

Summer 2016  
Online course

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## COMM 160: Introduction to the Art of Film

### Course Description

This course provides foundational training in the analysis of film and video texts. The bulk of the course focuses on technical aspects of cinema: composition, lighting, cinematography, editing, sound, and narrative. Then we'll look at a broader range of issues and films: genre, type, and context.

Our primary objectives in this course are to learn the concepts and terms most commonly used in film analysis, and learn how to use these concepts and terms when writing and talking about a film or a group of films. In addition to this, though, we will seek to understand film as an industry, as a complex medium for artistic expression, and as a product of its historical, cultural, and social context.

### Learning Outcomes

COMM 160 is a GEP Investigation Level Arts course. Students who commit themselves to active learning and engagement with the course content and completion of course assignments will be able to:

- Define the fundamental principles of film form and style, including narrative features, mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, and sound;
- Recognize the basic formal elements of several film genres and film types;
- Use the language of film analysis to describe what they see and hear when they watch a movie and to discuss and write critically and effectively about the ways films move us aesthetically, intellectually, and emotionally.

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### Requirements (total of 100)

Discussion posts (8 @ 2.5% each)	20%
Outside Film Response	20%
Quizzes (6 @ 5% each)	30%
Cumulative Final Exam	30%

### Grading Scale

A: 94-100	B-: 80-83	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-93	C+: 77-79	D: 64-66
B+: 87-89	C: 74-76	F: 0-63
B: 84-86	C-: 70-73	

### Readings

Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction, 10<sup>th</sup> ed.* is available via rental. Upon occasion, supplemental readings might be posted on D2L. Make sure to check the syllabus and D2L and keep up with both *Film Art* and the supplemental readings.

### D2L and Streaming Access

This course will be delivered fully online through a course management system called D2L. Minimum recommended computer and internet configurations for online courses can be found [here](#). To access this course on D2L you will need access to the Internet and a supported Web browser (Internet Explorer, Chrome, Firefox, Safari). To ensure that you are using the recommended personal computer configurations, please refer to the [D2L settings link](#). You will use your UWSP account to login to the course

from the [D2L Login Page](#). If you have not activated your UWSP account, please visit the [Manage Your Account](#) page to do so. In D2L, you will access online lessons, course materials, and resources.

In addition to this, you'll need to access the library's eReserves site (<https://mypoint.uwsp.edu/librarycoursepages/instr.aspx>) to watch streaming films. Please note the system requirements for SWANK and streaming videos. **When in doubt, use Firefox.** If you have problems with streaming videos, please contact Denise Heimstead at [dheimste@uwsp.edu](mailto:dheimste@uwsp.edu) or call 715-346-4428. Office hours are M-F 9:00 AM-5:30PM.

### **Technical Assistance**

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem with D2L you can: Visit with a [Student Technology Tutor](#)<http://www.uwsp.edu/tlc/Pages/ComputerGuides.aspx>  
Seek assistance from the [HELP Desk](#)<http://www.uwsp.edu/infotech/Pages/HelpDesk/default.aspx>

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### **Course Work**

#### **1. QUIZZES**

One of the big goals of this class is to establish a common vocabulary for analyzing audiovisual texts, and quizzes are essential for testing that understanding. You will have six quizzes to complete in the first three weeks of class: weeks one, two, and three will have two quizzes each. **You are highly advised to complete the assigned readings for each week/unit before taking the quiz.** Review any “terms/concepts to know” (see course schedule), main ideas, and note any extended or in-depth examples presented in the text. You will be able to **RETAKE** each quiz once. I advise you to proceed in this order: 1) do the reading, 2) review key terms, 3) take the quiz, 4) watch the lectures, and then 5) retake the quiz if desired.

**All quizzes will be open from Monday morning (12am) to 11:59pm the following Sunday.** That is, you have one full week to complete the required quizzes.

**Keep up with the readings and the quizzes.** You may not make up missed quizzes except in the case of a verifiable severe illness or family emergency.

#### **2. SCREENINGS**

You are responsible for watching **two movies on your own per week.** All films will be available as streaming files on the library's website, here: [https://mypoint.uwsp.edu/librarycoursepages/CoursePage.aspx?grp\\_id=10026434](https://mypoint.uwsp.edu/librarycoursepages/CoursePage.aspx?grp_id=10026434) (or, alternatively, you can go to the library's main site, <http://www.uwsp.edu/library/Pages/default.aspx>, click on eReserves near the bottom of the column on the left, and log in to see the course files.

There are many movies listed, but **NOT ALL** the films are required. Make sure to **follow the syllabus** to make sure you're watching the appropriate movie on the appropriate week.

**A note about picture quality:** some of the videos are not in HD, but this is something over which I have no control. If this bothers you (it would bother me!) I encourage you to access the film via other means—some are on Netflix or Hulu (Hulu has the entire Criterion collection), some are available via Amazon, and all of them can be checked out at the library (we have a reserve shelf for this class). Life is too short to settle for subpar video unless you absolutely have to.

#### **3. DISCUSSION POSTS**

One of the best habits a film analyst can establish is the practice of **taking notes during a film**, and jotting down immediate reactions throughout, and as soon as it's over. (The other important habit a film analyst should cultivate, of course, is watching things over and over again.) To encourage this, each streaming film will have a worksheet associated with it in D2L. I will not be collecting these worksheets, but I want you to use them as the basis for your short discussion posts.

The first discussion post will be an introductory post of around 100-200 words (I'll ask you who you are and what your favorite movies are) due **by Tuesday, June 21**.

After that, each student will be responsible for **two film discussion posts on D2L a week**, at 200-300 words each. You have two options for your film discussion posts:

- A) Write a short discussion of what you think the film was about, and how it relates to one of the concepts we're covering that week, including at least one specific example from the film that illustrates the point you want to make about how film creates meaning. For example, say I want to talk about the use of color in *Wizard of Oz*, because I think the color of Oz suggests that an imaginary world can be far more vivid than the real world. I will start with the above statement rephrased as a thesis (In *The Wizard of Oz*, the use of color suggests that an imaginary world can be far more vivid than the real world), and then use examples to support that thesis (once Dorothy enters her dream world, it's in color). This is a simplistic example, but you get the idea? Please don't hesitate to ask questions.
- B) Respond to someone else's post. Not just "I agree," but build upon their idea. You might provide another example that supports their point about the relationship between the film's style and its meaning, or you might give an example that refutes their point. Either way, make sure you are addressing their point with a substantive response.

Since we're watching two movies a week, you can, in theory, do two option As a week. Or, if you're the sort of person that enjoys building on the ideas of others, you can do two option Bs a week. Either way, I need two discussion posts per week, completed by Sunday at 11:59pm. I will respond to posts in a video response on Mondays.

On the final week, you will have ONE discussion post on *Citizen Kane*, due by Tuesday July 12<sup>th</sup> at midnight. (If you are attempting to complete work on the weekends, I strongly advise you to watch the film and complete your response early.) I will respond to your posts in a video response on Wednesday the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Posts will be graded according to a set of basic criteria:**

- Does the post meet the requirements of the assignment?
- Does the post cite specific examples, clearly described (i.e., can I tell that you actually watched the film)?
- Does the post analyze those specific examples (i.e., do you have something interesting to say about the example you're describing)?
- Does the post link style/narrative to meaning in the film (i.e., are you thinking about theme)?
- Does the post show original and critical thought?
- Does the post, if applicable, make a substantive contribution to the argument upon which it's building?
- Does the post make a clear connection between the lessons of the week and the film?

- Is the post well-written, with proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation? (Or if those rules are broken, is there a clear stylistic reason for it?)
- Does the post meet the guidelines for online etiquette, described below?

### Online Etiquette Guidelines

Your instructor and fellow students wish to foster a safe online learning environment. All opinions and experiences, no matter how different or controversial they may be perceived, must be respected in the tolerant spirit of academic discourse. You are encouraged to comment, question, or critique an idea but you are not to attack an individual. Working as a community of learners, we can build a polite and respectful course community.

The following tips will enhance the learning experience for everyone in the course:

- Do not dominate any discussion.
- Give other students the opportunity to join in the discussion.
- Do not use offensive language, unless you are quoting the film. Present ideas appropriately.
- Be cautious in using Internet language. For example, do not capitalize all letters since this suggests shouting. Try not to use confusing acronyms that your professor might have to look up on Urban Dictionary.
- Emoticons or emojis can be helpful to convey your tone but do not overdo or overuse them. No smiling poop emoji unless it is really, really appropriate.
- Avoid using vernacular and/or slang language. This could possibly lead to misinterpretation.
- Never make fun of someone's ability to read or write.
- Share tips with other students.
- Keep an open mind and be willing to express even your minority opinion.
- Minority opinions have to be respected.
- Think and edit before you push the "Send" button.
- Do not hesitate to ask for feedback.
- Respect the rules of grammar and punctuation. If you must break them, make sure you've got a really good reason.
- Using humor is great, if you are funny.

Adapted from:

Mintu-Wimsatt, A., Kernek, C., & Lozada, H. R. (2010). *Netiquette: Make it part of your syllabus*. Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 6(1). Retrieved from

[http://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/mintu-wimsatt\\_0310.htm](http://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/mintu-wimsatt_0310.htm)

Shea, V. (1994). Netiquette. Albion.com. Retrieved from:

<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/book/>.

#### **4. OUTSIDE FILM RESPONSE**

In addition to the film discussion posts, at one point throughout the course, students will be required to complete a short (300-400 word) response to a film **screened on your own**. You may choose one of the films on the course's eReserve site **that you are NOT otherwise required to watch** (i.e., you can't write your outside response on *Rear Window*, since we're all required to watch that one, but you CAN write on *Attack the Block*), or you can choose an entirely different film. Either way, your essay should demonstrate attention to the film's style and form, **especially the elements we're focusing on that week**. Responses will be graded on the quality of analysis and the relevance to the elements we are covering in a given week. You can complete this assignment **at any time** throughout the course, but **I recommend that you do it before the final week of class**. More information on film responses will be provided in a separate handout.

## 5. FINAL EXAM

Your final exam will be cumulative, and will be open between 12am Wednesday, 7/13 and 12 noon on Friday, 7/15. It will consist of multiple choice and short essay questions.

## 6. EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

Each week I'll be attending a film at the Rogers Cinema for \$5 Tuesday. I'll send out an email on Monday letting you know what movie I'm going to, and when (it'll be a matinee). You have two options for potential extra credit: 1) show up and attend the movie with me, then chat about it with me for a bit afterwards. Or, if you're out of town, you can 2) attend the same movie, and then record a video response of yourself discussing the relevance of the film to that week's topics (i.e., mise-en-scene, cinematography, narrative, etc.) For every one of these events you attend, I will award you up to two points of extra credit!

### Complete Assignments

**All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through D2L unless otherwise instructed.**

Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline or special permission must be requested from instructor *before the due date*. Extensions will not be given beyond the next assignment except under extreme circumstances. All discussion assignments must be completed by the assignment due date and time. Late or missing discussion assignments will affect the student's grade.

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### Understand When You May Drop This Course

It is the student's responsibility to understand when they need to consider unenrolling from a course. Refer to the UWSP [Academic Calendar](#) for dates and deadlines for registration. After this period, a serious and compelling reason is required to drop from the course. Serious and compelling reasons includes: (1) documented and significant change in work hours, leaving student unable to attend class, or (2) documented and severe physical/mental illness/injury to the student or student's family.

### Incomplete Policy

Under emergency/special circumstances, students may petition for an incomplete grade. An incomplete will only be assigned if the student has completed more than half of the coursework for the class, and if the student can present a compelling reason for needing the incomplete All incomplete course assignments must be completed by the end of the semester following the course.

### Inform Your Instructor of Any Accommodations Needed

If you have a documented disability and verification from the [Disability and Assistive Technology Center](#) and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact your instructor as soon as possible. It is the student's responsibility to provide documentation of disability to Disability Services and meet with a Disability Services counselor to request special accommodation *before* classes start.

The Disability and Assistive Technology Center is located in 609 Learning Resource Center and can be contacted by phone at (715) 346-3365 (Voice) (715) 346-3362 (TDD only) or via email at [datctr@uwsp.edu](mailto:datctr@uwsp.edu).

### Statement of Policy

UW-Stevens Point will modify academic program requirements as necessary to ensure that they do not discriminate against qualified applicants or students with disabilities. The modifications should not affect the substance of educational programs or compromise academic standards; nor should they intrude upon academic freedom. Examinations or other procedures used for evaluating students' academic achievements may be adapted. The results of such evaluation must demonstrate the student's achievement in the academic activity, rather than describe his/her disability.

*If modifications are required due to a disability, please inform the instructor and contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center in 609 LRC, or (715) 346-3365.*

### **Statement of Academic Integrity**

UW-Stevens Point values a safe, honest, respectful, and inviting learning environment. In order to ensure that each student has the opportunity to succeed, we have developed a set of expectations for all students and instructors. This set of expectations is known as the Rights and Responsibilities document, and it is intended to help establish a positive living and learning environment at UWSP. Click here for more information: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Pages/rightsandresponsibilities.aspx>

Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education in general and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is taken very seriously. Don't do it! The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. For more information, see the UWSP "Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures" section of the Rights and Responsibilities document, Chapter 14, which is excerpted below, and can be accessed here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

### **Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures**

#### **UWSP 14.01 Statement of principles**

The board of regents, administrators, faculty, academic staff and students of the university of Wisconsin system believe that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the university of Wisconsin system. The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Students who violate these standards must be confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions.

#### **UWSP 14.03 Academic misconduct subject to disciplinary action.**

##### **(1) Academic misconduct is an act in which a student:**

- (a) Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
- (b) Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- (c) Forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- (d) Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- (e) Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; or
- (f) Assists other students in any of these acts.

(2) Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to: cheating on an examination; collaborating with others in work to be presented, contrary to the stated rules of the course; submitting a paper or assignment as one's own work when a part or all of the paper or assignment is the work of another; submitting a paper or assignment that contains ideas or research of others without appropriately identifying the sources of those ideas; stealing examinations or course materials; submitting, if contrary to the rules of a course, work previously presented in another course; tampering with the laboratory experiment or computer program of another student; knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above, including assistance in an arrangement whereby any work, classroom performance, examination or other activity is submitted or performed by a person other than the student under whose name the work is submitted or performed.

Also: if you use Wikipedia, or anything online, you have to CITE IT. I don't care whether you use MLA or Chicago style citations, but please be consistent. When in doubt, CITE THE SOURCE. I cannot stress this enough. Consequences for plagiarism are severe: again, see the above link to your Rights and Responsibilities document.

### Challenging Subject Material

Some films in this course may include profanity, disturbing or adult imagery (death, suicide, violence, sex, flying monkeys), and/or challenging themes (sexism, racism, corporate greed, war, politics): this is because movies are about ideas and the human condition, and the human condition isn't always nice, so its art should not be sanitized. If you have specific triggers you'd like to mention to me before embarking on the screenings for this class, I am **more than willing to listen**, talk to you about the contents of these films, and if necessary, make accommodations.

### Contacting Me

I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours. If you do not hear back from me within that time frame, it's safe to assume I didn't get your email! Resending doesn't offend me. I am also available on Google Hangouts—my user name is [celza@uwsp.edu](mailto:celza@uwsp.edu). I will attempt to be available in real time between 11-3 on Mondays and Wednesdays at a bare minimum, but feel free to message me at other times too—if I've got my phone on me, and I'm not doing something else, I'll respond. But **please don't message me after 9pm or before 7am!** You can email me, of course, but no texting, please. I am also far less likely to respond to you quickly during the weekend, because I have a toddler. His name is Clark, and his favorite things are buses, fire trucks, and undivided attention.

I'm usually in my office, CAC 311, between 11-3 from Monday-Wednesday, and at various points throughout the week, as well. If you'd like to meet in person, **I'd love to meet with you!** I rail against the impersonal nature of online instruction, and I bet you do too. Message/email to make an appointment, or just stop by.

### Terms of Enrollment

This syllabus is a contract. By taking this class, you agree to the policies listed here. I reserve the right to change the syllabus, but only within reason, and with timely notification to students.

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## CLASS SCHEDULE

### WEEK ONE (6/20-6/26): STORYTELLING, FORM, AND NARRATIVE

#### Unit 1: Film form and pattern recognition (Smith, "It's Just a Movie"; B&T Ch. 2)

**Terms/concepts to know:** form, suspense, surprise, convention, meaning (referential, explicit, implicit, symptomatic), ideology, function, similarity/repetition, motif, parallels, difference/variation, development, segmentation, unity/disunity, pattern

#### Unit 2: Principles of narrative form (B&T Ch. 3, p. 72-86)

**Terms/concepts to know:** narrative, plot, story, diegesis, cause/effect, temporal order, temporal duration, temporal frequency, flashback/flashforward, exposition, backstory, climax, change in knowledge, resolution, classical Hollywood cinema

#### Unit 3: Narration (B&T Ch. 3, p. 87-99)

**Terms/concepts to know:** narration, range of story narration (restricted, unrestricted), depth of story narration (perceptual subjectivity, mental subjectivity), sound perspective, point of view, protagonist, narrator

**Screenings:**

*The Wizard of Oz* (1939, Victor Fleming, 102 min)

*The Virgin Suicides* (2000, Sofia Coppola, 97 min)

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**WEEK TWO (6/27-7/3): MISE-EN-SCENE AND CINEMATOGRAPHY**

**Unit 4: Mise-en-scene: setting, costume, lighting (B&T Ch. 4, p. 112-131)**

**Terms/concepts to know:** mise-en-scene (lighting, setting, costume/makeup, props, staging), lighting terms (quality: hard, soft; direction: top, bottom, side, front, under, back; source: key, fill, three-point; color)

**Unit 5: Mise-en-scene: staging, movement, performance (B&T Ch. 4, p. 131-158)**

**Terms/concepts to know:** figure, individualized and stylized performance, types, typecasting, typage, aerial perspective, depth cues (size diminution, overlap, volume and planes), acting and camera distance, compositional balance, shallow space and deep space composition, rule of thirds, symmetry, compositional stress, negative space

**Unit 6: Cinematography: lens, static framing (B&T Ch. 5, p. 160-195)**

**Terms/concepts to know:** shot, focal length (wide angle, telephoto, depth of field, deep focus, racking focus), aspect ratio, offscreen space, masking, angle (high, low, straight on), level (even, canted), height (high, low, straight on), distance (extreme close up, close up, medium close up, medium shot, medium long shot, long shot, extreme long shot)

**Unit 7: Cinematography: mobile framing (B&T Ch. 5, p. 195-216)**

**Terms/concepts to know:** pan, track, crane, tilt, reframing, hand-held, zoom, long take

**Screenings:**

*Pan's Labyrinth* (2006, Guillermo del Toro, 119 min)

*Rear Window* (1954, Alfred Hitchcock, 112 min)

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**WEEK THREE (7/4-7/10): EDITING AND SOUND**

**Unit 8: Editing: the basics (B&T Ch. 6, p. 218-232)**

**Terms/concepts to know:** cut, fade, dissolve, wipe, graphic match, graphic contrast, elliptical editing, overlapping editing

**Unit 9: Editing: continuity editing and narrative space (B&T Ch. 6, p. 232-264)**



**Terms/concepts to know:** continuity editing (180 degree system, axis of action, screen direction, establishing shot/reestablishing shot, eyeline match, shot/reverse shot, match on action, crosscutting, montage sequence), jump cut, discontinuity editing, nondiegetic insert

**Unit 10: Sound in cinema (B&T Ch. 7)**

**Terms/concepts to know:** loudness/volume, pitch, timbre, fidelity, dialogue overlap, sound perspective, sound motifs, rhythm, diegetic/nondiegetic sound, external/internal diegetic sound, synchronous/asynchronous sound, simultaneous/nonsimultaneous sound, sound bridge

**Screenings:**

*The Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing* (2004, Wendy Apple, 98 min)

*The Prestige* (2006, Christopher Nolan, 130 min)

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**WEEK FOUR (7/11-7/15): STYLE, FILM FORM, GENRE**

**Unit 11: Putting it all together: style and film form (B&T Ch. 2, p. 99-109 AND Ch. 8, p. 308-326)**

**Terms/concepts to know:** style, creative choices, creative constraints; for quiz, be familiar with the examples B&T use in this chapter.

**Unit 12: Genre and cinematic modes (B&T Ch. 9, AND Ch. 10, p. 369-386)**

**Terms/concepts to know:** genre, subgenre, conventions, iconography, cycles, social functions of genres, iconography and conventions of the western, the horror film, the crime film, the sci-fi film, the musical, documentary, categorical form, rhetorical form, experimental film, abstract form, associational form

**Screenings:**

*Citizen Kane* (1941, Orson Welles, 119 min)

*La Jetée* (France, 1962, Marker, 28 min)

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**FINAL EXAM WILL BE OPEN FROM 12 midnight on 7/13 to 12 noon on 7/15**