
MODERN FILMS & THEIR MEANINGS in Fall 2020 (FM1010)

Course Code	FM1010	Professor(s)	Alice Craven, Valerio Coladonato
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	
Class Schedule	F: 10:50-12:25 in C-102 T: 16:20-17:55 in C-102	Office Hours	
Credits	4	Email	acraven@aup.edu, vcoladonato@aup.edu
Semester	Fall 2020	Office Tel. Ext.	

Course Description

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

How do filmmakers convey emotions and ideas? How do we, as spectators, make sense of films? This course is an introduction to cinema - its language, its techniques, and the social and cultural factors that have made it one of the most influential art forms of our time. With a firm grounding in history and focusing on international films from the last 20 years, we will discuss the technological, economic and political aspects of the film industry. By analyzing the work of key directors, we will be able to observe how their movies work: we will focus both on the different components of film language, and on our experiences as spectators. Together with readings and screenings, there will be individual and group assignments that will help students discuss the content of each lecture, and familiarize with new critical skills and concepts related to the cinema.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to trace the rise and development of contemporary cinema as an art form, industry and cultural product.

Students will be able to define key terms, recognize cinematic elements, differentiate between form and content and analyze how they work together to make meaning.

Students will have a deeper understanding of the work of some of the major directors in film history.

Coursework will strengthen the student's observational, analytical and writing skills.

Local and Global Perspectives: Students will enhance their intercultural understanding of languages, cultures, and histories of local societies and the global issues to which these relate.(CCI LO1)

Aesthetic Inquiry and Creative Expression: Students will engage with artistic or creative objects (e.g., visual art, theatrical works, film) in different media and from a range of cultural traditions.(CCI LO2)

Exploring and Engaging Difference: Students will think critically about cultural and social difference; they will identify and understand power structures that determine hierarchies and inequalities that can relate to race, ethnicity, gender, nationhood, religion, or class.(CCI LO3)

General Education

GLACC

This course can be used to fulfill the following requirement and as such has the following learning objectives:

- **CCI LO1:** Local and Global Perspectives: Students will enhance their intercultural understanding of languages, cultures, and histories of local societies and the global issues to which these relate.
- **CCI LO2:** Aesthetic Inquiry and Creative Expression: Students will engage with artistic or creative objects (e.g., visual art, theatrical works, film) in different media and from a range of cultural traditions.
- **CCI LO3:** Exploring and Engaging Difference: Students will think critically about cultural and social difference; they will identify and understand power structures that determine hierarchies and inequalities that can relate to race, ethnicity, gender, nationhood, religion, or class.

Course Outline

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week 1 –Sept 25th

Taught by Prof. Craven

Week II – Sept 29th – Oct 2nd

Taught by Prof. Craven

September 30th – last day to drop/add courses online

Week III – Oct 6th – Oct 9th

Reading: Textbook Chapter 1: Film Art and Filmmaking

Screening: Excerpts of “[Hugo](#)” (Scorsese); “[L’homme à la tête en caoutchouc](#)” (Méliès)”

Additional resources:

- Excerpt from *Cabiria* (Pastrone): the scene on Moloch’s temple, quickly seen in the montage of early films in the library sequence in Scorsese’s *Hugo*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GC4PcpdOsnQ>
- We read this article on *Hugo* which contextualizes the director Méliès in film history, and to what extent Scorsese contributed to his renewed popularity:
<http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/12/07/hugo-scorseses-birthday-present-to-georges-melies/>

Week IV – Oct 13th – Oct 16th

Video recording of the class: October 13 watch [here](#).

Reading: Textbook Chapter 2: The Significance of Film Form

Screening: Excerpts of “[Singin' in the rain](#)” and “[La la land](#)” opening scene (*link to the full film not available – you can stream from an online platform*)

Assignment: Please describe the creative choices behind a sequence from each of the two films, and what the similarities/differences or influences between the two are.

Additional resources:

- Link to Jurassic’s Park opening scene: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qz5JmgLQEzs>

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- Link to video-essay on Spielberg's opening scenes (we watched until the opening of Close Encounters of the Third Kind): <https://vimeo.com/185118818>

Week V – Oct 20th – Oct 23rd

Taught by Prof. Craven

Week VI – Oct 27th – Oct 30th

Video recording of class: October 27 watch [here](#). October 30 watch [here](#).

Reading: Textbook Chapter 4: The Shot: Mise-en-Scene (on setting and costume)

Screening: [In the Mood for Love](#) (Wong Kar-wai) IMPORTANT: I have re-uploaded the file with subtitles embedded.

Assignment: group work on costume design: pick a character from one of the films listed in the links below, and described how they are dressed (you can also refer to images you find online). How does costume contribute to our understanding of their identity? What can we gather about the social group they belong to? What about their personality? Does costume play a part in the narrative? Does it set a certain mood? Is there anything striking about the colors, fabric, props or any other visual aspect in their costume?

Links for this assignment:

1. <https://brightside.me/wonder-films/19-movies-with-gorgeous-outfits-that-won-an-oscar-for-best-costume-design-745410/>
2. <https://oscar.go.com/nominees/costume-design/costume-design-jojo-rabbit-7>

Additional resources:

- video essay on framing in “In the Mood for Love”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01E5otZCpqw&vl=en>
- Taxi driver opening scene: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5pDSdQrsXM>
- West side story prologue: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxoC5Oyf_ss
- Trailer of The Grand Budapest Hotel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Fg5iWmQjwk>
- Interview with costume designer of the film:

<http://www.abramsandchronicle.co.uk/blog/the-wes-anderson-style-an-interview-with-milena-canonero/>

- we watched this video on costume design:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRAmlaSlm80&feature=emb_title
- and this one on the Coen's Brothers use of setting as character: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbEj57MMY_4

October 28th, Mid-semester

November

Week VII – Nov 3rd – Nov 6th

Reading: Textbook Chapter 4: The Shot: Mise-en-Scene (on lighting and staging)

- On Nov. 6 and Nov. 10: Midterm presentations (I). Here is the prompt:

The presentation should analyse a sequence from a film of your choice. You should focus on two elements out of those studied so far; for example:

- form and expectations
- creative decisions and patterns
- the four levels of meaning
- setting and mood
- setting and character
- costume design

(you can also include lighting and staging, which we will study this Tuesday Nov. 3)

In a similar way to how we have analyzed films in class, you are expected to provide a description and interpretation of those elements in the sequence you choose, by explicitly referring to the ideas and concepts from the textbook. Each presentation should last between 5 and 6 minutes (I will be strict with time to make sure everyone can present). There is no need to

have a power point, as long as you have 2-3 screenshots from the sequence to provide a visual reference for us.

Week VIII – Nov 10th

- Midterm presentations (II) see prompt above

November 11th to 13th, fall break (no classes)

Week VIII – Nov 17th- Nov 20th

Screening: Nolan, *Inception*

Reading: Chapter 3: *Narrative Form*

Assignment: Describe how the narrative works in a film of your choice with a non-chronological plot - in particular, describe the narrative structure and the types of narration (restricted, omniscient, etc.); discuss also how the plot is organized, and how it differs from the story.

November 16th, Mid-semester grades due

Week IX – Nov 24th – Nov 27th

Reading: Chapter 5, Cinematography

Screening: Moonlight (Jenkins)

Assignment: TBA

November 27th, last day to withdraw from a course

last day to choose credit/no credit option

Week X - Nov 1st – Dec 4th

Readings: Chapter 6, Editing

Group Assignment: Take screenshots of a sequence of your choice; collect them in a shared document and describe the editing techniques: what principles does the editing follow? (e.g. spatial, temporal, rhythmic, graphic). What are the effects of editing on the viewer's experience?

December

Week XI – Dec 8th – Dec 11th

Reading: Chapter 7: Sound

Screening: Tabu (Gomes)

Assignment: Read the class notes and use those concepts to describe how sound is designed in a sequence from a film of your choice. Make sure to be detailed in your description and to address as many categories as possible. Explain how sound is used to enhance the narrative or the emotion of the scene

December 11th, last day of classes,

December 12th - 15th, reading days

FINAL EXAM: Friday, Dec. 18, 15h00

January 4nd, all grades due

Textbooks

Title	Author	Publisher	ISBN	Required
Film Art: An Introduction, 12th Edition	Bordwell, David and Thompson, Kristin	McGraw-Hill	9781260565669	Yes

Attendance Policy

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has an attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for participation in study trips related to their courses.

Covid-19 temporary amendments:

Students studying at The American University of Paris are still expected to attend ALL scheduled classes. During this pandemic, students will have the option of attending classes remotely when special circumstances apply. If students are placed under quarantine by the French authorities or by their doctor, or when students present symptoms of Covid-19 and are directed, by their doctor or the AUP Health Office, to remain home. It is still the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that their professor might have set in the course syllabus. In particular, students attending remotely from distant Time Zones should check with their professors about the specific attendance policy for remote learners.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

In all cases of missed course meetings, the responsibility for communication with the professor, and for making up missed work, rests solely with the student.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Excessive absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may also recommend

withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and *especially during the Periods*.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STATEMENT: As an Anglophone university, The American University is strongly committed to effective English language mastery at the undergraduate level. Most courses require and formal written and oral presentations in English, and AUP students are expected to strive to achieve proficiency in English in all domains as part of their course work. To that end, professors include English proficiency among the criteria for evaluation, often referring students to the university Writing Lab where they may obtain help on specific assignments. Proficiency in English is monitored at various points throughout the student's academic career, during the admissions and advising processes, while the student is completing general education requirements, the accomplishment of degree program courses and senior theses.

Grading Policy

GRADING:

(to be confirmed after consulting with Prof. Craven)

1. Attendance and participation (presentations): 10%
2. Midterm presentation: 25%
3. Response text before end of term 15%
4. Final paper: 30%
5. Final exam: 30%

Other

By the end of the course, the students should be able to:

- place the films within their social, political, cultural and historical contexts.
- recognize and breakdown cinematic codes that express or constrain ideas.

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- recognize different ways in which spectator position is shaped by cinematic techniques.
 - demonstrate critical analysis and applied historical understanding in the production of original work.
 - write clearly, coherently and skilfully about the films in this class in terms of their history, theory, aesthetics, and/or social/cultural context
 - research and analyze data about genre and representation on and behind the screen
 - participate in a public film screening