

MRTS 1320.001—Perspectives on Film

RTFP 184, Mondays and Wednesdays 9:00 – 11:20am

Instructor: Mr. Travis Sutton, RTFP 229

Email: Travis.Sutton@unt.edu

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30 – 12:30pm

Teaching Assistants: Michael Flanagan (MichaelFlanagan@my.unt.edu)
Elaine DiFalco (ElaineDiFalco@my.unt.edu)

For questions about attendance, unexcused absences, and weekly writing activities, please contact one of the teaching assistants before contacting your instructor.

Course Description:

This class is designed to help develop and strengthen students' abilities to analyze and interpret motion picture artistry. The end goal is to help each student develop and expand his or her own critical awareness and enjoyment of the motion picture experience. This process will begin with an overview of film form, including familiarization with cinematic language and narrative structure. The different elements that make up a film will be considered: screenwriting, production design, cinematography, acting, editing, and sound. Comparisons will be made of movies from different genres, cultures, and historical periods. Film can be understood from a number of perspectives: as a technology, as a business, as entertainment, as art, and perhaps most importantly as a socio-cultural artifact, which to some extent reflects the cultural conditions under which it is produced and received. Therefore, the class will also introduce broader concepts of ideology and representation as theorized within cultural studies, and provide an overview of film history in relation to issues of human diversity.

Students who are unwilling to explore issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality within an educational framework should consider enrolling in another class.

Course Objectives:

- To increase the *visual literacy* of each student. This means becoming a better watcher and listener of movies by paying attention to the details that contribute to a film's overall meaning.
- To expand the body of movies that students might appreciate, movies beyond mainstream Hollywood fare
- To increase students' understanding of how films are made, considering both technical and structural tools of filmmaking
- To master the vocabulary and basic concepts of film analysis, both formal and contextual
- To explore how movies interact with audiences/spectators, particularly in the way movies can shape a culture and its ideology

Required Reading:

Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film, 5th Edition by Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan. W. W. Norton and Co., 2015.

Some versions of this textbook provide a supplemental online access code or DVD. I will not be using any of the DVD videos or online materials for the course, so you are not required to obtain them. However, the extra videos and online materials are instructive if you wish to explore them on your own. A copy of the textbook will also be available on reserve at the university library.

Course documents, such as the syllabus and the instructions for the writing assignments, will be available on Canvas.

Course Requirements:

Writing Activities	10%
Midterm Examination	25%
Final Examination.....	25%
Film Review (500-750 words).....	15%
Film Analysis (1000-1250 words).....	25%

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, and in-class contributions are an important part of the classroom experience. Students are expected to complete each reading assignment for discussion in class. The instructor will be prepared to clarify concepts and to provide film clips for analysis as a group.

The instructor will maintain an attendance record for each class meeting. Prior to the beginning of class, a roster will be located at the front of the room for each student to sign. It is the responsibility of each student to ensure that he or she has signed the roster for that day. **Rosters without signatures will be recorded as absences.** The instructor will accept a signature as evidence of a student's presence for the entirety of a class session. Any form of dishonesty with the attendance record, which includes signing and leaving or signing for another student, will be treated as academic dishonesty and result in a zero for the course.

Rosters will remain available for students to sign for fifteen minutes after class has started; however, please be on time to avoid signing during class instruction. Signatures will not be permitted fifteen minutes after instruction has started, and they will not be accepted at the end of class.

Students who do not attend the first class session are subject to being dropped from the course, unless they notify the instructor ahead of time.

Students who acquire more than three unexcused absences over the course of the semester will receive a penalty in their final grade: each unexcused absence after the first three will result in three percentage points deducted from the final grade. For example, a total of five unexcused absences in the semester would result in two penalties; consequently, a final score of 84% would drop to 78%.

Absences can be excused ahead of time for school-sponsored activities, religious holidays, illnesses, and other personal emergencies. Please provide documentation, such as a doctor's note or an authorized absence card, to one of the teaching assistants to excuse an absence.

Classroom Behavior

Rude or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated in the classroom. Disruptive behavior can include anything that would interfere with an instructor's ability to conduct class or with a student's ability to benefit from the instruction. Please note that behaviors likely to distract the instructor and, thus, to interrupt the flow of the class include activities designed to signal student inattentiveness, such as texting, reading, sleeping, working on material for other classes, etc. Electronic devices, such as laptops and tablets, are permitted in the classroom, as long as they are used to assist with course-related learning.

Writing Activities

Ten writing activities will be assigned during the semester. Each writing activity is designed for a student to respond to the weekly reading assignments from the textbook. Writing activities are to be completed online through links posted on Canvas. Hard copies and/or late submissions, without instructor approval, will not be accepted.

Examinations

There will be a midterm examination and a final examination. The final examination will *not* be cumulative. Each examination will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions, and the questions will be based on class lectures, assigned readings, and films screened in class. Each student is required to be prepared with a **Number 2 Pencil** for each examination.

Examinations will not be given to students who arrive fifteen minutes (or later) after the course is scheduled to begin on an examination day.

If you are involved in a school-sponsored activity that requires your absence during an examination day, you must make arrangements with the instructor to take the examination prior to the scheduled examination date.

Writing Projects

Students will complete two writing projects during the semester. Each project is designed to demonstrate a student's ability to present different kinds of arguments about a film: evaluation and interpretation. Detailed instructions for each writing project will be available on Canvas. A grading rubric will also be available online that details what the instructor and teaching assistants consider when assessing completed assignments.

Grading Criteria:

- Students are required to submit assignments on due dates listed in this syllabus. Late submissions of the **weekly writing activities** are generally not accepted. A late submission of a **writing project** (e.g. the movie review or the film analysis) will result in a deduction of 10 percentage points of the grade per day. Students are responsible for presenting appropriate documentation to excuse late work.
- Because assignments for this course are submitted online, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that submissions are fully uploaded into Canvas and Turnitin. Additionally, it is a good idea to **keep backup copies of all completed work** in case these online systems encounter problems during the semester.
- Because of security concerns and your right to privacy, **the instructor will not discuss grades over email**. If you have a question about your grade, send your instructor a message indicating that you want to discuss your grade, and your instructor will make arrangements to visit with you.
- Your instructor's goal is to help you improve your writing and critical thinking skills, so it is important for you to ask questions.
- Extra credit assignments or a final grade curve will not be offered in this class.
- Grades are not negotiable. Your final course grade will be based on your work in the course. If you are concerned about a grade, see your instructor during office hours.
- **Any form of academic dishonesty will result in an 'F' for the course and possibly further sanctions at the university level.**

Numerical Grade Equivalents.

Course grades are calculated on the standard scale:

A = 100-90

B = 89-80

C = 79-70

D = 69-60

F = 59-0

Every border creates situations where you may be "just below" the grade you want or require. This is frustrating for all concerned, but it is not a reason to change the grade.

Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) Statement:

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must

meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at [940.565.4323](tel:940.565.4323).

Acceptable Student Behavior:

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.deanofstudents.unt.edu

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault:

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources> 0. Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate and she can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648.

Policy on Student Attendance and Religious Holidays:

If you plan to miss class due to observance of a religious holiday, notify me in writing by the next class day.

MRTS 1320 SCHEDULE (FALL 2018)

	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY
1	August 27 Introduction to the Course	August 29 SCREEN: <i>Singin' in the Rain</i> (1953)
2	September 3 LABOR DAY NO CLASS	September 5 Looking at Movies Chapter 1: "Looking at Movies" (pg 1-32)
3	September 10 Film Form Chapter 2: "Principles of Film Form" (pg 36-64)	September 12 SCREEN: <i>Hiroshima Mon Amour</i> (1959)
4	September 17 Types of Movies Chapter 3: "Types of Movies" (pg 68-85, 111-118)	September 19 SCREEN: <i>Chico & Rita</i> (2010)
5	September 24 Genre Chapter 3: "Types of Movies" (pg 85-111)	September 26 SCREEN: <i>Double Indemnity</i> (1944) DUE: MOVIE REVIEW
6	October 1 Screenwriting Chapter 4: "Elements of Narrative" (pg 122-160)	October 3 SCREEN: <i>Melancholia</i> (2011)
7	October 8 Production Design Chapter 5: "Mise-en-Scene" (pg 164-196)	October 10 SCREEN: <i>The Graduate</i> (1967)
8	October 15 Mise-en-Scene Chapter 5: "Mise-en-Scene" (pg 196-208)	October 17 MIDTERM EXAM

9	Writing Activity 6 Due	October 22 Cinematography Chapter 6: "Cinematography" (pg 212-268)	October 24 SCREEN: <i>Pariah</i> (2011)
10	Writing Activity 7 Due	October 29 Acting Chapter 7: "Acting" (pg 272-308)	October 31 SCREEN: <i>Lost in Yonkers</i> (1993)
11	Writing Activity 8 Due	November 5 Editing Chapter 8: "Editing" (pg 318-353)	November 7 SCREEN: <i>Salaam Bombay!</i> (1988)
12	Writing Activity 9 Due	November 12 Sound Chapter 9: Sound (pg 364-396)	November 14 SCREEN: <i>Citizen Kane</i> (1941)
13		November 19 Production Chapter 11: "Filmmaking Technologies and Production Systems" (pg 458-489)	November 21 REVISION DAY – NO CLASS DUE: FILM ANALYSIS
14		November 26 Film History I Chapter 10: "Film History" (pg 406-433)	November 28 SCREEN: <i>The General</i> (1926)
15	Writing Activity 10 Due	December 3 Film History II Chapter 10: "Film History" (pg 433-453)	December 5 REVIEW DAY
FINAL EXAM Wednesday, December 12, 2018 8:00am – 10:00am			