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ENG 4904-600: Studies in Film

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Eastern Illinois University

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**English 4904, section 600: Studies in Film:
“Decay” in Modern Society
Summer 2021 – Online
8-week Summer Session, June 1 – July 23**

Instructor: Dr. Bobby Martínez

E-mail: rlmartinez@eiu.edu

Office Hours: Contact me when you need to reach me by Panther e-mail or text.

Class Websites: D2L course site

Course Description:

In this course, students will explore the ways in which we understand film as a tool for examining cultural and social decay. Through a study of films from around the world, we will consider how directors characterize “decay” in a variety of guises: from the problem of evil, to racist and gendered violence, to fights over social justice and national identity, to urban disaffection and technological alienation. We will think critically about how cinema magnifies the erosion of society, and what possible remedies it has to offer.

This course will be taught online and is writing intensive. Assignments will include weekly, detailed forum posts about assigned films, short analysis papers, and a research term project. This course actively aims to prepare students to meet EIU’s university learning goals of critical thinking, writing and critical reading, speaking and listening, quantitative reasoning, and responsible citizenship.

Welcome:

Welcome to Studies in Film class for summer 2021! This course will be delivered online through Eastern Illinois University’s D2L system.

Course Access:

To access course material, visit EIU’s website and click on “D2L.” Log in to the course via D2L using your EIU Net ID and password. English 4904 Online will be completed over the course of the 8-week summer session, 2021. Due dates for assignments are noted in specific modules and in the first “course overview” module. The course includes reading assignments, writing assignments, film screenings, and forum discussion requirements.

Technical requirements:

Students must have regular access to the Internet while using a laptop or desktop computer. Students must know how to download and upload e-mail attachments, install software, and (if requesting an individual conference) use a webcam and microphone. Papers must be submitted in Microsoft Word; D2L cannot open papers submitted, for example, with Apple’s word processing program, Pages. You also must have access to Adobe Reader (free download) or Preview (for Macs).

Meet the Professor:

Hello! I am Dr. Bobby Martínez of EIU. My area of specialization is twentieth-century and contemporary British and American literature, and I always look forward to teaching this course. I am eager to explore our course material together.

I am not a Midwesterner; I come from the Washington, D.C., area, and did all of my schooling in Virginia and North Carolina. I worked professionally in the federal government business world for five years before turning to a life in academia. I have been teaching courses in writing, early/medieval literature, modern and contemporary British literature and culture, contemporary Latin American literature, film, and women's studies for over 19 years. When I am not teaching, you can easily find me nerding out about all kinds of music—jazz, rock, punk, funk, you name it. I love reading (of course) and playing music (drums, guitars), and I have a special love for dogs (dachshunds are awesome, and I have a newfound love for pit bulls or “pitties”) and now even like cats. Surprising how people can change.

How to Reach Me:

I do not find “official office hours” to work well for online courses, so please feel free to contact me by using EIU Panther e-mail. My address is rlmartinez@eiu.edu (please note that I prefer using Panthermail over D2L's internal e-mail). If you e-mail me late at night or at some unreachable moment (e.g., dinner), I will try to respond to e-mail messages within hours of receiving them on weekdays and weekends. I check e-mail routinely throughout each day.

Course Learning Objectives:

Students will aim to do the following:

- Students will evaluate film as an art form and a cultural artifact.
- Students will analyze and synthesize theories of film form and visual style.
- Students will identify film as a discursive narrative mode.
- Students will identify, critique, and apply film theories and historical contexts.
- Students will write analytically and effectively about film and related concepts.
- Students will exercise their abilities to summarize and synthesize information from scholarly sources of various disciplines and from interdisciplinary materials (writing, critical thinking).
- Students will have opportunities to make oral presentations of these summaries and syntheses (speaking).
- Students will learn to conduct interdisciplinary film research using both primary and secondary sources (critical thinking).
- Students will learn how to communicate these research findings in oral and written form (writing and speaking).
- Students will learn to research, study, analyze and compare films from their own culture and those of other cultures (critical thinking).
- Students will learn the importance of film studies in understanding cross-cultural interactions (citizenship).

- Students will learn the importance of film studies as a basis for social action (citizenship).
- Students will learn the significance of film as an integrated art form.
- Students will learn the significance of contemporary film to a study of contemporary culture and society.

Content Warning:

The post-war, contemporary era of our world (1945-present) has witnessed many traumatic events and human rights abuses. Many filmmakers tackle these traumatic, complex moments in history and thus engage in representations of struggles and violence. Some of these writers and filmmakers will often use stark methods to explore social problems and social violence, machismo, and political/sexual violence (sometimes involving rape, torture, or other forms of abuse) as a way to get readers' attention and tell stories that represent the realities and challenges they see in their worlds. As a result, some of our texts may prove emotionally painful for or morally offensive to you. If you're unwilling to read such material, please consider switching to another course. If you consider this cinema worth watching but find yourself upset by it, always feel free to talk to me during office hours, and to bring up your concerns during class if you're comfortable.

Required Films (in full or excerpted):

- Hal Hartley, *Flirt* (1995)
- Antonio Campos, *Afterschool* (2008)
- Michelangelo Antonioni, *Blow-Up* (1966)
- Ziad Doueiri, *The Attack* (2012)
- Don Siegel, *Dirty Harry* (1971)
- Michael Haneke, *The White Ribbon* (2009)
- Jen & Sylvia Soska, *American Mary* (2012)
- Issa López, *Tigers Are Not Afraid* (2017)

Reading and Listening Study for Class:

You are required to do all assigned reading and screenings for this course. More importantly, you are expected to read all assignments and watch all films **carefully** and **conscientiously**, meaning you are to make note of your reactions to the readings and films and be prepared to share your critical thoughts of this material on the forum for class discussions. If you do not understand something in the reading or films, you should read or watch it again and work at its meaning. This process is what is known as "critical reading" (and critical viewing!): you must study a writer's and director's language and images and think critically about their meanings and ramifications. This critical, thoughtful attention to detail applies equally to any audio/visual texts (music, film) we study: pay careful attention to sounds, melody, lyrics, camera movement, editing, use of color, etc., and think carefully about their meaning.

The texts listed above are available from Textbook Rental (TRS). Other required readings will be available online via our course page on D2L.

Required Participation, Materials & Editions:

- Check Panthermail (e-mail) **daily**
- Use text editions found at Textbook Rental
- Participate in all discussion forums
- Watch all assigned films **carefully**
- Complete all readings assigned for the course

Smartphone/Social Media Policy:

To protect the safety of the classroom and the privacy of the students, usage of cell phones or smartphones to screen capture and post any material about our course or class to social media sites or apps (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, YouTube, etc.) **is strictly forbidden**. Smartphone or cell phone use for social media regarding class will only be permitted with the prior approval of the instructor.

Assignments:

All assignments, unless otherwise specified, are to be completed in Cambria or Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, using MLA format.

- Film Analysis Essay: 15%
- D2L Forum Posts about the films: 40%
- D2L Forum Responses to classmates: 20%
- Prospectus for Capstone Project: 5%
- Capstone Project: 20%

Turning in Assignments & Feedback:

All assignments turned in via D2L Dropbox must be in Microsoft Word format. Instructor feedback will be embedded in graded writing.

Regarding Assignment Due Dates, Missed Assignments, and Weekly Modules:

Deadlines for assignments and discussions will be clearly labeled in each weekly Module.

With the exception of deadlines missed due to documented emergencies, **no late assignments will be accepted**. Assignments may only be turned in late if the student provides documentation of an emergency. Proper documentation must be an official, original scanned document containing the student's name; it must also cover the date(s) in question and be signed by a professional (e.g., a doctor). An e-mail that merely describes why you want to turn in your assignment late is not proper documentation.

Note that with the inclusion of the first module—labeled Introductions—we will have seven (7) modules in the course, basically one for each week. The first few modules will be viewable at the beginning of the course; the last few modules will appear as we progress through the course. If I post the last few Modules earlier, I will send everyone a notification email.

Assignment Descriptions:

All papers should be double spaced, in 12-point, Cambria or Times New Roman font, with 1" (top/bottom) and 1.25" (left/right) margins. Make sure to include your name, course name, professor's name, and date on the front page; a title for your paper; and your name and page numbers in the headers of the paper. Submit all work electronically, in Microsoft Word format, in D2L Dropbox.

- **Film Analysis Essay (5-8 pages):** This essay requires you to analyze closely one of the films we will watch during the early weeks of the course. The purpose of this assignment is two-fold: first, it is meant to help you demonstrate a stronger grasp of film vocabulary to practice more sophisticated film-specific analysis; second, it offers you a chance to explore an idea in depth related to a film and to develop an interpretive critique of the film.
- **Prospectus for Capstone Project: (1-2 pages):** This short paper requires you to state what you intend to work on for your Capstone Project. You need to identify your topic, the texts you will study, the themes/ideas you will explore, and what you hope to find or produce through your research and analysis. You should also state what format you think your project will take—for example, research paper, lesson plan, video essay, or some other multi-media form. Finally, you should include a short bibliography of sources you have investigated that helped you identify your topic.
- **The Capstone Project:** The Capstone Project can take shape of many forms. You can choose to research academic conferences and imagine yourself applying to participate in such a conference—that is, you would complete a conference-length (10-12 page) research paper with an abstract and a list of potentially appropriate conferences for the paper. Or you can design a six-week lesson plan at the secondary level for a unit on film analysis. This lesson plan will be accompanied by a (5-7 page) rationale for the unit and a bibliography of primary and secondary sources included that you used to devise your plan. Or you can choose to get really multimedia creative and complete a video essay centered on a particular concept or idea regarding cinema of interest to you.
- **D2L Forum Posts:** You will be required to complete weekly posts to our discussion forum for the various films that we will study throughout the course. Your posts should demonstrate thoughtful analysis of each film by analyzing at least two (2) pieces of evidence from each film for that week's post, as your way to support your interpretive thinking about the film. This means analyzing dialogue or other aspects of the *mise-en-scene* and making use of film vocabulary as you conduct your analysis.

- **D2L Forum Responses to Classmates:** For each post you make on assigned films, you will also respond to at least two (2) classmates' posts on the assigned film. Your response should be polite, conscientious, and demonstrate critical engagement with your classmates' ideas. Your responses should be completed within the time frame specified in each module.

Responses to Forum Discussions:

Notice above that the Discussion Forum is a large part of your final grade; below is a rubric that I will use for grading your participation. I will not assign a grade to each of your posts, but I will of course be closely watching, and participating in, our Discussion Forums.

Be aware that just as listening to others in an in-person classroom is important, so too is reading posts by other students. D2L allows me to see how often you do so (just as it allows me to see whether you watch the assigned films), and I can also tell when a student hastily dips in and out of Forums, merely dropping in their own posts and merely doing the minimal amount of required replies to others. So, post critically, ethically, and responsibly!

Criteria	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D
Response to Prompt	Brought new, well-supported understanding to discussion of the prompt's topic	Good response but could have been more clearly connected to prompt	Attempted adequate response but may have missed main idea or wandered too far from topic	Post(s) not made at all, or not at all connected to topic
Replies to other students (when required)	Clear, direct and detailed engagement with other students; specific references to others' ideas; reads most posts by others	Engaged with other students but could have been more specific or original	Engagement with other students minimal, very brief, or vague; reads very few posts by others beyond those replied to	Missing or extremely weak replies; doesn't read posts by others
Language	Proper use of clear, mostly error-free language; appropriately professional	Language could have been clearer or more polished at some points	Communication is weak, unclear, or highly inappropriate in an academic	Breaking of basic rules of appropriate communication in an academic environment

	communication		setting	OR post was not made
Evidence	Clear connections made to specific parts of texts, with solid supporting evidence	Some good evidence, but lacking in examples and specificity	Little supporting evidence from texts presented	Misunderstood nature of evidence or lacked evidence entirely
Timeliness	Post and any required replies met deadlines	One deadline or one component may have been missed	Deadlines were missed or did not include all requirements	Post(s) extremely late or missed entirely

A Note about Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else’s ideas, words, or work as your own. If you use or refer to ideas or work other than your own, you must acknowledge the source and author of those ideas/that work and document it properly using MLA format ([Purdue MLA Guide](#)). Plagiarism is an Honor Code violation at EIU, and offenders will be referred to the EIU Office for Student Standards. **Failure to cite any outside sources or critics will constitute plagiarism.**

Grading Scale:

- A = 94-100
- A- = 90-93
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 84-86
- B- = 80-83
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 74-76
- C- = 70-73
- D = 64-69
- F = 63 and below

Communication Etiquette for the Course:

- When posting to the Discussion Forum, stay on topic. Do not post irrelevant links, comments, thoughts, or pictures.
- Do not type in ALL CAPS! If you do, it will look like you are screaming.
- Do not write anything that sounds angry or sarcastic even as a joke, because without hearing your tone of voice, your peers might not realize you are joking.
- Always remember to say “please” and “thank you” when soliciting help from your classmates.

- Respect the opinion of your classmates. Disagreeing with a classmate's ideas is totally fine, but if you feel the need to disagree, do so respectfully and acknowledge the valid points in your classmate's argument. If you reply to a question from a classmate, make sure your answer is accurate!
- Do not badmouth others and show the same courtesy towards our course writers and filmmakers. You may disagree with the ideas of your classmates or with the ideas you encounter in class, but do not mock the person. Engage in rational, intellectual discussion.
- If you refer to either something in a novel or film, or something your classmate said earlier in the discussion, remember to quote that material so that others will not have to go back and figure out what you are referring to.
- Before asking a question, search the Internet to see if the answer is obvious or easy to find.
- Be forgiving and humble and generous. If anyone makes a mistake, do not badger them for it. Just let it go.
- Run a spelling and grammar check before posting anything to the discussion board, the instructor, or the public.

Student Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct. Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Disability Services:

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by McAfee Building, Room 1210, or call 217-581-6583.

Student Success Center:

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to the McAfee Building, Room 1301.

Tech Support:

If you need assistance with D2L, call D2L Support toll free at 1-877-325-7778. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. E-mail and Chat options are also available on the "My Home" page after logging in to D2L. Other D2L resources including a D2L Orientation course for students are available on the same page. For technical questions regarding other software, hardware, network issues, EIU NetID/password, or Panthermail, please contact the ITS Helpdesk at 217-581-4357 during regular business hours (8 am-5 pm) or submit a help ticket at EIU Tech Support. If you have a question regarding course content, contact your instructor.

Detailed Schedule of English 4904, Studies in Film

Module 1: Tuesday, June 1st – Tuesday, June 8th

Understanding Film Analysis:

- Read syllabus and if you have questions, post them to the "[Syllabus forum](#)" by **June 2nd, 5 p.m.**
- [Introduce yourself in the forum](#) by **June 2nd, 5 p.m.**
- Complete forum on [film clip exercises](#) by **Thursday, June 3rd, 8 p.m.** Respond to classmates by **Saturday, June 5th, 8 p.m.**
- Watch [Hal Hartley's Flirt](#) segment 1 by **Sunday, June 6th**, and group secretary posts by **Tuesday, June 8th, 3 p.m.** Groups respond to each other by **Wednesday, June 9th, 9 p.m.** on forum.

Module 2: Tuesday, June 8th – Tuesday, June 15th

Technological Infection and the Death of Affect in Antonio

Campos's *Afterschool* (2008)

- [Read module essay](#) carefully and consider its ideas and study questions.
- Watch Campos's *Afterschool* by **Saturday, June 12th.**
- Post your forum response by **Monday, June 14th, 5 p.m.**
- Respond to at least two classmates' posts by **Tuesday, June 15th, 9 p.m.**

Module 3: Tuesday, June 15th – June 22nd

Modern Urban Life and the Experience of Existential Estrangement in *Blow-Up* (1966)

- Read module essay carefully and consider its ideas and study questions.
- Watch Antonioni's *Blow-Up* by **Saturday, June 19th.**
- Post your forum response by **Monday, June 21st, 5 p.m.**
- Respond to at least two classmates' posts by **Tuesday, June 22nd, 9 p.m.**

Assignments Due:

- *June 22-29: Research Week: Define term project and turn in Capstone Project Prospectus (conf paper, video essay, auteur essay/presentation, teach to high school audience)*
- **Saturday, June 26th: Film Analysis Essay Due in D2L Dropbox**
- **Tuesday, June 29th: Prospectus for Capstone Project Due in D2L Dropbox**

Module 4: Tuesday, June 29th – July 6th

Terrorism and Cultural Identity in Ziad Doueiri's *The Attack* (2012):

- Read module essay carefully and consider its ideas and study questions.
- Watch Ziad Doueiri's *The Attack* by **Saturday, July 3rd.**
- Post your forum response by **Monday, July 5th, 5 p.m.**
- Respond to at least two classmates' posts by **Tuesday, July 6th, 9 p.m.**

Module 5: Tuesday, July 6th – July 13th

Gendered Violence and Social Thinking in Jen & Sylvia Soska's *American Mary* (2012):

- Read module essay carefully and consider its ideas and study questions.
- Read Laura Mulvey's essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."
- Watch Jen & Sylvia Soska's *American Mary* (2012) **by Saturday, July 10th.**
- Post your forum response **by Monday, July 12th, 5 p.m.**
- Respond to at least two classmates' posts **by Tuesday, July 13th, 9 p.m.**

Module 6: Tuesday, July 13th – July 20th

Cartel Violence and Adolescence in Issa López's *Tigers Are Not Afraid* (2017)

- Read module essay carefully and consider its ideas and study questions.
- Watch Issa López's *Tigers Are Not Afraid* (2017) **by Saturday, July 17th.**
- Post your forum response **by Monday, July 19th, 5 p.m.**
- Respond to at least two classmates' posts **by Tuesday, July 20th, 9 p.m.**
- **Capstone Projects due by Friday, July 23rd, 3 p.m.**