

Fall 2015  
T 11-1:50, CAC 333  
Th in CAC 201:

11-11:50 (Section 1)  
12-12:50 (Section 2)  
1-1:50 (Section 3)

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Office Hours: T 2-4 & W 10-12 CAC 307  
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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 first half 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, across a range of classic and contemporary U.S and foreign films, including black-and-white, silent, and/or subtitled movies;
- 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.

### **Requirements (total of 100)**

Participation/attendance	10%
Film Responses (2 @ 10% each)	20%
Quizzes (10 @ 2% each)	20%
Midterm	25%
Final	25%

### **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 will be posted on D2L. Make sure to check the syllabus and D2L and keep up with both *Film Art* and the supplemental readings. Readings should be completed by the class meeting under which they're listed.

## Course Work

Course work will consist of online quizzes on the readings and/or screenings; in-class activities (which cannot be made up); three out-of-class film viewings and written responses; one midterm exam and a final exam.

### 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. **Online quizzes on the assigned readings must be completed by midnight on the Monday immediately preceding that week's class.** You are highly advised to complete the assigned readings for each week/unit before taking the quiz. Review any "terms to be defined" (see course schedule), main ideas/concepts, and note any extended or in-depth examples presented in the text. Quizzes will be available on D2L from noon on the Friday prior to the due date.

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. However, you will have at least a couple opportunities during the course of the semester to attend extra-credit film-related events. If you attend a screening or event and write a thoughtful response, I will drop your lowest quiz score and give you full credit for that quiz (up to two quizzes) or give you full credit for a missed quiz (up to two quizzes), as applicable. As these opportunities arise, I will announce them in class and post them to D2L.

### Film Responses

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, students will be required to complete short (300-400 word) responses to films **screened on your own outside of class.** These can be informal and include your personal reactions, but should also 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. More information on film responses will be provided in a separate handout.

### Midterm and Final exam

Our Midterm will be on Tuesday, 10/27, and our final will be on Monday, 12/21, from 10:15am-12:15pm. More guidelines for the midterm and final will be given as the semester progresses.

### Papers must be:

Typed, in 12 point font, double-spaced, and stapled, with the pages numbered. I reserve the right to deduct points for violations of these requirements. Late papers drop by 10% for each 24 hours

it's late, whether it's the weekend or a weekday (i.e., a 50-point paper one day late will be penalized 5 points before I grade it). Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for personal emergencies, but **ONLY** if you ask me **IN ADVANCE** of the actual due date.

### Attendance Policy

Our Tuesday meetings will consist of lecture/discussion and film screenings, and our Thursday meetings will consist of discussion. Lectures will focus on select concepts from the readings and provide a context for the film(s) we will watch that week. These concepts may be illustrated with excerpts from different films, but our primary focus will be on recognizing them and understanding their function within a particular movie. **Even if you've seen a film before, you must attend class.** In addition, each week's lecture and discussion will build on previously covered material, so regular attendance is crucial to your success in the course.

**Attendance is mandatory**, and will be taken at the beginning of every discussion section. If you need to miss class for an emergency, let me know *in advance*. Absences will be excused on a case-by-case basis. You are allowed one unexcused absence, then after that each unexcused absence reduces your attendance/participation grade by one point.

### Class Environment

Students are expected to contribute to a respectful, productive learning environment. This includes being on time, being attentive, participating in class discussions, and being nice to everyone, regardless of their views. Technology is a big issue, but rest assured that it's pretty easy to tell whether a student is actually taking notes on a laptop or checking email/whatever. If you're going to use a laptop or tablet, please use it for class purposes, and please switch cell phones to silent. Also, no texting in class, please, and movie theater rules apply: no bright screens if the lights are off. Any violation of the above will impact your attendance/participation grade.

### Guidelines for Assessing Participation Grades

- Tardiness; degree and frequency
- Not just frequency, but quality of comments. Is it evident that the student has done the readings and engaged with the material?
- Consideration and respect for other students and their points of view
- Engagement with the class (i.e., sleeping or excessive talking to others while the professor or another student is speaking)
- Technology use: disrespectful or reasonable?

### Disability Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way that I can. For more information, please visit the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>

### 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 can be accessed here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

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.

### 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: Introduction

Thursday, 9/3 Discussion sections meet

Readings: Smith, "It's Just a Movie" (on D2L)

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### Week Two: Intro to Film as Art, Technology, and Business

*Before class: Complete Quiz 1 on D2L*

Tuesday, 9/8 Screening: *Singin' in the Rain* (1952, Gene Kelly/Stanley Donen, 103 min)

Thursday, 9/10 Discussion sections meet

Readings: B&T, Ch. 1 (whole chapter recommended; p 1-4, 9-13, and 16-47 required.)

**Terms/concepts to know:** aspect ratio, continuity, gauges of film, phases of film from production to exhibition, storyboard, auteur, emulsion, letterboxing, gaffer, foley artist, marketing and merchandising

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**Week Three: Storytelling in the Movies: Film Form and Pattern Recognition**  
*Before class: Complete Quiz 2 on D2L*

Tuesday, 9/15 Screening: *The Wizard of Oz* (1939, Victor Fleming, 102 min)  
Thursday, 9/17 Discussion sections meet

Readings: 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

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**Week Four: The Principles of Narrative Form: Classical Hollywood Narrative**  
*Before class: Complete Quiz 3 on D2L*

Tuesday, 9/22 Screening: *His Girl Friday* (1940, Howard Hawks, 92 min)  
Thursday, 9/24 Discussion sections meet

Readings: 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

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**Week Five: Narration**  
*Before class: Complete Quiz 4 on D2L*

Tuesday, 9/29 Screening: *Duck Amuck* (1953, Chuck Jones, 7 min); *The Virgin Suicides* (2000, Sofia Coppola, 97 min)  
Thursday, 10/1 Discussion sections meet

Readings: B&T, Ch. 3, p 87-110

**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

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**Week Six: Mise-en-Scene**  
*Before class: Complete Quiz 5 on D2L*

Tuesday, 10/6 *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006, Guillermo del Toro, 119 min)  
Thursday, 10/8 Discussion sections meet

Readings: 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)

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**Week Seven: Staging: Movement and Performance**

*Before class: Complete Quiz 6 on D2L*

Tuesday, 10/13 Guest lecture by Laurie Schmeling; Screening: *The Social Network* (2010, David Fincher, 120 min)

Thursday, 10/15 Discussion sections meet

Readings: B&T, Ch. 5, p. 160-195; <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/01/30/the-social-network-faces-behind-facebook/>

**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

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**Week Eight: Cinematography: Frames of Reference and Mobile Framing**

*Before class: Complete Quiz 7 on D2L*

Tuesday, 10/20 *Chungking Express* (1994, Wong Kar Wai, 102 min)

Thursday, 10/22 Discussion sections meet

Readings: B&T, Ch. 5, p. 195-217

**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), pan, track, crane, tilt, reframing, hand-held, zoom, long take

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**Week Nine: MIDTERM**

Tuesday, 10/27 Midterm on B&T, Ch. 1-5

Thursday, 10/29 No discussion sections

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**Week Ten: Continuity Editing: The Invisible Cut and Narrative Space**

***Before class: Complete Quiz 8 on D2L***

Tuesday, 11/3 *Rear Window* (1954, Alfred Hitchcock, 112 min)

Thursday, 11/5 Discussion sections meet

Readings: B&T, Ch. 6

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

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**Week Eleven: Sound in Cinema**

***Before class: Complete Quiz 9 on D2L***

Tuesday, 11/10 *The Prestige* (2006, Christopher Nolan, 130 min)

Thursday, 11/12 Discussion sections meet

Readings: 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

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**Week Twelve: Style and Film Form**

***Before class: Complete Quiz 10 on D2L***

Tuesday, 11/17 Screening: *Citizen Kane* (1941, Orson Welles, 119 min)

Thursday, 11/19 Discussion sections meet

Readings: B&T, Ch. 8

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

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**Week Thirteen: Genre and Cinematic Modes**

***Before class: NO QUIZ. NO MORE QUIZZES. BUT PLEASE KEEP READING.***

Tuesday, 11/24 Screening: *Attack the Block* (2011, Joe Cornish, 88 min)

Thursday, 11/26: **NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING**

Readings: B&T, Ch. 9

**Terms/concepts to know:** genre, subgenre, conventions, iconography, cycles

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**Week Fourteen: Genre and Cinematic Modes, part 2**

Tuesday, 12/1 Screening: *Brick* (2005, Rian Johnson, 109 min)

Thursday, 12/3 Discussion sections meet

Readings: TBD

**Terms/concepts to know:** social functions of genres, iconography and conventions of the western, the horror film, the crime film, the sci-fi film, and the musical

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**Week Fifteen: Alternative Cinematic Forms: Avant-garde and Documentary**

Tuesday, 12/8 Screening: *La Jetée* (France, 1962, Marker, 28 min), other short films TBD

Thursday, 12/10 Discussion sections meet

Readings: B&T, Ch. 10 (p. 350-386)

**Terms/concepts to know:** documentary, categorical form, rhetorical form, experimental film, abstract form, associational form

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**Week Sixteen: Alternative Cinematic Forms, part 2: Animation, Digital and Otherwise**

Tuesday, 12/15 Screening: TBD

Readings: B&T, Ch. 10 (pp. 386-395); Ch. 1 (p. 13-16); "Pandora's Digital Box"

**Terms/concepts to know:** animation: drawn, cel, full, limited, cut-out, model/puppet, pixilation, CGI, digital formats, resolution

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**FINAL EXAM MONDAY, 12/21, 10:15-12:15**