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ENG 4904-001: Studies in Film

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ENG 4904, section 001: Studies in Film
Cinema and Social Justice
Spring 2019 | Coleman 1255 | TH 3.30 PM-6.50 PM

Professor: Dr. Robert Martínez
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Office Hours: T/TH 11 AM-2 PM and by appointment
Class Websites: D2L course site

Course Description:

In this course, students will consider how cinema has evolved as a powerful art form that directly impacts public opinion and helps to shape public consciousness (perhaps unlike any other form of technology). From the earliest days of films like D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) to Spike Lee's latest film, *BlacKkKlansman* (2018), cinema has come to filter and represent our sense of reality and history, especially in matters of socio-political importance. We will study a wide range of national and international films that provoke debate about issues of social justice and the condition of what it means to be human.

Themes: Identity and Culture; Law and Social Justice; Education and Society; Genre, Form, and Poetics; Science and the Environment; Media, Technology, and Popular Culture.

Course Learning Goals:

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

Required Texts & Films:

- Bernard F. Dick, *Anatomy of Film* (6th edition) at TRS
- Selected readings on D2L

- William Wellman, *Battleground* (1949) or *The Story of G.I. Joe* (1945)
- Oliver Stone, *Platoon* (1986)
- David Mackenzie, *Hell or High Water* (2016)
- Robert Wiene, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920)
- F. W. Murnau, *Nosferatu* (1922)
- Fritz Lang, *M* (1931)
- Stuart Gordon, *Re-Animator* (1985)
- George Romero, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978)
- Danny Boyle, *28 Days Later* (2002)
- D. W. Griffith, *Birth of a Nation* (1915)
- Spike Lee, *Do the Right Thing* (1989)
- Mathieu Kassovitz, *La Haine* (Hate; 1995)
- Mel Brooks, *Blazing Saddles* (1974)
- Robert Townsend, *Hollywood Shuffle* (1986)
- Zal Batmanglij, *The East* (2013)

Screenings in and Readings for Class:

You are required to attend all class film screenings and to do all assigned reading 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/films and be prepared to share your critical thoughts and interpretations of the works we cover. If you do not understand something in the reading, you should read it again and work at its meaning; likewise, if something about a film is perplexing, watch it again and think about it carefully. This process is what is known as “critical reading” and “critical thinking”: you must study a writer’s language or filmmaker’s films and think critically about its meanings and ramifications.

The text listed above is available from Textbook Rental (TRS). Other required readings will be available online via our course page on D2L. On the day that a text is to be discussed, you must have that work with you in class. For **electronic readings (PDF or Web documents)**, you must **have readable access to those documents in class on the day the material is discussed**. Since this course emphasizes careful reading and writing, you must either print out the document(s) or use a laptop, desktop, iPad, Kindle, or Nook to view them. ***Using Smartphones to view readings for class discussion is not acceptable, unless directed to do so by the instructor.***

Required Attendance, Materials & Editions:

- Check Panthermail (e-mail) **daily**
- Sign-up for and use “Remind” app for class texting
- Use text editions found at Textbook Rental
- Attend class and participate daily in discussion
- Attend all film screenings
- Complete all forum posts
- Additional readings via handouts or D2L

Attendance in English 4904 means that you are present in class each day in both *body and mind*—that is, I expect you to come to class each day having completed any required reading or listening or viewing assignments and ready to share your thoughtful, considered ideas. **Missing class and not completing assignments are not acceptable.** If you become ill or experience family or personal difficulties beyond your control, then you must notify me of your absence as soon as possible. Not completing daily assignments and not contributing to class discussion will result in poor

participation grade scores. If you miss more than three (3) classes, your final course grade will be penalized: starting with the fourth (4th) absence, a "+" or "-" will be deducted from your final course grade.

Smartphone/Social Media Policy:

To protect the safety of the classroom and the privacy of the students, usage of cell phones or smartphones during class to videotape, to text, and to access social media sites or apps (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, YouTube, etc.) **is strictly forbidden**. Smartphone or cell phone use during class will only be permitted with the prior approval of the instructor.

Grading of Assignments:

- Three (3) short essays (3-4 pages each): 25%
- General Participation, class discussion, possible quizzes: 10%
- Weekly Forum posts for each film (250-400 words per post): 10%
- Group Project "Teach the Class" Presentation: 20%
- Research Term Paper (10-12 pages): 35%

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 = 60-69
- F = below 60

Turning in Assignments & Feedback:

Assignments turned in via D2L Dropbox must be in **Microsoft Word format**. Instructor feedback will be embedded in graded writing. Be sure to review and save your graded essays. One of your most important tools for improvement will be the comments and corrections I make in or suggest to your writing. *If you wish to see your writing improve and your grade rise as the semester progresses, you must carefully refer back to these written comments as you write subsequent essays.*

Guidelines for Specific Assignments:

All written work should be formatted thus:

- Use Microsoft Word
- Use Double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman or Cambria font
- Use 1" (top/bottom) and 1.25" (left/right) margins
- Include your name, course name, professor's name, and date on the front page
- Include a title for your essays
- Place your name and page numbers in the headers of your essays
- Turn in all written work electronically via D2L Dropbox

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: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>). 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.**

Most assignments will receive letter grades. For shorter assignments, the following check-mark system may be used:

- $\checkmark+$ = Excellent work that is strongly engaged, on-topic, and very well written.
- \checkmark = Satisfactory work that is on-topic and cleanly written.
- $\checkmark-$ = Below average work that shows little engagement, is off-topic, and is hurriedly and poorly written.

Student Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). 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 Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call [217-581-6583](tel:217-581-6583).

Student Success Center:

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) 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](tel:217-581-6696), or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

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 <https://techsupport.eiu.edu/>. If you have a question regarding course content, contact your instructor.

**Eng. 4904, section 001:
Studies in Film: Cinema as Social
Spring 2019 | Tentative Class Schedule***

***Please note:** This schedule is *tentative*; activities or readings are subject to change depending on class progress.

Date	What We'll Do in Class	Homework
Thurs., 1/10	Discuss course policies and syllabus Cultural & Intellectual background to contemporary society Discuss how film creates representation and meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read "Sound" in <i>Anatomy of Film</i> (pp. 36-50) - Read "Mise-en-Scène" in <i>Anatomy of Film</i> (pp. 86-98) - Read "The Shot" in <i>Anatomy of Film</i> (pp. 51-63) - Read sections on shots and editing in <i>Anatomy of Film</i> (pp. 69-83) - Complete online assignment assessing film excerpts - Assign Discussion Leaders for films
Thurs., 1/17	1. Discuss examples of film techniques 2. Unit I – Understanding war: Watch Stone's <i>Platoon</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read excerpt regarding Francois Truffaut's response to cinema and "The Algerian Tragedy" (D2L) - Read "Introduction" to <i>War on the Silver Screen</i> (D2L) - Read "Introduction" to <i>War Cinema</i> (D2L)
Thurs., 1/24	1. Discuss <i>Platoon</i> 2. Unit I- Understanding war: Watch Wellman's <i>Battleground</i>	Review film options for Group Presentation project (see handout)
Thurs., 1/31	1. Discuss <i>Battleground</i> 2. Unit II – Race and Representation: Watch Griffith's <i>Birth of a Nation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turn in (D2L Dropbox) choices for group project
Thurs., 2/7	1. Discuss <i>Birth of a Nation</i> 2. Unit II – Race and Representation: Watch Lee's <i>Do the Right Thing</i>	Watch Spike Lee's video essay on <i>Do the Right Thing</i> (via D2L)
Thurs., 2/14	1. Discuss <i>Do the Right Thing</i> 2. Unit II – Race and Representation: Watch Kassovitz's <i>La Haine</i> Short Essay #1 Due in D2L	
Thurs., 2/21	1. Discuss <i>La Haine</i> 2. Unit II – Race and Representation: Watch Brooks's <i>Blazing Saddles</i>	

Thurs., 2/28	1. Discuss <i>Blazing Saddles</i> 2. Unit II – Race and Representation: Watch Townsend's <i>Hollywood Shuffle</i>	
Thurs., 3/7	1. Discuss <i>Hollywood Shuffle</i> 2. Unit III – Horror and Society: Watch Romero's <i>Dawn of the Dead</i> Short Essay #2 Due in D2L	
Thurs., 3/14	No Class – Spring Break	
Thurs., 3/21	1. Discuss <i>Dawn of the Dead</i> 2. Unit III – Horror and Society: Watch Gordon's <i>The Re-Animator</i>	
Thurs., 3/28	1. Discuss <i>The Re-Animator</i> 2. Unit III – Horror and Society: Watch Boyle's <i>28 Days Later</i>	Reminders! - Be working on Research Term Paper!
Fri., 3/29	Précis & Annotated Bibliography for Term Paper due in Dropbox	
Thurs., 4/4	1. Discuss <i>28 Days Later</i> 2. Unit IV – Individual Agency and the Environment: Watch Batmanglij's <i>The East</i> Short Essay #3 Due in D2L	Reminders! - Be working on Research Term Paper!
Thurs., 4/11	1. Discuss <i>The East</i> 2. Unit V – Roots of Fascism: Watch Wiene's <i>The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari</i>	Reminders! - Be working on Research Term Paper!
Thurs., 4/18	1. Discuss <i>The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari</i> 2. Unit V – Roots of Fascism: Watch and discuss Lang's <i>M</i>	
Thurs., 4/25	Last Day of Class Course evals	Research Term Paper is due Tuesday, April 30, in D2L by 10 PM.