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ENG 4904-600: Studies in Film

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Spring 2021 English 4904, Studies in Film: Women, Contemporary Film, and Authorship

Instructor: Robin L. Murray

Email: rlmurray@eiu.edu

Course Schedule: Online

Office Hours: TWR 12:30-2 & by appointment

Phone: 549-0199 (texting best before 10 pm)

Course Description: Studies in Film— Women, Contemporary Film, and Authorship

Filmmaker Michelle Citron declares that "many women directors are forced to make a choice: either they maintain control over production of their films and settle for smaller audiences, or they relinquish a degree of control to establishment forces in order to reach a wider audience." Crucial to this class is the question of authorship, particularly the extent to which contemporary women directors (auteurs) have agency and authority over their own cultural representation. With a global/intersectional approach underpinning our choices, this spring 2021 section of English 4904 will explore the question of authorship in relation to films by contemporary female directors who cross audiences, while also maintaining artistic agency. Filmmakers will range from Patty Jenkins, Ana Lily Amirpour and Ava Duvernay to Deniz Gamze Erguven, Dee Rees and Rungano Nyoni. Students will also have the opportunity to self-select films to screen.

Themes: Law and Social Justice; Genre, Form and Poetics; Science and the Environment; Media, Technology and Popular Culture. Note: May be repeated once with permission of Department

Please note: We will be using D2L for this class.

- D2L Student Orientation: <https://online.eiu.edu/d2l/home/6909>
- For IT Help, please call the Help Desk at 217-581-HELP.

Course Objectives:

Students will:

1. Evaluate films directed by women as art form and cultural artifact
2. Analyze and synthesize theories of film form and visual style
3. Identify and analyze both narrative and non-narrative films directed by women
4. Identify, critique and apply film theories and historical contexts to women's cinema
5. Write analytically and effectively about women's cinema and related concepts
6. Construct and explain selected women's contemporary cinema contexts and concepts

Course Texts Beyond Films:

"Film Form and Narrative" on D2L

Branigan, Edward and Buckland, Warren, editors. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*. Routledge, 2015.

Gay, Roxane. *Bad Feminist*. Harper Perennial, 2014.

Grant, Barry Keith (Ed.). *Film Genre Reader III*, University of Texas Press, 2003 on D2L

Course Requirements: To succeed in this course, you must effectively complete each of the following:

1. Once a week you will complete a **discussion post** answering a question about the film(s) screened and/or text read for that class and respond to peers in a small group discussion. Initial responses should be at least 150 words and examine your chosen question carefully. Replies to your peers should add connections with other films, theories or experiences or offer an alternative perspective. You will respond to all members of your small group.
2. You will also be expected to keep a **film log**, with notes on each film screened in class (you may use on your midterm and final). Make sure you read the material for each class. I will provide guidance.

3. You will also write **one paper** due after midterm (with a proposal and draft). This paper will allow you to look beyond films screened for class to examine other films and approaches in 6-8 pages.
4. In small groups you will choose a film theory/genre (based on your week's focus), introduce it with a **multimedia presentation** with questions and lead a full class discussion following its screening.
5. You will take a **midterm exam** and **final exam**, which will allow you to synthesize information gained from the textbooks, films, and their cultural and historical contexts.

Note: Paper and other prompts will be provided.

Learning Goals: Course objectives are designed to help students achieve each of four learning goals of general education and university-wide assessment as follows:

I. Critical Thinking

EIU graduates question, examine, evaluate, and respond to problems or arguments by:

- Asking essential questions and engaging diverse perspectives.
- Seeking and gathering data, information, and knowledge from experience, texts, graphics, and media.
- Understanding, interpreting, and critiquing relevant data, information, and knowledge.
- Synthesizing and integrating data, information, and knowledge to infer and create new insights Anticipating, reflecting upon, and evaluating implications of assumptions, arguments, hypotheses, and conclusions.
- Creating and presenting defensible expressions, arguments, positions, hypotheses, and proposals.

II. Writing and Critical Reading

EIU graduates write critically and evaluate varied sources by:

- Creating documents appropriate for specific audiences, purposes, genres, disciplines, and professions.
- Crafting cogent and defensible applications, analyses, evaluations, and arguments about problems, ideas, and issues.
- Producing documents that are well organized, focused, and cohesive.
- Using appropriate vocabulary, mechanics, grammar, diction, and sentence structure.
- Understanding, questioning, analyzing, and synthesizing complex textual, numeric, and graphical sources.
- Evaluating evidence, issues, ideas, and problems from multiple perspectives.
- Collecting and employing source materials ethically and understanding their strengths and limitations.

III. Speaking and Listening

EIU graduates prepare, deliver, and critically evaluate presentations and other formal speaking activities by:

- Collecting, comprehending, analyzing, synthesizing and ethically incorporating source material.
- Adapting formal and impromptu presentations, debates, and discussions to their audience and purpose.
- Developing and organizing ideas and supporting them with appropriate details and evidence.
- Using effective language skills adapted for oral delivery, including appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure.
- Using effective vocal delivery skills, including volume, pitch, rate of speech, articulation, pronunciation, and fluency.
- Employing effective physical delivery skills, including eye contact, gestures, and movement.
- Using active and critical listening skills to understand and evaluate oral communication.

IV. Responsible Citizenship

EIU graduates make informed decisions based on knowledge of the physical and natural world and human history and culture by:

- Engaging with diverse ideas, individuals, groups, and cultures.
- Applying ethical reasoning and standards in personal, professional, disciplinary, and civic contexts.
- Participating formally and informally in civic life to better the public good.
- Applying knowledge and skills to new and changing contexts within and beyond the classroom.

Graduate Student Note: In addition to the above requirements, students enrolled in the course for graduate credit will extend their paper to approximately 10-12 pages (conference length). These students will be asked to submit a proposal for the paper, as will all other students, but should also include a bibliography with their proposal.

Grades: Grades for this course will be determined as follows

• Small Group Discussions	15%
• Paper with proposal and draft	20%
• Film Log	15%
• Film Genre/Theory introduction and discussion	20%
• Midterm	15%
• Final Exam	15%
	<hr/>
	100%

Other Policies:

1. **Plagiarism Statement:** “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--`the inappropriate imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of `F’ for the course.
2. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
3. Please also note that this course is Writing Intensive, so a paper completed for the course can be turned in to your electronic writing portfolio—some time during the actual course of the class.
4. Ambitious students can also seek help from the Writing Center. Call for an appointment (581-5920) or visit ((CH3110) at any point in the writing process, from brainstorming, planning and drafting, to final editing. Bring your assignment sheet and any written work and/or sources with you. The Writing Center is open Monday-Thursday, 9-3 and 6-9, and Friday from 9-1 and has virtual sessions.
5. You must complete all major assignments to complete this course.
6. Students seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should provide each of their English department professors with the yellow form, “Application for English department Approval to Student Teach.” These are available online or on a rack outside the office of Dr. Melissa Ames.

Spring 2021 ENG 4904 Tentative Course Calendar
Subject to Change

January

Introduction to the Class and its Focus

1/11 First Class Day/Week: Introduction to the class and D2L.

Assignments this due by Tuesday, January 19 at midnight

1. Complete a survey to share brief introductions with your peers
2. Watch multimedia introduction to form and style and read Film Form, Style, and Narrative.
3. Complete an initial small group response. Respond to peers by Thursday, 1/19 at midnight.
4. Watch Women Who Run Hollywood documentary on D2L and complete a practice film log. There are guides to help you with this on D2L.

18 MLK Jr. Day, No Classes

Drama Cinema and Women Auteurs

19 Week 2: **Small Group Response** to multimedia presentation and reading due by midnight today.

Film log response due by midnight today.

Assignments this week due by Monday, January 25 at midnight:

1. Watch one of these drama films and write a film log: *Songs My Brother Taught Me* or *Before Tomorrow*.
2. Read chapter 24, "Tales of Sound and Fury..." in the Film Genre Reader III and complete a small group response with guiding questions on D2L. Reply to peers by midnight on Wednesday, January 27.

Note: Lions in Winter poet laureate Joy Harjo reading on January 30 at 1:00 pm—online and free!
More information on D2L.

25 Week 3: **Small Group Response** to multimedia presentation and reading due by midnight today.

Film log response due by midnight today.

Assignments this week due by Monday, February 1 at midnight:

1. Watch one of these drama films and write a film log: *MadeinUSA*, *The Swamp*, *Zama*, or *Selma*.
2. Read "Feminist Film Theory Core Concepts and Feminist Film Theory, History Of and "Gaze Theory" in Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory and complete a small group response with help from questions on D2L. Reply to peers by midnight on Wednesday, 2/3.

February

Coming of Age Cinema and Women Auteurs

2/1 Week 4: An easier week. **Small Group Response** to multimedia presentation and reading due by midnight today.

Film log response due by midnight today.

Note: Please check out a reading by poet Joan Kane on February 4 at 5:00 pm (free and online)

Assignments due by Monday, February 8 at midnight:

1. Watch one of these coming-of-age films and write a film log: *Fish Tank*, *Leave No Trace*, *Lady Bird*, or *Book Smart*.
2. Read chapter 30 "Teen Films..." in *Film Genre Reader III* and "Queer Theory/Queer Cinema" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory* and complete a small group response with help from questions on D2L. Reply to peers by midnight on Wednesday, 2/10.

2 Personal Wellness Day, No Classes!

8 Week 5: **Small Group Response** to multimedia presentation and reading due by midnight today.
Film log response due by midnight today.

Assignments due by Monday, February 15 at midnight:

1. Watch one of the following coming-of-age films and write a film log: *Mustang*, *Pariah*, *Wadjda*, *Whale Rider*, or *Drunk-town's Finest*
2. Read "Auteur Theory," "Point of View," and "Representation" in *Routledge Encyclopedia* and complete a small group response with help from questions on D2L. Reply to peers by midnight on Wednesday, 2/17.

Horror Film and Women Auteurs

12 Lincoln's Birthday

15 Week 6: **Small Group Response** to multimedia presentation and reading due by midnight today.
Film log response due by midnight today.

Assignments due by Monday, February 22 at midnight:

1. Watch one of the following horror films and write a film log (you may choose another film directed by a woman if you have trouble with any of these films): *Strigoi* (comic horror), *Jennifer's Body*, *The Bad Batch*, *A Girl Walks Home from Night*, *Raw*, or *The Babadook*.
2. Read ch. 23 "Monsters from the Id" in *Film Genre Reader III* and complete a small group response with help from questions on D2L. Reply to peers by midnight on Thursday, 2/25.

22 Week 7: An easier week (prepare for midterm): **Small Group Response** to multimedia presentation and reading due by midnight today.
Film log response due by midnight today.

Assignments due by Monday, March 1 at midnight:

1. Read the prompts for your group multimedia presentation and your final paper and complete a small group response brainstorming possible topics/approaches, based on the calendar.
2. Gather your film logs and discussions (complete any you missed) to prepare for the midterm.

Note: the midterm will be due by midnight on Wednesday, March 3.

24 Personal Wellness Day, No Classes!

March

Superheroes, Animation, and Graphic Narrative Adaptations

3/1 Week 8: Please complete the Midterm by Wednesday, 3/3 at midnight!

Please complete your small group discussion about the group presentation and final paper by midnight on Monday, March 1.

Assignments for Monday, March 8 by midnight:

1. Watch one of the following superhero films and write a film log: *Wonder Woman*, *Destroyer* or a female directed superhero film available on streaming services such as *Old Guard*, *The Kitchen* or *I'm Your Woman*
2. Group 1 will complete a presentation illuminating ch. 20 "Bug in a Rug" or 31 "Global Noir in *Film Genre Reader III*" or an article of their choice. Everyone should view and complete a response to questions in a full-class discussion. Reply to peers by Wednesday, March 10 at midnight.
3. Complete a brief proposal for your final project: topic, approach, and reasons for your choice.

8 Week 9: **Small Group Response** to multimedia presentation and reading due by midnight today.

Film log response due by midnight today.

Assignments for Monday, March 15 by midnight:

1. Watch one of the following war films and write a film log: *Zero Dark 30*, *Persepolis*, or *Hurt Locker*
2. Group 2 will complete a presentation illuminating chapter 27 "Friendly Civilians" in *Film Genre Reader III* or another chapter/article. Everyone should view and complete a response to questions in a full-class discussion. Reply to peers by Wednesday, 3/17.

15 Week 10: An easier week: **Full-Class Response** to multimedia presentation due by midnight today.

Film log response due by midnight today.

Assignments for Monday March 22 by midnight:

1. Watch one of the following animated films/graphic narrative adaptations and write a film log: *Sita Sings the Blues*, *Half-Life*, *Frozen*, or *Brave*.
2. Group 3 will present "Film and Emotion" or "Cinematic Excess" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory* and complete a response to questions in a full-class discussion. Reply to peers by Wednesday, March 24 at midnight.

18 Personal Wellness Day, No Classes!

Comedy Genres and Women Auteurs

22 Week 11: **Full-Class Response** to group presentation due by midnight today.

Film log response due by midnight today.

Assignments for Monday 3/29 at midnight:

1. Watch one of the following screwball or romantic comedy films and complete a film log: *Mommy's Coming*, *Tortilla Soup*, *Saving Face*, *Emma*, or *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

2. Group 4 will Read chapter 25, "Screwball Comedies" or another relevant chapter in *Film Genre Reader III* or *Encyclopedia of Film Theory* and prepare a presentation with questions for a full-class discussion.

29 Week 12: **Full-Class Response** to group presentation due by midnight today.
Film log response due by midnight today.

Assignments for Monday, April 5 by midnight:

1. Watch one of the following comedy films and complete a film log: *Obvious Child*, *Mama Mia*, *Woman on Top*, *I am Not a Witch*, or *Something's Gotta Give*.
2. Read ch. 8 "The Self-Reflexive Musical..." in *Film Genre Reader III* and complete a response in your small-group discussion. Reply to your peers by Wednesday, April 7 at midnight.

April

5 Week 13: an easier week: **Small Group Response** to multimedia presentation and reading due by midnight today.
Film log response due by midnight today

Assignment for Monday, April 12:

1. Complete a draft of your final project by midnight
2. Complete peer reviews by Saturday, April 17 at midnight.
3. Schedule a brief phone, Zoom, etc. conference with Dr. Murray

7 Personal Wellness Day, No Classes!

12 Week 14: Project draft due for conferences and peer review:

1. Complete a draft of your final project by midnight
2. Complete peer reviews by Saturday, April 17 at midnight
3. Participate in brief conference, if possible (working with your schedules this week and next).

Assignment for Next Monday by midnight:

1. Watch a genre film of your choice directed by a woman auteur, such as Kelly Reichardt, Chloé Zhao, Ava Duvernay, Dee Rees, Lucrecia Martel especially one related to your paper and complete a film log.
2. Continue working on your paper revisions and catch up on any work, if needed.

19 Week 15: an easier week: Film log due.

Assignment for Wednesday, April 28

Revision of paper

Note: Prepare for final exam due by midnight on May 6.

22 Personal Wellness Day, No Classes!

26 Make-Up Week: Final draft of project due by midnight on Wednesday, April 28.

May

6 Final Exam due by midnight.