

Fall 2019  
T 11-1:50, CAC 333  
Th in CAC 237:11-11:50 (Section 1)  
12-12:50 (Section 2)  
1-1:50 (Section 3)

Dr. Cary Elza  
Office Hours: T 2-3, W 2-3, & by appt CAC 311  
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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 and a Critical Thinking 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 identify and analyze cinematic elements, using knowledge of relevant aesthetic criteria to think critically about what they see and hear when watching time-based media.
- Discuss and write critically and effectively about how films move us aesthetically, intellectually, and emotionally.
- Recognize critical thinking as a process of identifying, analyzing, evaluating, and constructing reasoning in deciding what conclusions to draw (argumentation) or actions to take (decision-making and problem-solving).

### Requirements (total of 100)

Participation/attendance	10%	
Film Responses (2 @ 10% each)		20% (graded on 10-point scale)
Quizzes (10 @ 2% each)	20%	
Midterm		25% (graded on 100-point scale)
Final		25% (graded on 100-point scale)

### Grading Scale

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

### Readings

Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction, 11<sup>th</sup> ed.* is available via rental. Upon occasion, supplemental readings will be posted in Canvas. Make sure to check the syllabus and Canvas 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

#### 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. **Online quizzes on the assigned readings must be completed by 11am Tuesdays (right before 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 Canvas from 11am on the Thursday 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 Canvas.

## **2) 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 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.

## **3) Midterm and Final exam**

Our Midterm will be on Tuesday, 10/23, and our final will be during final week, time TBD. More guidelines for the midterm and final will be given as the semester progresses.

## **Paper Requirements**

Unless I indicate that papers can be put in Dropbox, assume that I want a hard copy, 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 given 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 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 the internet. 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 (or anything else on your phone) 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. If you are more than 10 minutes late, **I reserve the right to not let you in**.
- Not just frequency, but quality of comments. Is it evident that the student has read/engaged with the material? Are comments contributing to an interesting and vibrant community discussion? Do comments open up discussion or shut it down?
- Related to the above...consideration and respect for other students and their points of view!
- Engagement with the class (i.e., sleeping or excessive talking or any other kind of disrespectful behavior while the professor or another student is speaking).
- Technology use: disrespectful or reasonable? Did I have to yell at you?

### 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 within reason, and with timely notification to students.

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

*Before class: Read Smith, "It's Just a Movie" (on CANVAS); B&T, Ch. 1 (whole chapter recommended; p 1-4, 9-13, and 17-29 required.)*

Tuesday, 9/3 Screening: *Singin' in the Rain* (1952, Gene Kelly/Stanley Donen, 103 min)

Thursday, 9/5 Discussion sections meet

**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 Two: Storytelling in the Movies: Film Form and Pattern Recognition**

*Before class: Read B&T Ch. 2 (and Ch. 1 if you didn't already); Complete Quiz 1 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 9/10 Screening: *The Wizard of Oz* (1939, Victor Fleming, 102 min)

Thursday, 9/12 Discussion sections meet

**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 Three: The Principles of Narrative Form: Classical Hollywood Narrative**

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 3 (p. 72-86); Complete Quiz 2 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 9/17 Screening: *His Girl Friday* (1940, Howard Hawks, 92 min)

Thursday, 9/19 Discussion sections meet

**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 Four: Narration**

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 3 (p. 87-110); Complete Quiz 3 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 9/24 Screening: *The Virgin Suicides* (2000, Sofia Coppola, 97 min)

Thursday, 9/26 Discussion sections meet

**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 Five: Mise-en-Scene**

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 4 (p. 112-131); Complete Quiz 4 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 10/1 *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006, Guillermo del Toro, 119 min)

Thursday, 10/3 Discussion sections meet

**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 Six: Staging: Movement and Performance**

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 4 (p. 131-158) and article on The Social Network on CANVAS; Complete Quiz 5 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 10/8 Guest lecture by Laurie Schmeling; Screening: *The Social Network* (2010, David Fincher, 120 min)

Thursday, 10/10 Discussion sections meet

**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 Seven: Cinematography: Frames of Reference and Mobile Framing**

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 5; Complete Quiz 6 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 10/15 *Rear Window* (1954, Alfred Hitchcock, 112 min)

Thursday, 10/17 Discussion sections meet

**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 Eight: MIDTERM**

Tuesday, 10/22 Midterm on B&T, Ch. 1-5

Thursday, 10/24 No discussion sections

**Week Nine: Editing**

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 6 (p. 216-230); NO CANVAS QUIZ THIS WEEK*

Tuesday, 10/29 *The Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing* (2004, Wendy Apple, 98 min)

Thursday, 10/31 Discussion sections meet

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

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

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 6 (p. 230-262); Complete Quiz 7 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 11/5 *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015, George Miller, 120 min)

Thursday, 11/7 Discussion sections meet

**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

**Week Eleven: Sound in Cinema**

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 7; Complete Quiz 8 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 11/12 *The Prestige* (2006, Christopher Nolan, 130 min)

Thursday, 11/14 Discussion sections meet

**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

**Week Twelve: Style and Film Form**

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 8, 303-209; Complete Quiz 9 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 11/19 Screening: *Citizen Kane* (1941, Orson Welles, 119 min)

Thursday, 11/21 Discussion sections meet

**Terms/concepts to know:** style, creative choices, creative constraints; meaning (referential, explicit, implicit, symptomatic), ideology; for next week's quiz, be familiar with the examples B&T use in this chapter.

**Week Thirteen: Style and Film Form**

*Before class: Watch Critical Thinking video; Complete Quiz 10 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 11/26 Review of cinematic elements and developing a claim for a film's theme

Thursday, 11/28 THANKSGIVING; NO CLASS

**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 Fourteen: Genre and Cinematic Modes**

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 9; Complete Quiz 11 on CANVAS*

Tuesday, 12/3 Screening: *The Quick and the Dead* (1995, Sam Raimi, 107 min)

Thursday, 12/5 Discussion sections meet

**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, and the musical

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**Week Fifteen: Alternative Cinematic Forms: Avant-garde, Documentary, Animation**

*Before class: Read B&T, Ch. 10*

***NO QUIZ. NO MORE QUIZZES. BUT PLEASE READ ANYWAY.***

Tuesday, 12/10 Screening TBD

Thursday, 12/12 Discussion sections meet

**Terms/concepts to know:** documentary, categorical form, rhetorical form, experimental film, abstract form, associational form; animation: drawn, cel, model/puppet, pixilation, CGI, digital formats, resolution

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<b>FINAL EXAM TBD</b>
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