

**SYLLABUS AND POLICIES**  
**FST 496 SENIOR SEMINAR IN FILM STUDIES**  
**APPROACHES TO FILM AESTHETICS**

Professor Todd Berliner  
Monday/Wednesday 9-11:15 am (135 min.) in LH 246

Spring 2020

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What makes a movie interesting, pleasurable, engaging, emotionally affecting, thought-provoking, or beautiful? How does a film's artistic design affect our cinematic experience? Film researchers working in aesthetics seek to answer these questions, and many scholars working today have extended the investigation in exciting directions. Their work illuminates not just aesthetic experience but also related issues of ideology, philosophy, and psychology, as well as film history, film technology, and the film industry.

This course showcases innovative approaches to film aesthetics, illustrating the potential of this work to illuminate key aspects of the cinema. We will study a range of scholars (from film studies, psychology, and philosophy) working in film aesthetics today and watch movies that offer a variety of aesthetic experiences, some quite challenging intellectually and emotionally. Wherever we are in the course, we will not be 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?

This course partially satisfies the Writing Competency requirement in the Film Studies major, and we will spend a deal of class time working on improving your writing skills.

**CLASS MEETINGS AND FILMS**

You should plan to attend all of every class meeting, 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.

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 Professor Berliner if you have concerns.

You may not use laptops or other electronics during class without my permission.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES**

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

- 15% Oral Presentation
- 20% 10 Reading Summaries (I'll drop your 4 lowest scores)
- 20% Aesthetic Analysis Paper
- 25% Aesthetic Analysis Paper (revised)
- 20% Class participation. This category includes attendance (missing class lowers your grade), punctuality, preparedness, and thoughtful participation in class discussions and workshops. 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).

*Extra credit (optional):* For extra credit, you may rewrite any of your reading summaries; I will average the two grades. See instructions on the Writing Assignments handout.

Type and double space everything you hand in. On Canvas you will find sample reading summaries, prospectuses, and papers—exemplary work written by students in previous courses.

## **ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

Sign up to make a presentation on Canvas: first come-first pick. If you miss your scheduled presentation, I'll schedule you for another of my choosing and deduct 15% from your presentation grade.

## **PROSPECTUS WORKSHOP**

We will critique each student's prospectus. Sign up for your workshop slot on Canvas.

## **OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

I will hold office hours on Wednesdays 3:30-4:45 pm, or by appointment, in King Hall 106D. I am typically available to make appointments on Mondays, Wednesdays, and sometimes Fridays.

My campus mailbox is located in the Film Studies Department office in King Hall. My office phone number is 910-962-3336. Email is the best way to reach me: [berlinert@uncw.edu](mailto:berlinert@uncw.edu).

## **UNCW STUDENT ACADEMIC HONOR CODE**

All students are subject to the UNCW 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 allow your reader to believe that another person's words, work, or ideas are yours. I report plagiarism 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 Resources*

The librarians in Randall can help you obtain materials for your papers. Randall library has a [webpage devoted to film studies resources](#).

The [Writing Center](#) provides one-on-one consultations with writing tutors (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 can supply me with a letter from the Office of Disability Services (962-7555) detailing necessary class accommodations.

### *Violence and Harassment*

UNCW does not tolerate violence or harassment. If you experience either, contact the police at 911 (in cases of 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>.

## READINGS/ELECTRONIC FILES

Electronic files may be downloaded from Canvas. Contact TAC (962-4357) if you need help with Canvas. Randall library has the books from which the electronic reserves are taken.

### Handouts

1. **Berliner.WritingInstruction.pdf**  
Instructions and tips for improving your writing.
2. **FST496presentations.pdf**  
Directions for your oral presentations.
3. **FST496syllabus.pdf**  
Syllabus, Course Policies, Course Schedule, and References for Electronic Readings.
4. **FST496WritingAssignments.pdf**  
A handout describing all of the writing assignments for the semester.

### Readings

- **Bordwell.artcinema.pdf**  
David Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice," in *Poetics of Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 151-169
- **Carroll.AestheticExperience.pdf**  
Noël Carroll, "Art and Aesthetic Experience" in *Philosophy of Art: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 155-204.
- **Carroll.ideology.pdf**  
Noël Carroll, "Mass Art and Ideology" in *A Philosophy of Mass Art* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1998), 360-412.
- **Justus.filmmusic.pdf**  
Timothy Justus, "Toward a Naturalized Aesthetics of Film Music: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Intramusical and Extramusical Meaning," *Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind*, Vol 13, Issue 3, Winter 2019: 1-22.
- **Keating.noirlighting.pdf**  
Patrick Keating, "Film Noir and the Limits of Classicism," in *Hollywood Lighting from the Silent Era to Film Noir* (New York: Columbia UP, 2009), 201-221.
- **Levinson.pleasure.pdf**  
Jerrold Levinson, "Pleasure and the Value of Works of Art" in *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (New York: Cornell UP, 1996), 11-26.
- **Prince.digital1.pdf**  
Stephen Prince, "Through the Looking Glass," in *Digital Visual Effects in Cinema: The Seduction of Reality* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 11-55.
- **Smith.engaging.pdf**  
Murray Smith, "Engaging Characters" in *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (Oxford, England: Oxford UP, 1995), 73-109.
- **Thompson.Bicycle.pdf**  
Kristin Thompson, "Realism in the Cinema: *Bicycle Thieves*" in *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) 197-217.
- **Thompson.neoformalism.pdf**  
Kristin Thompson, "Neoformalist Film Analysis: One Approach, Many Methods" in *Breaking the Glass Armor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) 3-46.

### Sample Student Papers

- Exemplary reading summaries, prospectuses, and papers written by students in previous courses.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOS)

### SLOS FOR FILM STUDIES CRITICAL STUDIES CAPSTONE COURSES

- CAP 1. Students will integrate key facets of their education over the course of their university experience.
  - Demonstrate the ability to carry out large-scale individualized projects on topics related to the history and/or aesthetics of cinema, integrating their research, writing, and oral communication skills and culminating in a substantial research project that integrates key facets of their film studies education.

### SLOS FOR FILM STUDIES CRITICAL REASONING COURSES

- CR 1. Portray and evaluate researched or derived information or mathematical data accurately and appropriately, and to convert or translate information or data into different, but appropriate forms. [Inquiry, Information Literacy]
  - Use and critique information acquired through research in order to discuss, present on, and write critically about film-studies topics.
  - Evaluate and use evidence to generalize, explain, and interpret information.
- CR 2. Synthesize viewpoints, quantitative data, or interpretations of experts and stakeholders. [Foundational Knowledge, Inquiry, Information Literacy]
  - Synthesize the viewpoints and interpretations of film scholars, filmmakers, and/or film commentators in order to understand and interrogate the ideas and assumptions of film studies experts and stakeholders.
- CR 3. Analyze systematically the relevance and limitations of their own methods, perspectives, or quantitative data. [Inquiry, Critical Thinking]
  - Demonstrate an understanding of one's own research methodologies, examining the relevance and limitations of one's methods, perspectives, and evidence.
- CR 4. Articulate complex, logical, and informed (by researched or derived information and/or quantitative analysis) inferences and/or conclusions. [Critical Thinking, Thoughtful Expression]
  - Write and present cogent, well-reasoned, and well researched arguments that articulate complex ideas about topics in film.
  - Write precise, discipline-appropriate prose that demonstrates a command of complex issues and reasoning skills within a cogent piece of academic writing.

### SLOS FOR FILM STUDIES WRITING INTENSIVE COURSES

- WI 1. Demonstrate an ability to produce written texts that reflect a knowledge and understanding of disciplinary conventions in terms of audience expectations, genre conventions, and/or citation practices.
  - Students write critical essays about the cinema in which they analyze moving images and sounds, interpret information, evaluate research and historical data, cite sources, and/or perform other activities appropriate to the discipline of film studies.
- WI 2. Demonstrate the ability to employ an iterative writing process that includes invention, drafting, and revision in response to instructor feedback to complete a major writing project or series of written assignments.
  - Students submit at least 3500 words of graded writing, divided among two or more assignments, with instructor feedback in between each assignment.
  - Students respond to instructor feedback by revising their written work and demonstrating mastery or significant improvement in the format, organization, grammar, style, and disciplinary conventions of their writing.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**  
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**Notes:**

- Study readings *before* the class meeting for which they are listed. Readings are on Canvas.
- Screenings take place in class.
- Bring to every class meeting the following documents:
  - 1) Instructions for Writing Papers (Berliner.WritingInstruction.pdf)
  - 2) Course Syllabus (FST496syllabus.pdf)
  - 3) Writing Assignments (FST496WritingAssignments.pdf)
  - 4) Oral Presentations (FST496presentations.pdf)
  - 5) Any reading due that day
- “*Due in class*” items must be ready to turn in at the very beginning of class.

**UNIT 1      PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES**

1 Jan	13 Mon	<b>Screening:</b> <i>Mad Detective</i> (Hong Kong 2007, 89 min, Johnny To)
2	15 Wed	<b>Reading due:</b> A) FST496syllabus.pdf B) FST496WritingAssignments.pdf (p. 1, “Reading Summaries”) C) FST496presentations.pdf D) Sample Reading Summaries E) Writing.Instructions.pdf (skim this document for now to see what’s in it)
	16 Thu	<b>Due:</b> Sign up for your presentation by today. The sign-up sheet is on Canvas: Click “edit” and add your name to the slot you want. If you don’t sign-up by today, I will assign you a slot.
	20 Mon	<i>MLK Holiday</i>
3	22 Wed	<b>Reading due:</b> Carroll.AestheticExperience.pdf (especially pages 155-173, 182-191, 200-203) <b>Due in class:</b> Reading Summary 1 <i>Last day to add/drop a class</i> <b>Oral Presentation</b> (Carroll): _____
4	27 Mon	<b>Screening:</b> <i>Holy Motors</i> (France 2012, 115 min, Leos Carax)
5	29 Wed	<b>Reading due:</b> Levinson.pleasure.pdf <b>Due in class:</b> Reading Summary 2 <b>Oral Presentation</b> (Levinson): _____
6 Feb	3 Mon	<b>Screening:</b> <i>Green Book</i> (USA 2018, 130 min, Peter Farrelly)
7	5 Wed	<b>Reading due:</b> Carroll.ideology.pdf <b>Due in class:</b> Reading Summary 3 (Focus your summary on the second part of essay in which Carroll explains how ideology functions as a type of rhetoric; devote one paragraph to quickly summarizing Carroll’s definition of ideology in the first part.) <b>Oral Presentation</b> (Carroll): _____ <i>(Tip for presenter: Read up on the Green Book controversy [e.g. <a href="#">Wesley Morris</a>])</i>

**UNIT 2 PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES**

8 Feb 10 Mon **Screening:** *The Elephant Man* (USA 1980, 124 min., David Lynch)

9 12 Wed **Reading due:** Justus.filmmusic.pdf  
**Due in class:** Reading Summary 4  
**Oral Presentation** (Justus): \_\_\_\_\_

10 17 Mon **Screening:** *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (USA 1956, 120 min., Alfred Hitchcock)

11 19 Wed **Reading due:** Smith.engaging.pdf  
**Due in class:** Reading Summary 5 (include two questions for the author, Murray Smith)  
**Oral Presentation** (Smith): \_\_\_\_\_

12 24 Mon Video conference with Murray Smith

25 Tue **Due:** Sign up for your prospectus critique by today. The sign-up sheet is on Canvas: Click “edit” and add your name to the slot you want. If you don’t sign-up by today, I will assign you to a slot.

**UNIT 3 NEOFORMALISM**

13 Feb 26 Wed **Reading due:** Thompson.neoformalism.pdf (pp. 3-44)  
**Due in class:** Reading Summary 6  
**Oral Presentation** (Thompson): \_\_\_\_\_  
(Tip for presenter: Discuss the reading in light of any movie or movies we have seen so far.)

14 Mar 2 Mon **Screening:** *Bicycle Thieves* (Italy 1948, Vittorio De Sica, 89 min)  
**Reading due:** A) FST496WritingAssignments.pdf (pp. 2-3)  
B) Sample prospectuses (Canvas)

15 4 Wed **Reading due:** Thompson.Bicycle.pdf  
**Due in class:** Reading Summary 7  
**Oral Presentation** (Thompson): \_\_\_\_\_

9-13 *Spring Break!*

**UNIT 4 PROSPECTUS WORKSHOP**

In-class critiques of student prospectuses and bibliographies. Attendance, timeliness, and participation at these meetings are critical.

**Due in class:** Prospectus and Working Bibliography (15 hard copies).

16 Mar 16 Mon \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17 18 Wed \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18 23 Mon \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Writing Workshop:** How to Develop a Strong Thesis and Organize a Paper

**UNIT 5 HISTORICAL POETICS: FILM HISTORY, FILM TECHNOLOGY AND FILM INDUSTRIES**

19 Mar 25 Wed **Screening:** *Wild Strawberries* (Sweden 1957, 91 min., Ingmar Bergman)

20 30 Mon **Reading due:** Bordwell.artcinema.pdf

**Due in class:** Reading Summary 8

**Oral Presentation** (Bordwell): \_\_\_\_\_

(*Tip for presenter:* Consider discussing *Bicycle Thieves*, as well as *Wild Strawberries*)

21 Apr 1 Wed **Screening:** *Jurassic Park* (USA 1993, 127 min., Steven Spielberg)

**Reading due:** FST496WritingAssignments.pdf (p. 4)

22 6 Mon **Reading due:** Prince.digital1.pdf

**Due in class:** Reading Summary 9

**Oral Presentation** (Prince): \_\_\_\_\_

7 Tue **Due by email by noon:** Your working thesis

23 8 Wed **Workshop:** Thesis Workshop 1

24 13 Mon **Screening:** *Hangover Square* (USA 1945, 77 min., John Brahm)

14 Tues **Due by email by noon:** Aesthetic Analysis Paper. The title of your attachment should start with your last name (e.g. “yourlastname\_paper.docx”).

25 15 Wed **Reading due:** Keating.noirlighting.pdf

**Due in class:** Reading Summary 10

**Oral Presentation** (Keating): \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIT 6 PRACTICING AESTHETIC ANALYSIS: HODGEPODGE APPROACHES**

26 Apr 20 Mon **Screening:** *The Piano* (New Zealand/Australia 1993, 121 min., Jane Campion)

27 22 Wed Film Studies Department Exit Exam

28 27 Mon **Screening:** *Locke* (UK 2013, 85 min, Steven Knight)

28 Tue **Due by email by noon:** Your reworked thesis

29 29 Wed **Workshop:** Thesis Workshop 2

30 May 4 Mon 8:00-11:00am. Final exam time (no exam, just presentations). **Research Paper Presentations:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5 Tue **Due by email by 11:59 pm:** Aesthetic Analysis Paper (revised). The title of your attachment starts with your last name (e.g. “yourlastname\_finalpaper.docx”)