

Introduction to **FILM**

COMM 1851
Fall 2009, Section 002
Wednesdays, 6-9 p.m.
TC237A

Instructor: **Danny Linton**
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Office Hours: **By Appointment**

Books and Readings:

- Richard Barsam, *Looking at Movies*. 2nd edition.
- Stephanie Harrison, *Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen: 35 Great Stories That Have Inspired Great Films*.
- Other readings as required.

Grading Scale:

A+ (99-100)	A (92-98)	A- (90-91)
B+ (88-89)	B (82-87)	B- (80-81)
C+ (78-79)	C (72-77)	C- (70-71)
D+ (68-69)	D (60-67)	F (59 and below)

Your grade will be a reflection of how well you have mastered the material, not how hard you have worked. I do not curve grades, though there may be opportunities for extra credit as the semester progresses.

Grading Procedures:

Midterm: 20%
Research Paper: 25%
Participation/In-Class Written Assignments: 20%
Final Exam (comprehensive): 35%

Attendance Policy:

This class depends on the participation and the mutual support of students. I do not take attendance in my class. However, failure to attend classes regularly will, without fail, adversely affect your scores on exams and written assignments, as well as lower your participation grade. Put simply, if you do not attend class, you cannot master the material. Attendance is vital to your participation grade, in particular, as it is derived from work done directly in class. If you should miss a class during which a participation grade is given, you **cannot** make up this grade, **even if you have an excused absence**. You cannot receive credit for participating in an exercise you were not present for, even if you have a good reason for not being there. Punctuality is also required. Please come to class on time. Latecomers often interrupt the screening of a film and distract the students who did show up on time. In addition, do not attend class without the intention of staying for the duration. Excessive tardiness and/or leaving early will also adversely affect your grade.

Originality:

According to The University of Memphis Student Handbook, your assignments must reflect your own effort. In situations where external sources are used, you must acknowledge your sources and add your own analysis; otherwise, it's plagiarism. If you plagiarize or cheat, the minimum penalty is an F on the assignment; other penalties could include an F for the course and/or suspension. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities (including invisible disabilities such as chronic diseases or learning disabilities) are encouraged to notify me of their condition within the first two classes of the semester. The college and I will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities.

Policy on Written Assignments:

As part of the general education program, each student will be required to write 3,000+ words on the topic of film during the course of the semester. This requirement will be met by the completion of both the major research paper due near the end of the semester as well as several more concise in-class writing assignments. Written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus. Late papers will not be accepted except in the cases of excused, documented emergencies. Being ill, printer malfunctions, and car trouble on the day the paper is due do not constitute emergencies.

Film Content Disclaimer:

Some of the films we will view in this class may contain nudity, violence, sexual situations, or other graphic material. Since film cannot successfully be studied without looking at a wide variety of material, no films have been eliminated (or selected, for that matter) solely on the basis of such content. If you should find the content of a particular film to be objectionable, I ask that you at least give the film a chance. If, having done that, you still have a problem, I will not make you stay to watch the film. You will, however, still be required to master the concepts the film is displaying and its importance to the study of the medium. Please bear in mind that I am not expecting you personally to like every film shown. You are here to learn about the film medium, not watch a film festival of your favorite movies.

Miscellaneous Notes:

There is no eating, drinking, or smoking allowed in TC237A or any of the University's off-campus classrooms. In general, the only breaks scheduled in class will occur after the screening of a film while the closing credits are playing. Please be back in your seats by the time the credits have ended. Also, please turn off all cell phones and pagers during class, as they are an obvious distraction to both me and your fellow classmates. Also, you may not use laptop computers during film screenings.

Course Schedule:

All assignments are in bold type and are to be completed before class on the day they appear in the schedule. Please bring your books and/or readings to class. Films are subject to change.

SEPTEMBER

- 2 Introduction to the course; Class introductions
Film Structure & Terminology
Film: **Various Clips** **Barsam, 250-269**
- 9 Genre
Film: **Bringing Up Baby** (Hawks, 1938; 102m.) **Barsam, 29-42; 336-38; 366-67**
- 16 Genre (cont.)
Film: **When Harry Met Sally...** (Reiner, 1989; 96m.) **Barsam, 29-42; 336-38; 366-67**
- 23 The Business of Film **In-class handouts; Barsam, 345-371**
- 30 Auteur theory **Barsam, 323-24; 332-33**
Film: **The Shawshank Redemption** (Darabont, 1994; 142m.)
By class time, you are to have watched one additional film made by Frank Darabont. Please only choose from *The Green Mile* (1999) and *The Mist* (2007).

OCTOBER

- 7 **MIDTERM EXAM**
- 14 Adaptation (Notes for Assignment Due October 15)
Feminist theory
Film: **The Crying Game** (Jordan, 1992; 112m.) **Barsam, 327; 334-35**
- 21 Plot, Semiotics, & Story Language
Film: **Pulp Fiction** (Tarantino, 1994; 154m.)
ADAPTATION HOMEWORK DUE **Barsam, 196-201; 60-76; 248-249;**
Story & film of your choice from
Adaptations
- 28 Plot, Semiotics, & Story Language (cont.)
Film: **Run Lola Run** (Tykwer, 1999; 81m.)
+ Various Clips **Barsam, 196-201; 60-76; 248-249**

NOVEMBER

- 4 Film Censorship and The MPAA **Assigned readings (given in class)**
- 11 The Black New Wave
Film: **Do the Right Thing** (Lee, 1989; 120m.)
- 18 Research paper work day
- 25 **No class:** Thanksgiving Break

DECEMBER

- 2 Documentary
Film: **The Thin Blue Line** (Morris, 1988; 103m.) **Barsam, 38-42**
- 9 Review for Final Exam
RESEARCH PAPER DUE
- 16 Final Exam (6-8 p.m.)

RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES

For this paper, you may work individually or in groups of up to three members. You and/or your group will select one film from the attached list and, together, write a thorough **research** paper in which you examine the film in a wide variety of areas. No two people/groups will be allowed to use the same film, and the films will be selected using a lottery-style system. Whichever film you analyze, your paper should be between 6-8 pages typed, double-spaced in a basic 10- or 12-point font (i.e. Times or Helvetica) with 1" margins. It is due by the beginning of class on **Wednesday, December 2, 2009**, and counts as 25% of your final grade. For those not working alone, only one paper is to be submitted for each group, and all group members will receive the same grade for the paper. All group members are expected to participate equally on the research and writing of this assignment. Depending upon which film you choose, you must include a section focusing on the indicated areas of study for that particular film. Please include a bibliography page listing all works cited in the paper. Do not devote more than one brief paragraph to basic plot summary; assume I have seen and am familiar with all of the films. The paper is NOT to include personal opinion or a first person writing style. Each section of the paper should be equally researched and equally proportional in length towards the total paper. Use the following basic guidelines to include the appropriate material in each section:

BUSINESS (required of each film): Include information regarding the film's year of release, studio, production company, production costs, domestic gross, awards won and/or nominated for, and any other pertinent information regarding the film's performance as a financial entity. Was the film considered a financial success? (Awards information should only be mentioned when it directly affected a film's financial performance.)

GENRE: Compare the film to other films within the same genre. Where would you classify this film within the four cycle discussed in class? What conventions and/or cliches does the film contain and/or avoid?

AUTEUR THEORY: Compare the film to other films made by the same director. Does the film "fit" with the rest of the movies from its director's filmography? Do some direct comparisons as with the auteur activity in class. Do these comparisons help establish your film's director as an auteur? Why or why not?

FEMINIST: Examine your film with particular attention to issues of gender. How are both female and male characters depicted in the film? Do you find any examples of gaze theory or objectification in your film? Discuss the gender implications these examples may contain.

PLOT/SEMIOTICS/STORY LANGUAGE: How dependent upon icons and symbols is your movie? Using the terms discussed during the semiotics lecture in class, analyze your film's use of semiotics from casting to movie music to set design and beyond. Is your movie's plot/diegesis handled in a linear structure, or something else? Explain.

ADAPTATION: If your paper is to include a section on adaptation, then your film previously existed in some other form (book, play, etc.) prior to making it to the screen. Seek out the original source material and analyze it. (If the source material is a novel, read it.) What similarities and differences do you find between the source material and the film that resulted? Analyze the differences, and explain why the director saw fit to make these changes.

RACE/BLACK NEW WAVE: Examine your film with particular attention to issues of race. How is race depicted in the film? If you consider your film to be an actual part of the Black New Wave movement, talk about the film's importance to that movement. Either way, discuss the racial implications the film contains. (NOTE: Not all films on the attached list using this section are Black New Wave films and may simply require a discussion of racial themes they contain.)

DOCUMENTARY: Should you choose a documentary film, discuss the film in relation to the points made about ethics and presentation of fact in documentary films discussed in class.

CONTROVERSY: If your paper is to include a section on controversy, then your film either ignited or became involved in some form of public controversy during its release. Investigate the facts of this controversy and provide a summary of the events that occurred. What implications did this film have on society, and did the controversy seem to help or hurt the film in the long run?

	Business	Genre	Auteur	Feminist	Semiotics	Adaptation	BNW	Docu	Controversy
2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)	•	•	•			•			
About a Boy (2002)	•	•	•	•		•			
About Schmidt (2002)	•	•	•		•	•			
Aliens (1986)	•	•	•	•	•				
Amélie (2001)	•	•	•	•	•				
American Beauty (1999)	•	•		•	•				
Babe (1995)	•	•			•	•			
Before Sunset (2004)	•	•	•	•	•				
Being John Malkovich (1999)	•	•		•	•				
The Big Chill (1983)	•	•	•	•	•				
The Birdcage (1996)	•	•	•	•		•			
Blue Velvet (1986)	•		•	•	•				•
Body Heat (1981)	•	•	•	•	•				
Boogie Nights (1997)	•	•		•	•				•
Bound (1996)	•	•	•	•	•				
Boys Don't Cry (1999)	•	•		•					•
Brokeback Mountain (2005)	•	•	•	•	•	•			•
Bull Durham (1988)	•	•	•	•	•				
Casablanca (1943)	•	•		•	•				
Chasing Amy (1997)	•	•	•	•	•				
Citizen Kane (1941)	•		•		•				•
Clockers (1995)	•	•	•			•	•		
Closer (2004)	•	•	•	•	•	•			
Contact (1997)	•	•	•	•		•			
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)	•	•	•	•	•				
The Crying Game (1992)	•	•	•	•	•				
Dead Again (1991)	•	•	•	•	•				
The Departed (2006)	•	•	•		•	•			
Devil In A Blue Dress (1995)	•	•			•	•	•		
Do The Right Thing (1989)	•		•	•			•		•
Dog Day Afternoon (1975)	•	•	•	•	•				
Dolores Claiborne (1995)	•			•	•	•			
Double Indemnity (1944)	•	•	•	•	•				
Down And Out In Beverly Hills (1986)	•		•	•	•	•			
Ed Wood (1994)	•	•	•	•					
The English Patient (1996)	•	•		•		•			
Election (1999)	•	•	•	•		•			
Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004)	•	•	•		•			•	•
Fargo (1996)	•	•	•	•	•				
Fatal Attraction (1987)	•	•	•	•	•				
Fearless (1993)	•		•		•	•			
Frailty (2002)	•	•		•	•				
Fried Green Tomatoes (1991)	•	•		•	•	•			
The Godfather (1972)	•	•	•		•	•			
Gods And Monsters (1998)	•	•	•		•	•			
The Graduate (1967)	•		•	•	•	•			
Guess Who's Coming To Dinner (1967)	•	•	•		•		•		
Hannah And Her Sisters (1986)	•		•	•	•				

	Business	Genre	Auteur	Feminist	Semiotics	Adaptation	BNW	Docu	Controversy
A History of Violence (2005)	•	•	•	•	•				
Hoop Dreams (1994)	•				•		•	•	
Howards End (1992)	•	•	•	•		•			
It's A Wonderful Life (1946)	•	•	•		•				
Jackie Brown (1997)	•		•	•		•	•		•
Jaws (1975)	•	•	•		•	•			
JFK (1991)	•		•		•	•		•	•
L.A. Confidential (1997)	•	•		•	•	•			
The Last Seduction (1994)	•	•		•	•				
Leaving Las Vegas (1995)	•	•		•	•	•			
Malcolm X (1992)	•		•			•	•		•
The Manchurian Candidate (1962)	•	•	•	•	•	•			
Memento (2001)	•	•		•	•	•			
Men Don't Leave (1991)	•	•		•	•				
Million Dollar Baby (2004)	•	•	•	•	•	•			
Minority Report (2002)	•	•	•		•	•			
Moulin Rouge (2001)	•	•	•	•	•				
Much Ado About Nothing (1993)	•	•	•		•	•			
Munich (2005)	•	•	•		•	•			
The Night Of The Hunter (1955)	•	•		•	•				
On The Waterfront (1954)	•		•	•	•				
One False Move (1992)	•	•			•		•		
Ordinary People (1980)	•	•	•	•		•			
Pulp Fiction (1994)	•		•		•		•		
The Remains Of The Day (1993)	•	•	•	•		•			
Run Lola Run (1999)	•	•		•	•				
Saving Private Ryan (1998)	•	•	•		•				
Secrets & Lies (1996)	•	•	•		•		•		
The Shawshank Redemption (1994)	•	•			•	•	•		
Some Like It Hot (1959)	•	•	•	•	•				
The Spanish Prisoner (1998)	•	•	•		•				
Star Wars (1977)	•	•		•	•				
The Straight Story (1999)	•	•	•		•				
The Talented Mr. Ripley (1999)	•	•	•	•		•			
Talk to Her (2002)	•	•	•	•	•				
Taxi Driver (1976)	•		•	•	•				
Thelma & Louise (1991)	•	•	•	•	•				
To Die For (1995)	•	•	•	•		•			
To Kill A Mockingbird (1962)	•	•	•			•	•		
Tootsie (1982)	•	•	•	•	•				
Traffic (2000)	•	•	•			•			•
The Truman Show (1998)	•	•	•		•				
Unforgiven (1992)	•		•	•	•				
Vertigo (1958)	•	•	•		•				
What's Love Go To Do With It (1993)	•	•		•		•	•		
Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf? (1966)	•		•	•	•				•
Wild Things (1998)	•	•		•	•				