

Spring 2021 Film Studies Course Offerings

Film Studies/Art History 206 – Film History Part II: Development of an Art (1945-present)

Online – asynchronous

Zach Anderson, Instructor

This course surveys the international development of cinema in the post-World War II (1945-present) period. Film movements and tendencies examined will include postwar Hollywood, Italian neo-realism, avant-garde approaches, emerging documentary forms, various “New Waves” across the globe, and more. These diverse filmmaking styles and approaches will be evaluated in relation to the social, cultural, and historical contexts out of which they emerged.

Film Studies 212: Intermediate Topics in Film Studies: Business on Film

Online – asynchronous

Zach Finch, Instructor

A piece in *Money Magazine* describes Hollywood films about US businesses as “getting it all wrong.” This is certainly paradoxical considering the power and prestige of the entertainment industry in the US. In Hollywood, the world of business enacts many kinds of narratives, from conspiracy stories to morality plays to rags-to-riches dramas. In the Business Film, as in all genres, filmmakers put on display the full spectrum of human behaviors; but, then, how can the films that depict business dealings and business people be said to be so off target? Through sustained study in humanistic inquiry, students in this course will investigate this and other larger questions by examining just what and how films that take the world of business as their subject try to communicate about that world.

Films may include: *Wall Street*, *Working Girl*, *Nine to Five*, *Trading Places*, *The Social Network*, *Office Space*, *Sorry to Bother You* and more!

Film Studies/English 286: Writing about Film and Television

Online – asynchronous

Jessica Sellin-Blanc, Instructor

Film Studies/English 290 Introduction to Film Studies

Online - asynchronous

Professor Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece
szczepan@uwm.edu

This course introduces students to the basics of film analysis, cinematic formal elements, genre, and narrative structure and helps students develop the skills to recognize, analyze, describe and enjoy film as an art and entertainment form. To

understand how films are constructed to make meaning and engage audiences, students will be introduced to the basic “building blocks” and formal elements (narrative, mise-en-scene, cinematography, sound and editing) that make up the film as well as some fundamental principles of analysis, genre, style, and storytelling. The class includes weekly readings, screenings, lectures, and discussion boards. All readings will be provided on Canvas.

Film Studies/English 312: Topics in Film Studies: Cinema and Digital Culture

Online - asynchronous

Professor Tami Williams

From cinema to cell phones, the multimedia context of contemporary life is rapidly changing. From the late 19th century kinoscope to the 21st century iPhone, moving image culture has, in fact, never stopped reinventing or creating itself anew. This course provides a general introduction to the critical study of motion pictures in relation to digital media. We will examine the nature of the digital from a variety of perspectives: technological, economic and social. However, our primary approach will be cultural and aesthetic. Namely, we will look at how “new media,” such as digital photography, video games, virtual reality, and the “World Wide Web,” refashion earlier forms such as film and television, as well as how these latter are, themselves, influenced by emerging media. In addition to studying critical, historical and theoretical texts on new technologies, we will consider the place of the Self within the context of new media.

Film Studies/English/Comp Lit 316: Scottish Cinema

Online - asynchronous

Zach Finch, Instructor (zfinch@uwm.edu)

This course provides an introduction to many of Scottish cinema’s most important and influential themes and issues, films, and filmmakers. One of our goals is to add to the ongoing discussion concerning how to make sense of Scotland’s cinematic traditions and contributions. Through seven units we will explore a broad range of films, filmmaking traditions, and new frontiers for Scottish cinema. Screenings may include: *Braveheart*, *Brave*, *Brigadoon*, *Trainspotting*, *The Bill Douglas Trilogy*, *Morvern Callar*, and more!

Film Studies/English/Comp Lit 316: Body and Desire in World Cinema

Online with synchronous, T 3pm-4:15pm meetings

Professor Jian Xu

The human body, by dint of its placement in culture and history, is laden with meaning. Its movement in space, posture, stylization, affect and sensation, cannot but signify. But besides this semiotic inevitability, the body also lives a life in materiality. This material body, though unsymbolizable, is intensely explored in cinema, by way of crises that endanger its being, producing narrative tension and visual fascination. This being body in crisis reveals a complex of desire, desire both as a sociohistorical imprint that structures the body's meaning and as a material transgression against that meaning. Through a group of films produced in different parts of the world, this class will study how the human body in cinema is often straddled between meaning and being, performing the paradoxical function of creating an otherness within the symbolic. We'll examine how films from different cultures stage unusual situations to call forth the material body, and what critical agency such a body often brings forth. We'll observe how such psychosomatic practices as religion (eastern), martial arts, music and dance, occult rituals, dragging, psychiatric therapy, scientific experiments, etc., mold, affect, or produce the body's meaning and desire, and how film diegesis mediates that meaning and desire through its own cultural codes. The objective of our study is to discover how this unique cinematic body opens up dimensions of truth we do not normally see, truth that undermines the entrenched norms of society by overstepping many boundaries, from those of race, class, gender, sex, to what it means to be human.

Film Studies/Jewish Studies 350: The Holocaust in Global Cinema

Online – asynchronous

Rachel Baum, Instructor

Course description: How can historically traumatic events be remembered and represented in film?

In the first decades after the Holocaust, discourse about Holocaust film centered around the impossibility of representing the event, yet today there are many such films from around the world. This course looks at narrative and documentary films about the Holocaust, engaging with such questions as:

- How do the films of different countries work through (or fail to work through) their Holocaust legacy?
- How do filmmakers' technical and narrative choices shape the viewers' confrontation with Holocaust history?
- How do Holocaust films represent power and powerlessness, perpetrators and victims? How does an attention to gender, age, sexuality, and ethnicity help us to engage more meaningfully with these categories?
- How does an attention to genre help us to analyze Holocaust films? How do Holocaust films draw on the genres of horror and melodrama, to name two? Can the genre of comedy ever facilitate a confrontation with Holocaust history?

Possible screenings include: *Night and Fog* (France, 1955) *Schindler's List* (United States, 1993), *Aimee & Jaguar* (Germany, 1998), *Inglourious Basterds* (United States,

2009), *Ida* (Poland, 2013), *Son of Saul* (Hungary, 2015), *JoJo Rabbit* (United States, 2019)

While the subject is serious, the course is structured in a way that values students' emotional well-being. If you are interested in the topic but concerned about the depressing subject matter, you are encouraged to contact the instructor.

Assignments will include regular online discussions about films and secondary readings, and short papers.

Readings will be delivered electronically via Canvas. Professor will try to keep costs down by favoring films owned by UWM streaming services, but students may be asked to purchase one month of a streaming film service or to obtain some films from their local library.

English/Film Studies 380: Media in Society: TV in Movies

Mondays 1:15-2:05, Hybrid 51-80% online

Professor Michael Newman

This class is about the way television has been understood socially, culturally, and politically, with an emphasis on American TV/film. It looks at movies about television as a source of popular knowledge about the medium of TV. In combination with readings in television history, criticism, and theory, the films screened in this class speak to the status of mass media in a democratic society driven by capitalism and consumerism. We will examine the place of television in everyday life as a uniquely powerful form of popular culture. The course will look at movies that represent television in relation to national politics, social change, consumer culture, and constructions of gender/sexuality and race/ethnicity. Genres of TV to be explored include news, sitcom, sketch comedy, soap opera, reality TV, and home video. The screenings will include comedy, drama, and horror films.

Likely films: *A Face in the Crowd* (1957), *Network* (1976), *The Front* (1976), *Tootsie* (1982), *Videodrome* (1983), *Broadcast News* (1987), *Quiz Show* (1994), *Pleasantville* (1998), *Ringu* (1998), *The Truman Show* (1998), and *Bamboozled* (2000).

ENG/FILMSTD 393: Entertainment Industries: The American Television Industry

Online - asynchronous

Professor Elana Levine

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ehlevine@uwm.edu

This course provides an in-depth exploration of the American television industry, emphasizing the present and recent past while giving students a strong foundation in

the historical structures and practices amidst which the present-day industry has developed. Students will gain an understanding of the systems of production, distribution, financing, and labor that shape American entertainment television and grapple with the similarities and differences between the structures of the broadcast, cable, and streaming TV industries. While the course is primarily focused on the American industry, we will also consider the global circulation of television, especially in the digital age. The course will use readings, discussions, and small group activities to explore these questions. Students will engage in a creative research project that will allow them to examine the contemporary TV industry.

Learning objectives:

By the end of this course, you will:

- 1) Understand the major production, distribution, financing, and labor practices of the contemporary American TV industry
- 2) Understand the historical structures of the TV industry
- 3) Improve your media research skills and your writing about media
- 4) Improve your ability to read and understand media studies scholarship
- 5) Develop a more critical, sophisticated perspective on your own relationship to media in general and television in particular

Required Readings

Available at the **UWM Bookstore**

Amanda D. Lotz, *We Now Disrupt This Broadcast: How Cable Transformed Television and the Internet Revolutionized it All*, MIT Press, 2018 (\$29.95 or available digitally through UWM Library)

Additional readings available on Canvas



English/Film Studies 394: Theories of Mass Culture
Game and Story
Stuart Moulthrop

Film Studies/English 394: Theories of Mass Culture – Game and Story

Online - asynchronous

Professor Stuart Moulthrop

This will be an asynchronous, online class focusing on the intersection of procedural play and narrative. It is based around Twine, a free and easy-to-learn platform for making interactive texts, which most Twine makers understand as games. In its first decade, Twine has become a major tool for experimental and independent developers. Many important indie games have been made with Twine, including Zoe Quinn's *Depression Quest* (the game at ground zero of GamerGate), Porpentine's *With Those We Love Alive*, Anna Anthropy's *Queers in Love at the End of the World*, Ztul's *The Uncle Who Works for Nintendo*, and a host of others on sites like itch.io. The famous "Bandersnatch" episode of *Black Mirror* started from a treatment built in Twine,

suggesting a connection to screenwriting and media production, for those who are interested.

The syllabus will alternate between making and reflecting. In *making* weeks you'll work through one or more practical exercises, learning how to do increasingly ambitious things with Twine. In *reflecting* weeks you'll read articles, view videos and play games, exploring possibilities for interactive storytelling. There are three projects, with an assignment-free week set aside for each. Options for the projects will include making an original story/ game or writing an essay. It is hoped/assumed that everyone will take the game-making option at least once.

The class will be conducted online without scheduled meetings. At the beginning of each project work week the instructor will give a live demonstration of relevant Twine techniques, recorded for later reference. There will also be weekly online hours for technical help. Online resources for Twine learning are excellent.

Anticipated questions:

Does this class have any face-to-face meetings? No. It's online and asynchronous. The only scheduled events will be the optional demonstration before each project is due.

Isn't it hard to learn coding online? Maybe and maybe not, but Twine doesn't require a lot of coding.

Should I have a personal computer for this class? Yes, but it can be very modest. Twine uses the same basic technologies as the web. It runs on all major operating systems.

Do I need to be a writer? You're already a writer. You're welcome to work in any genre, style, or medium.

Do I need to be a gamer? If you say so. All you really need is some curiosity about multi-path, procedural writing.

Is there a syllabus? A draft syllabus will be ready around mid-November.

How do I find out more? Contact Stuart Moulthrop, moulthro@uwm.edu.

Film Studies/English 690: Seminar in Contemporary Cinema and Media: Cultural Studies of Film and Media

Online with one synchronous meeting per week (T, 9:45-11AM)

Professor Elana Levine

414-251-8766

ehlevine@uwm.edu

As the capstone seminar for Film Studies and English/Plan H, this course teaches students about the approach to studying film and media known as cultural studies. As such, this course will engage with theories of media and culture, as well as the application of those theories to media analysis. Students will learn about such research methods as historical analysis, textual analysis, and discourse analysis, and will get practice in applying these skills to their own work. In addition to studying the theories and methods foundational to the cultural studies approach, we will consider select media-related topics in depth. These topics represent some of the current concerns in the field of media and cultural studies. Through exploration of significant theories, methods, and cases, as well as through the execution of individual research projects, students will develop a more sophisticated perspective on contemporary film and media.

Learning objectives:

By the end of this course, you will:

- 6) Understand some of the key theories that inform media and cultural studies scholarship
- 7) Understand the complexities of the relationships between media industries, media texts, media audiences, and the social contexts within which they are created and received
- 8) Improve your media analysis skills, both oral and written
- 9) Improve your ability to read and understand media studies scholarship
- 10) Further develop an analytical perspective on your own relationship to media

Required readings

Available on Canvas