

SYLLABUS AND POLICIES
FST 496/569 SENIOR SEMINAR IN FILM STUDIES
APPROACHES TO FILM AESTHETICS

Professor Todd Berliner

Spring 2021

Monday 1-3:15 pm (135 min.) in KI 101, Wednesday 1-3:15 pm (135 min.) in KI 104 (or Zoom)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What makes a movie interesting, pleasurable, engaging, emotionally affecting, thought-provoking, or beautiful? How does a film's design affect our cinematic experience? Film researchers working in aesthetics seek to answer these questions, and some researchers have extended the investigation in exciting directions, illuminating not just film aesthetics but also related issues in philosophy, psychology, history, technology and the film industry.

This course showcases different approaches to film aesthetics, illustrating the potential of this work to illuminate key aspects of the cinema. We will study a range of scholarship (from film studies, psychology, and philosophy) and watch movies that offer a variety of aesthetic experiences. 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?

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

CLASS MEETINGS AND FILMS

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 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. If you have a special reason for wanting to use electronics, see me before you do.

We will watch films in class, except for one that you will watch on your own. Screened films represent a diversity of approaches to aesthetic experience in order to expand your concepts of aesthetic value. So that you can further study the films screened, copies are available through Randall Library on disc or streaming. Clicking on film titles in the schedule below will take you to a streaming version of the film, if available.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

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

- 20% 10 Reading Summaries (I'll drop your 4 lowest scores)
- 20% Aesthetic Analysis Paper
- 25% Aesthetic Analysis Paper (revised)
- 15% Oral Presentation
- 20% Class participation

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).

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Writing assignments include 10 reading summaries, a prospectus, and two papers. See the instructions on the Writing Assignments handout. Type and double space everything.

Extra credit (optional): You may revise any of your reading summaries; I will average the two grades. See the instructions on the Writing Assignments handout.

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.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class participation is essential. It is based on attendance, punctuality, preparedness, and thoughtful participation in class discussions and workshops. Missing class lowers your participation grade; more than five absences will cause you to fail class participation. Two tardies or early exits equals an absence, provided you attend most of the meeting.

PROSPECTUS WORKSHOP

We will workshop each student's prospectus. Sign up for your workshop on Canvas by the due date indicated in the syllabus.

OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

I will hold office hours on Zoom by appointment. I welcome you to make appointments with me to discuss the course by emailing me (berlinert@uncw.edu) with some timeslot options. My campus mailbox is located in the Film Studies Department office in King Hall. My office phone number is 910-962-3336.

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. Click [here](#) for information and a tutorial on recognizing plagiarism. The UNCW [Writing Center](#) can also help you spot and avoid plagiarism.

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). 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 [here](#).

ELECTRONIC FILES: HANDOUTS AND READINGS

Electronic files may be downloaded from Canvas. Contact TAC (910-962-4357) if you need help with Canvas. Randall library has all of the books from which electronic files are taken.

Handouts

- **Berliner.WritingInstruction.pdf**
Instructions and tips for improving your writing.
- **FST496_569presentations.pdf**
Directions for your oral presentations.
- **FST496_569syllabus.pdf**
Syllabus, Course Policies, Course Schedule, and References for Electronic Readings.
- **FST496_569WritingAssignments.pdf**
A handout describing all of the writing assignments for the semester.
- **Sample Student Papers**
Exemplary reading summaries, prospectuses, and papers written by students in previous courses.

Readings

Graduate students: Some of the readings below are required only for grad students, as indicated in the syllabus, who need not write reading summaries of these additional readings.

- **Armstrong.Detweiler-Bedell.beauty.pdf**
Armstrong, Thomas, and Brian Detwiler-Bedell. "Beauty as an Emotion: The Exhilarating Prospect of Mastering a Challenging World." *Review of General Psychology*, vol 12, no.4: 305-329.
- **Berliner.IdeologyEmotionAestheticPleasure.pdf**
Berliner, Todd. "Ideology, Emotion, and Aesthetic Pleasure." *Hollywood Aesthetic: Pleasure in American Cinema*, Oxford UP, 2017, pp. 133-155.
- **Bordwell.Convention.pdf**
Bordwell, David. "Convention, Construction, and Cinematic Vision." *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, edited by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll, U Wisconsin P, 1996, pp. 87-107.
- **Bordwell.artcinema.pdf**
Bordwell, David. "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice." *Poetics of Cinema*, Routledge, 2008, pp. 151-169
- **Carroll.AestheticExperience.pdf**
Carroll, Noël. "Art and Aesthetic Experience." *Philosophy of Art: An Introduction*, Routledge, 1999, pp. 155-204.
- **Carroll.artdomainaesthetic.pdf**
Carroll, Noël. "Art and Aesthetic Experience." *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 40, no.2, 2000: 191-208.
- **Carroll.ideology.pdf**
Carroll, Noël. "Mass Art and Ideology." *A Philosophy of Mass Art*, Clarendon Press, 1998, pp. 360-412.
- **Justus.filmmusic.pdf**
Justus, Timothy. "Toward a Naturalized Aesthetics of Film Music: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Intramusical and Extramusical Meaning." *Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind*, vol 13, no.3, 2019: 1-22.
- **Keating.noirlighting.pdf**
Keating, Patrick. "Film Noir and the Limits of Classicism." *Hollywood Lighting from the Silent Era to Film Noir*, Columbia UP, 2009, pp. 201-221.
- **Kerr.b-noir.pdf**
Kerr, Paul. "Out of What Past? Notes on the B Film Noir." *Film Noir Reader*, edited by Alain Silver and James Ursini, Limelight, 1996, pp. 107-27.
- **Levinson.aesthetic.pdf**
Levinson, Jerrold. "What is Aesthetic Pleasure?" *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Cornell

UP, 1996, pp. 3-10.

- **Levinson.pleasure.pdf**

Levinson, Jerrold. "Pleasure and the Value of Works of Art." *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Cornell UP, 1996, pp. 11-26.

- **Nannicelli.Cognitivism.pdf**

Nannicelli, Ted. "Cognitivism." *The Craft of Criticism: Critical Media Studies in Practice*, edited by Michael Kackman and Mary Celeste Kearney, Routledge, 2018, pp. 157-168.

- **Prince.digital1.pdf**

Prince, Stephen. "Through the Looking Glass" *Digital Visual Effects in Cinema: The Seduction of Reality*, Rutgers UP, 2012, pp. 11-55.

- **Smith.engaging.pdf**

Smith, Murray. "Engaging Characters." *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema*, Oxford UP, 1995, pp. 73-109.

- **Thompson.Bicycle.pdf**

Thompson, Kristin. "Realism in the Cinema: *Bicycle Thieves*." *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis*. Princeton UP, 1988, pp. 197-217.

- **Thompson.neoformalism.pdf**

Thompson, Kristin. "Neoformalist Film Analysis: One Approach, Many Methods." *Breaking the Glass Armor*, Princeton UP, 1988, pp. 3-46.

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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Spring 2021

Monday 1-3:15 pm (135 min.) in KI 101, Wednesday 1-3:15 pm (135 min.) in KI 104 (or Zoom)

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 20 Wed	Introduction to film aesthetics. Introduction to writing style.
21 Thu	Due: 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 end of day, I will assign you a slot.
2 25 Mon	Screening: Mad Detective (Hong Kong 2007, 89 min, Johnny To) Reading due: A) FST496_569syllabus.pdf B) FST496_569WritingAssignments.pdf (p. 1, “Reading Summaries”) C) FST496_569presentations.pdf D) Sample Reading Summaries E) Writing.Instructions.pdf (skim this document for now to see what’s in it)
3 27 Wed	Reading due: Carroll.AestheticExperience.pdf Additional graduate student reading: Carroll.artdomainaesthetic.pdf Due in class: Reading Summary 1 (Focus your summary on pages 155-173, 189-191, 200-203) <i>Last day to add/drop a class</i> Oral Presentation (Carroll): _____
4 Feb 1 Mon	Screening: Holy Motors (France 2012, 115 min, Leos Carax)
5 3 Wed	Reading due: Levinson.pleasure.pdf Additional graduate student reading: Levinson.aesthetic.pdf Due in class: Reading Summary 2 Oral Presentation (Levinson): _____
6 Feb 8 Mon	Watch on your own before class: Green Book (USA 2018, 130 min, Peter Farrelly) Screening: BlacKkKlansman (USA 2018, 135 min, Spike Lee).
7 10 Wed	Reading due: Carroll.ideology.pdf Listen to podcast: <i>The Daily</i> , “ What Hollywood Keeps Getting Wrong about Race ,” an interview with Wesley Morris from <i>NY Times</i> . Additional graduate student reading (optional): Berliner.IdeologyEmotionAestheticPleasure.pdf Due in class: Reading Summary 3 (Focus your summary on the second part of the essay in which Carroll explains how ideology functions as a type of rhetoric; devote just one paragraph to quickly summarizing Carroll’s definition of ideology in the first part.) Oral Presentation (Carroll): _____ <i>(Tip for presenter: Discuss Carroll reading relative to Green Book and BlacKkKlansman)</i>

UNIT 2 PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES

8 Feb 15 Mon **Screening:** [The Elephant Man](#) (USA 1980, 124 min., David Lynch)

9 17 Wed **Reading due:** Justus.filmmusic.pdf

Additional graduate student reading: Nannicelli.Cognitivism.pdf

Due in class: Reading Summary 4

Oral Presentation (Justus): _____

10 22 Mon **Screening:** [The Man Who Knew Too Much](#) (USA 1956, 120 min., Alfred Hitchcock)

11 24 Wed **Reading due:** Smith.engaging.pdf

Additional graduate student reading: Bordwell.Convention.pdf

Due in class: Reading Summary 5 (include two questions for the author, Murray Smith)

Oral Presentation (Smith): _____

12 Mar 1 Mon Video conference with Murray Smith

2 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 Mar 3 Wed **Reading due:** Thompson.neoformalism.pdf (pp. 3-44)

Due in class: Reading Summary 6

Oral Presentation (Thompson): _____

(Tip for presenter: Discuss the reading relative to any movie or movies we have seen so far.)

14 8 Mon **Screening:** [Bicycle Thieves](#) (Italy 1948, Vittorio De Sica, 89 min)

Reading due: A) FST496WritingAssignments.pdf (pp. 2-3, “Aesthetic Analysis Paper Assignments” “Prospectus, Working Bibliography, and Filmography”) B) Sample prospectuses (Canvas)

15 10 Wed **Reading due:** Thompson.Bicycle.pdf

Due in class: Reading Summary 7

Oral Presentation (Thompson): _____

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 (16 hard copies).

16 Mar 15 Mon _____

17 17 Wed _____

18 22 Mon _____

19 24 Wed _____

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

- 20 Mar 29 Mon **Screening:** [Rashomon](#) (Japan 1950, 88 min, Akira Kurosawa)
Reading due: 1) FST496WritingAssignments.pdf (p. 4, “Aesthetic Analysis Paper”)
 2) Sample paper on Canvas
- 21 31 Wed **Screening:** *Vagabond* (France 1985, 105 min., Agnès Varda)
- 22 Apr 5 Mon **Reading due:** Bordwell.artcinema.pdf
Due in class: Reading Summary 8
Oral Presentation (Bordwell): _____
 (Tip for presenter: Discuss the reading relative to *Bicycle Thieves*, *Rashomon*, and *Vagabond*.)
- 6 Tue **Due by email by noon:** Your working thesis
- 23 7 Wed **Workshop:** Thesis Workshop 1
- 24 12 Mon **Screening:** [Jurassic Park](#) (USA 1993, 127 min., Steven Spielberg)
 13 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 14 Wed **Reading due:** Prince.digital1.pdf
Due in class: Reading Summary 9
Oral Presentation (Prince): _____
- 26 Apr 19 Mon **Screening:** [T-Men](#) (USA 1947, 92 min., Anthony Mann)
Reading due: FST496WritingAssignments.pdf (p. 5, “Aesthetic Analysis Paper (Revised)”)
- 27 21 Wed **Reading due:** Keating.noirlighting.pdf
Additional graduate student reading: kerr.b-noir.pdf
Due in class: Reading Summary 10
Oral Presentation (Keating): _____
- 28 26 Mon **Screening:** *Hangover Square* (USA 1945, 77 min., John Brahm)
- 27 Tue **Due by email by noon:** Your reworked thesis
- 29 28 Wed **Workshop:** Thesis Workshop 2
- 30 30 Fri 11:30 am- 2:30 pm (KI 101). Final exam time (no exam, just presentations).
Research Paper Presentations:

- 5 Wed **Due by email by noon:** Aesthetic Analysis Paper (revised). The title of your attachment starts with your last name (e.g. “yourlastname_revision.docx”)