

COM 221--Introduction to Film

Dr. Kimberly Neuendorf

Fall 2006

Office: MU 241

Class: MU 107, 10:00-11:50 am T-Th

Office Hrs.: Tues. 3:00-5:00 pm,

Wed. 1:00-4:00 pm and by appointment

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Course Objectives

This course is an introduction to the theory, history and practice of film--film as art, as industry, and as a language of sounds and images. The lectures are closely tied to the screenings, and are organized as a combination of the following perspectives: the "language," the genres, the history, the theory, and the industry.

Screenings

Nearly half the class time will be devoted to film screenings. The films are your PRIMARY TEXTS, not just entertainment. You will be required to think--seriously and critically--about what you are seeing. In short, an active (rather than passive) viewing is required. Exams will cover the screenings, as related to the lectures and readings. The instructor reserves the right to assign up to three out-of-class viewings, either for theatrically released current films, or for films available to rent on video.

Required Readings

1. Prince, S. (2007). *Movies and meaning: An introduction to film* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
2. COM 221 Class Outlines—To be found ONLINE, updated intermittently. You'll want to have the outlines with you during class. Again, the site is <http://academic.csuohio.edu/kneuendorf> (click on "Fall 2006, COM 221"). The website will also provide updated extra credit film lists, announcements, and other information and materials.
3. COM 221 Additional Readings—To be found ONLINE, updated intermittently. These readings are generally very short (1-3 pages), pulled from popular and trade publications. They are intended to give you more information about current and specialized topics in film.
4. Readings from the recommended Geiger and Rutsky book (see below) may be assigned as required or for extra credit, at the discretion of the instructor. The Geiger and Rutsky book will be on reserve at the CSU Library.

Your weekly required reading assignments are attached to this syllabus.

Required Viewings

In addition to in-class screenings, the instructor may assign up to five out-of-class feature films. Such viewing assignments will be announced in class and posted on the class website. Out-of-class viewing may require paid admission to a theater.

Recommended Readings

1. Bordwell, D., & Thompson, K. (2004). *Film art: An introduction* (7th ed.). Boston: McGrawHill.
2. Geiger, J., & Rutsky, R. L. (2005). *Film analysis: A Norton reader*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

3. Giannetti, L. (2005). *Understanding movies* (10th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Screening and Class Rules

1. Some of the films we see will come close to two hours in length. You are expected to see THE ENTIRE FILM, and may be tested especially on the beginning and the end, since these are often important parts of the film. Film running times are listed in the course outline; usually, a brief introduction will precede the film.
2. Each individual has a right to his/her own personal emotional response to a film. But remember that you are seeing these films in a classroom, not in your own home, nor in a movie theater! Therefore, students who publicly impose their inappropriate responses (whispering, open comments, cheers, boos, etc.) upon the other students in the class will be penalized through point deductions and/or being dropped/expelled from the class. However, laughter is an appropriate response to comedies, and is encouraged. The rustling of candy wrappers is not, contrary to popular belief, appropriate filmgoing behavior.

Grading

Grading is based on a midterm and a final exam, film logs, and completion of class activities.. Each exam is valued at 35% of your course grade. Class activities points will be given for a variety of in-class and out-of-class tasks, to be announced.

Midterm exam	35%
Final exam	35%
Film viewing logs	15%
Class activities	<u>15%</u>
	100%

Exams: Both exams will be entirely objective (multiple choice, matching, T/F). The final exam is primarily *not* cumulative. Sample exams will be posted on the class website.

Film viewing logs: Each student is required to view three approved films, with completion of Viewing Logs for three *different* categories. Instructions and the current list of approved films are to be found on the class website, and some hard copies will also be available. The three required Logs are due during the last week of classes, and none will be accepted after that time. Additions to the list of approved films will be posted on the course website.

Your instructor reserves the right to require other small assignments (including quizzes) that may replace a portion of one of the exams.

Extra Credit Opportunities

There are a couple of ways in which you can add points to your course total. No matter what type(s) of extra credit you complete, you may not receive more than 15 percentage points total in extra credit for the course. Two types of extra credit are available:

(1) An extra credit paper, worth up to 10 percentage points (5-8 is the usual or typical addition). Papers may take several forms, but will usually be research reports from outside reading and viewing, graded according to the quality and depth of your treatment of the topic. More information about specific requirements for the paper is contained in an additional handout to be found at the course website. In all cases, you must submit a proposal BEFORE YOU BEGIN your project (due the class period after the midterm). Unapproved papers will not be accepted. Papers must be typewritten, double spaced on one side of the paper. All papers are due at the

final exam period, and none will be accepted after that time.

(2) Outside viewing of approved films, with completion of Viewing Logs. (This is in addition to the three *required* Viewing Logs.) You may accumulate 1 percentage point (on occasion, 2 points) of extra credit for each film viewed and corresponding Log fully and correctly completed, with a maximum of 15 percentage points total. Instructions and the current list of approved films are to be found on the class website, and some hard copies will also be available. All extra credit Logs are due at the final exam period, and none will be accepted after that time. You may nominate potential additions to the list by submitting in writing by the class period after the midterm (1) the name of the film and (2) the Log category you believe it fits, and why. As noted earlier, additions to the list of approved films will be posted on the course website.

Make-up Exams, Incompletes

If you must miss an exam, you should discuss the problem with Dr. Neuendorf at least one class period before the exam is scheduled. In an emergency and as a last resort, you should notify the School of Communication staff and/or leave a note or send an email explaining the problem. Mere notification does not mean your excuse is automatically approved, and some points will typically be deducted even if approval for a make-up is given.

University rules indicate that "a grade of Incomplete is given only by prior arrangement with the instructor and only when a course requirement is unfulfilled through no fault of the student." In all cases where there is a problem, talk to the instructor as soon as possible--an early good-faith effort is likely to be rewarded. After-the-fact pleas will be rejected.

Attendance

Attendance will not always be taken, but you are responsible for all lecture material, film content, handouts, announcements, changes in assignments, etc.--in short, for everything that happens in class. Dr. Neuendorf will not be held responsible for repeating lecture material outside of class, and there will be no "makeup" film viewing. And, while many of the films for the class are available for rental on videocassette, they may be in a somewhat different form--thus, you are responsible for seeing each film as shown in class. On special occasions, there may be some required in-class viewings or other activities with attendance taken, and points deducted for unexcused absences.

Cheating

Cheating in any form will not be tolerated. This includes plagiarism (copying from a source without careful attribution), copying from another student's assignment (all instances of identical and near-identical answers will be considered illegitimate), talking with others during an in-class exam, obtaining copies of an exam prior to the test date, etc. Please refer to the CSU student handbook for the university's official stance. If you have any questions about this subject (e.g., how to adequately attribute to a source), feel free to speak with me. Any student caught cheating will receive a grade of "zero" for that exam/assignment and risks failing the entire course.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE (8/29/06)

Week 1	Authorship: Hitchcock as auteur
Aug. 29 →	Screening: Alfred Hitchcock, U.S., "Strangers on a Train" 1951, 101 min. "Film As. . ." (Perspectives on the entire 111-year film era)

- Week 2
Sept. 5 → More "Film As. . . "
Buster Keaton as auteur
Screening: Edwin S. Porter, U.S., "The Great Train Robbery," 1903, 10 min. AND
Buster Keaton, U.S., "Sherlock Jr.," 1924, 45 min.
- Week 3
Sept. 12 → Current issues in film
Film Language: Shots, angles
Screening: John Akomfrah, U.S., "Last Angel of History," 1996, 45 min.
- Week 4
Sept. 19 → Film Language: Camera movement, transitions
Screening: Stuart Samuels, U.S./Japan, "Visions of Light: The Art of Cinematography,"
1993, 90 min.
- Week 5
Sept. 26 → Film Language: Lighting, lenses
Screening: Peter Jackson, New Zealand, "Heavenly Creatures," 1994, 99 min.
- Week 6
Oct. 3 → Film Language: Stock, editing, continuity
Film Crew Roundup
Screening: Orson Welles, U.S., "Citizen Kane," 1941, 115 min.
- Week 7
Oct. 10 → Film Language: Sound, acting, special effects
Avant-garde & Surrealist Film Styles
Screening: Salvador Dali & Luis Bunuel, Spain/France, "Un Chien Andalou"
("Andalusian Dog"), 1928, 20 min.; Maya Deren, U.S., "Meshes of
the Afternoon," 1943, 17 min.; at least one short film by Stan Brakhage
- MIDTERM EXAM—Tuesday, October 17, in class
- Week 8
Oct. 19 Documentary Film
Screening: Robert Epstein, U.S., "The Times of Harvey Milk," 1984, 87 min.
- Week 9
Oct. 24 → The Hollywood Studio System
Theories of Film Analysis, inc. Genre Theory
Screening: Preston Sturges, U.S., "Sullivan's Travels," 1941, 97 min.
- Week 10
Oct. 31 → European Movements
Screening: TBA
- Week 11
Nov. 7 → Bollywood and Third Cinema
Screening: TBA
- Week 12
Nov. 14 → Social roles images in film
Screening: TBA
- Week 13
Nov. 21 → The rise of "indies"
Regional filmmaking
Screening: Shari Springer Berman & Robert Pulcini, U.S., "American Splendor,"

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 Required Reading Assignments

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Prince, Ch. 1

Week 4

Prince, Chs. 2, 3

Week 5

Prince, Chs. 4, 5

Week 6

Prince, Chs. 6

Check class website for additional short readings
 required for midterm exam

Week 7

Reading: “Avant-Garde” from Giannetti 4th
 edition (online)

MIDTERM EXAM—Tuesday, October 17, in class

Week 8 (after midterm)

Prince, Ch. 12

Week 9

Prince, Chs. 7, 8

Week 10

Prince, Ch. 9

Week 11

Week 12

Prince, Ch. 10

Week 13

Prince, Ch. 11

Week 14

Week 15

Check class website for additional short readings required
 for final exam

FINAL EXAM—Thursday, December 14, 8:30-10:30 am