**FAU School of Communication and Multimedia Studies, Florida Atlantic University**

**FIL 2000 : FILM APPRECIATION (*Honors Level*, 3 c.h.)**

**Prerequisite: ENC 1101 and ENC 1102**

**Instructor: Office Hours:**

**Office/Phone: Email:**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This foundational course in film studies introduces students to the various elements of film form, and to how those constituent parts create meaning both by themselves and in relation to each other. In doing so, you will learn about major stylistic movements and key historical events in film history. The course presents the basic vocabulary and concepts necessary for analyzing individual films and groups of films. Students will be expected to learn these terms and use them to describe films critically. Based on those observations, students will then take the next step of developing analytical and expositional arguments about films in a detailed, methodical and persuasive manner. This is a General Education course and fulfills the Foundations of Humanities requirement of FAU’s Intellectual Foundations Program.

**GORDON RULE**

 This writing intensive course serves as one of two "Gordon Rule" classes at the 2000-4000 level that must be taken after completing ENC 1101 and 1102 or their equivalents.  You must achieve a grade of "C" (not C-minus) or better to receive credit.  Furthermore, this class meets the University-wide Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) criteria, which expect you to improve your writing over the course of the term. The University’s WAC program promotes the teaching of writing across all levels and all disciplines. Writing-to-learn activities have proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, learning discipline-specific content, and understanding and building competence in the modes of inquiry and writing for various disciplines and professions.

**HONORS PROGRAM**

This course is conceived as part of the University Honors Program curriculum. As such, it is part of the required 20 honors credits UHP students need to complete those requirements. It is designed to provide UHP students with a rewarding appreciation of artistic expression, its cultural significance, and their relationship to human societies and interests.

# REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

1. **Jon Lewis, *Essential Cinema: An Introduction to Film Analysis.* (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2013).** Available at the FAU Boca campus bookstore. Check www.cengagebrain.com for possible discounts.
2. **Course readings available on Canvas.**

# ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION

Attendance is compulsory. Both attendance and participation will affect your final grade.\* You are expected to attend all class meetings on time and for the duration. Students are responsible for finding out the events of a meeting in the event of any absence. Classroom content such as presentation slides and film clips will not be made available elsewhere, online or otherwise.

Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. The use of cell phones (including text-messaging) during class time (especially screenings) is forbidden. Failure to comply will impact the participation grade very significantly. Laptop computers for note-taking only must be used discreetly, with permission, and cannot be used during screenings.

SCREENING RULES – In place to foster deep, refletive, and critical engagement with films

* All course screenings are mandatory (even if you’ve already seen the film).
* All laptops, cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during the screening (no exceptions). The bright screens are a disruptive distraction in a dark room.
* No talking.
* Avoid habitual departures.

In-class discussions are where student participation is more pro-active. After the lectures introduce key terms and important concepts with the screening of an illustrative film, discussions then encourage you to apply what you have learned, and develop skills necessary for critical interpretation of films. These sessions serve the important purpose of helping you understand how to word and construct the arguments for your papers, and how to come up with ideas for them. Secondarily, discussions provide an opportunity for students to raise questions regarding readings, lectures, and screenings in smaller groups, in an attempt to facilitate a better understanding of the course material.

The success of this course, and a substantial part of your final grade, relies heavily on the quality of your class participation. *Do not underestimate the influence of participation on your final grade.* Being an active participant goes beyond being the loudest and the most talkative person in class. You must show that you are engaging with the material and add to the discussion, not detract from it. *Take notes on your ideas, questions, thoughts and reflections on screenings as you view them or immediately after, and on readings as you read them (perhaps on the margins) and be prepared to raise these ideas in class*. **You are expected to be familiar with class screenings AND assigned readings.**

\*except as provided for in university policy, as stated in relevant Provost’s memoranda: http://www.fau.edu/provost/files/religious2011.pdf and http://www.fau.edu/provost/files/studentabsences.pdf

**DEADLINES AND GRADES**

Deadlines are clearly defined, and you are expected to honor them. As a rule, late assignments will be penalized a full letter grade per day.

1. All work that you turn in must be typed, lines must be double-spaced, hard copies stapled or paper-clipped.
2. All assignments and examinations must be completed. Failure to do so will result in an “F” for the course.
3. **FINAL GRADES will be based on the following:**

**Shot Analysis (1500-1800w) …25% Editing Analysis (1500-1800w) …25%**

**Midterm …15% Final Exam …15%**

**Attendance & Participation …20%**

**Grading Scale:** 100-97= A+ 79-77= C+ 59-0= F

96-94= A 76-74= C

93-90= A- 73-70= C-

89-87= B+ 69-67= D+

86-84= B 66-64= D

83-80= B- 63-60= D-

**WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

If this class is selected to participate in the university-wide WAC assessment program, you will be required to access the online assessment server, complete the consent form and survey, and submit electronically a first and final draft of a near-end-of-term-paper.

**OTHER POLICIES**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU’s campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/.

Code of Academic Integrity policy statement: Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see http://wise.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/Reg\_4.001\_5-26-10\_FINAL.pdf

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center: Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to http://www.fau,edu/counseling/

## COURSE READING/MONDAY LECTURE SCHEDULE (Subject to change)

**Wk 1 Introduction**

* Syllabi and course policies.
* Reading: Essential Cinema (EC) Chapters 1 and 7.
* **Screening: Citizen Kane (US: Orson Welles, 1941)**

**Wk 2 Mise-en-scène and Basic Editing**

* Reading:EC Sections 3-1 to 3-3, 4-1 to 4-3.
* Class discussion of *Citizen Kane.*
* **Screening: Winter’s Bone (US: Debra Granik, 2010)**

**Wk 3 Naturalism/Neorealism**

* Reading: EC Sections on location shooting (*3-1b),* and neorealist style *(9-3c)*

André Bazin, “An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism.” (PDF on Canvas)

* Class discussion of *Winter’s Bone* and André Bazin.
* **Screening: Do the Right Thing (US: Spike Lee, 1989)**

**Wk 4 Mise-en-scène/Cinematography: Lighting**

* Reading: Paul Schrader, “Notes on Film Noir.” (PDF on Canvas)

EC Sections 3-4 and 4-4; 9-3a.

* Class discussion of *Do the Right Thing* and Paul Schrader.
* **Screening: The Hitch-Hiker (US: Ida Lupino, 1953)**

**Wk 5 Cinematography**

* Re-read EC Sections 4-1 to 4-3.
* Class discussion of *Fargo*.
* **Screening: Fargo (US: Joel Coen, DP: Roger Deakins, 1996)**
* **Effective Writing Strategies I:** How to write an analysis paper
  + A presentation and discussion on the difference between the “journalistic film review” and academic film writing, in preparation for the Analysis Paper.
  + Read EC Chapter 10, especially 10-1a to 10-1d.

**Wk 6 Narrative I: Classical Structure**

* Reading: EC Sections 2-1, 2-2
* **Screening: Whip It (US: Drew Barrymore, 2009)**

**Workshop Week**

* Workshop session for Shot Analysis. Bring 3 copies of your draft. This is a full draft, and is required to observe the 1500w minimum.
* Due at second meeting: Shot Analysis.

Submit a Final Revision AND 3 workshopped copies in a 2-pocket folder.

Assessment will consider the completeness of the DRAFT **and** the extent of revisions.

**Wk 7 Narrative II: Non-Classical Systems**

* Reading: EC Section 9-3d

Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus

* **Screening: *La Bonheur* (France: Agnès Varda, 1965)**

**Wk 8**

* **MIDTERM *Remember to bring Examination Booklets. This is a 100% written exam.***
* **Screening: *Breathless* (France: Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)**

**Wk 9 Editing: The Classical Continuity System and its Alternatives**

* Reading: EC Chapter 5, 9-1c, 9-3b

1. Eisenstein, “A Dialectical Approach to Film Form.” (PDF on Canvas)

* Class discussion of *Breathless* and *La Bonheur.*
* **Screening: Battleship Potemkin (USSR: Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)**

**Wk 10 Film Sound and Music**

* Reading: EC Chapter 6.

Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler, “Prejudices and Bad Habits.”

* Class discussion of *Battleship Potemkin.*
* **Screening: Ratcatcher (UK: Lynne Ramsay, 1999)**

**Wk 11 Authorship**

* Reading: EC Chapter 9-1e, 9-2d, 9-3d
* Class discussion of Lynne Ramsay’s *Ratcatcher*.
* **Screening: Small Deaths, Kill the Day, and Gasman (UK: Lynne Ramsay, 1995, 1996, 1997)**

**Effective Writing Strategies II:** Lessons learned from Shot Analysis Paper

A presentation on the most noticeable trends discerned from the Shot Analysis Paper.

Plus a discussion of what students learned about their own writing habits and practices from crafting, workshopping, and revising that assignment.

**Wk 12 Genre**

* Reading: EC 2-3, skim chapter 9.[*Attn:* EC *2-3a*]
* **Screening: My Name is Nobody (Italy/France/W Germany: Tonino Valerii, 1973)**

**Wk 13 Documentary**

* **Screening: Stories We Tell (Canada: Sarah Polley, 2012)**
* Reading: EC 8-1

**Wk 14 Experimental Films**

* Reading: EC 8-3.
* **Screenings: First Comes Love (US: Su Friedrich, 2013)**

**The Seashell and the Clergyman (France: Germaine Dulac, 1928)**

**Meshes of the Afternoon (US: Maya Deren and A. Hammid, 1943)**

**Wk 15 2nd WORKSHOP WEEK and CONCLUSION**

* Conclusion

**Workshop Week**

* Workshop session for Editing Analysis. Bring 3 copies of your draft. This is a full draft, and is required to observe the 1500w minimum.
* Due at second meeting: Editing Analysis.

Submit a Final Revision AND 3 workshopped copies in a 2-pocket folder.

**Exam Week Final Examination.**

***Remember to bring Examination Booklets. This is a 100% written exam.***

**SHOT ANALYSIS PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

Conduct a FIVE (5) page (approximately 1500 words) analysis of a SINGLE shot, and explain how it produces significant meaning. DO NOT SELECT A FILM ON THE COURSE’S SCREENING SCHEDULE ABOVE. And please adhere to all the formatting and structural guidelines presented in class. This “meaning” that you choose to interpret and explain in your paper should make key contributions to one’s understanding of the shot or the film as a whole. You can, for instance, explain how cinematographic techniques have been used to:

* Construct a portrait of a character, or posit a worldview,
* Reinforce a theme,
* Establish moods or emotions, and so on…

(*Do not treat this list as a “checklist.” You can use one, all, or none of these suggestions.)*

FILM SOUND: The course has not yet covered film sound and music. It is *INADVISABLE* to base too much on an analysis of the soundtrack because you are unlikely to know how to address it with sufficient acuity and detail. Stick to the ***image*** and make sure that you get the most out of it.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

**Good papers have well-defined (1) THESIS STATEMENTS that serve to (2) ORGANIZE your (3) DETAILED SHOT DESCRIPTIONS and (4) WELL-SUPPORTED INTERPRETATIONS. Good papers display clear and persuasive evidence of these components.**

HOW DO I ORGANIZE THE PAPER?

Think about the following:

1. What is the film trying to express, and how do the formal elements that you have chosen to highlight try to accomplish that? How does it contribute or relate to that meaning? In most cases, a clear answer to those basic questions will constitute a thesis statement.
2. Build on that thesis statement: Elaborate where necessary and organize all your points.
3. Base your interpretations on a detailed **analysis of film form**. Remember the skills you developed during discussion sessions in:
4. **Describing** images (mise-en-scène, shot composition) & camera movement, if any.
5. Connecting that formal description to an **interpretation** of the film.
6. Make sensible and cogent connections between those shot descriptions and your interpretations of them.

HOW DO I CHOOSE A FILM?

1. Watch many films and take many notes. It is unwise to “set” yourself a film, because that film may not generate ideas. The more you watch, the more you’ll think; and once you’ve thought about several films, you’ll know which film will lead to the most interesting paper.
2. The “Pause” and “Rewind” buttons are your friends.
3. Look more closely at films about which, due to what you have learned in this course, you have noticed the most techniques or formal elements at work.
4. Look at the notes you take while watching, and try to see if your observations are related. If they are, see if they can be organized to a make larger point, or have a common purpose.

Keep in mind that a suitable shot isn’t necessarily kinetic, or “has a lot going on.” A slow-paced film with long shots and few camera movements often make for a great subject if those creative choices create a clear meaning, and allow you to write an interesting and convincing paper.

COMMON MISTAKES

1. **Taking on too much**. It will be to your advantage to keep the object of your analysis “small,” and thus specific. Entire books are written about single films, so don’t try to say everything in 5 pages. Remember the content and objectives of this class when you make your choice. It should contain enough formal elements to make it easy to display your skills in identifying and interpreting film form.
2. If you find yourself merely **dwelling on plot points or extended summaries**, reconsider your approach. They are only important if they add to your analysis of the SHOT.
3. After a few weeks of class, you should realize that impressionistic and evaluative adjectives (e.g. “good,” “great,” “beautiful,” “awesome,” etc), and unsupported opinions are useless to analysis, and detract from your purpose. Eliminate them completely.

**EDITING ANALYSIS PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

This assignment is almost identical to the earlier “Shot Analysis,” except instead of analyzing a single shot, you must conduct a FIVE (5) page (approximately 1500 words) analysis of a series of shots in a montage or editing sequence. Use the essay to explain how the sequence produces significant meaning. DO NOT SELECT A FILM ON THE COURSE’S SCREENING LIST. The assessment criteria, guidelines on how to organize the paper, how to choose a film, etc. remain the same.

All of what you learned earlier, and practiced in writing the shot analysis, will be useful in discussions of editing. And if the shot analysis involves describing a “picture,” remember that for a montage analysis, it is more important to highlight the ***relationships*** between several shots. What is important about the shots and how do those qualities relate in their ***juxtaposition***?

Once again, it is important to have a thesis statement – the paper must make an overall point. As examples, think of the sequences highlighted in class. Those analyses can be summarized by the following thesis statements:

**FBI raid in *The Silence of the Lambs***: “The norms and expectations around parallel editing are used to produce suspense, and a shocking moment.”

**Editing pattern of *Shutter Island***: “The film violates continuity and uses those ‘errors’ to represent the perspective of an insane character.”

**Finale of *The Godfather***: “The sequence’s cross-cutting juxtaposes different spaces, rituals, and actions; the baptism and executions highlight Michael’s contradictions, and signify the perpetuation of violence in his family.”

**Opening sequence of *Ali***: “The montage of culturally, politically, socially, and presonally significant moments in Ali’s memory, conspire to tell us that his words and actions are influenced by them.”

**WRITING WORKSHOPS**

**Objective**:

1. To improve your paper directly by receiving and applying constructive criticism into a revision. (You are assessed on how you integrate feedback into your final revision. For example, if your group mates identify an issue that you correctly address or unwisely ignore, you will be graded accordingly.)
2. To improve your paper indirectly by getting better as a writer through your role as a critical reader. (You are assessed on the quantity and quality of your comments and suggestions. They should be constructive, detailed and specific, and not vague and generic. These comments are empirical evidence of how deeply you are engaging with the paper.)

**What to do?**

1. Underline the **thesis statement**. Suggest how it can be clearer and more effective.
2. Underline confusing, ambiguous, or redundant passages with a squiggly line.
3. **Identify strengths and weaknesses**, and explain why. If you think some of the prose is descriptive, point out the details that make it so. If those details support an interpretation effectively, say so. If it does not, point that out.
4. **Avoid empty platitudes**. They serve little to no purpose.
5. **Evaluate the conclusion**. Does the conclusion do more than redundantly summarize? Have you been persuaded that the thesis statement has delivered on its promises? Explain why.
6. **Write your name** on the draft you're reading, so that the comments are identifiable.

The instructor will also be present and on hand to answer any questions during the workshop.

**Accepting and receiving Feedback**

1. Assuming that your group mates have offered specific comments, be open to these responses. If you disagree, explain why.
2. Try to understand why your classmate had that reaction. You may have stated something but maybe it could be written more forcefully. Maybe it needs to be restated, relocated to a prominent part of the paper, etc.
3. It's always possible that your group mate did not mean to say what you think they said. This is why a brief discussion is part of the workshop.

**Turning in the Revised Paper**

You must paperclip the following.

1. One final revision.
2. Two or three work shopped drafts that contain the markings and comments of your workshop mates.

**ADDITIONAL REVISION**

The revised draft will be returned to students with the instructor’s comments. There will be specific comments and a set of summary suggestions for improvement. Based on those comments, and a required in-person consultation with the instructor, students will be given the opportunity to revise the paper further for a better grade.