the Black Action Film”
26 Wed **Reading due:** Cook.Blockbuster.pdf

Feb 27-Mar 3 *Prospectus Conferences*

8 Mar 2 Mon **Screening:** *The Exorcist* (1973, 121 min., William Friedkin)
Lecture: “*The Exorcist* and Mainstream Exploitation”
4 Wed **Reading due:** Cook.Horrorexploitation.pdf
Mar 9-13 *Spring Break!*

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

9 Mar 16 Mon **Screening:** *Rocky III* (1982, 99 min., Sylvester Stallone)
Lectures: 1) “Hollywood Filmmaking in the 1980s”
2) “*Rocky III: Rocky Again and Again*”
18 Wed Library Instruction Session—*Meet in RL 1022.*
Reading due: Prince.ancillary.pdf

10 23 Mon **Screening:** *Die Hard* (1988, 131 min., John McTiernan)
Lecture: “Ideology and Aesthetic Pleasure in Hollywood Cinema”
25 Wed **Reading due:** 1) Thompson.Bordwell.Entertainmenteconomy.pdf
2) *TWHTI* (pp. 104-114 “A Certain Amount of Plot”)

11 30 Mon **Screening:** *Jerry Maguire* (1996, 139 min., Cameron Crowe)
Lecture: “How to Develop a Strong Thesis and Organize a Paper”
Apr 1 Wed **Reading due:** 1) *TWHTI* (pp. 51-71 “Pushing the Premises”)
2) *TWHTI* (pp. 139-157 “Some Likely Sources”)

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

12 Apr 6 Mon **Screening:** *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (1989, 100 min., Steven Soderbergh)
Lecture: “American Independent Cinema: Production, Distribution, and Exhibition”
8 Wed **Reading due:** 1) Schamus.indieconomics.pdf
2) Balio.globalization.pdf
3) Sample Papers (Canvas)

13 13 Mon **Screening:** *Magnolia* (1999, 188 min., Paul Thomas Anderson)
15 Wed **Reading due:** *TWHTI* (pp. 72-103 “Subjective Stories and Network Narratives”)

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

14 Apr 20 Mon **Screening:** *Unforgiven* (1992, 131 min., Clint Eastwood)
Lecture: “*Unforgiven* and the Evolution of the Western”
22 Wed **Reading due:** 1) *TWHTI* (pp. 158-179 “Style, Plain and Fancy”)
2) Schatz.Western2.pdf
23 Thu **Due by email (MS Word attachment) by 11:59 pm:** Film History Project.

15 27 Mon **Screening:** *Everyone Says I Love You* (1996, 101 min., Woody Allen)
Lecture: “Bursting into Song in the Hollywood Musical”
29 Wed **Reading due:** 1) *TWHTI* (pp. 180-189 “What’s Missing”)
2) Allen.technology.pdf

16 May 1 Fri 11:30 am – 2:30 pm in KI 101. Final Exam Time (no exam, just screening and discussion).
Screening: *Get Out* (2017, 104 min, Jordan Peele)