

COMMUNICATION 1400

"Introduction to Film Criticism"

Autumn 2019
Monday & Wednesday @ 2-3:45

Professor: Brian M. Goss, Ph.D.
Email: brian.goss@slu.edu
Office: San Ignacio Hall, N°313
Office Hours: Monday, 4-5; Tuesday & Thursday, 2-3 & 5:30-7
Course Credit: 3.0 Hours
Prerequisite: English 150 or Equivalent

Course Description

This course presents a survey of film as an art form and as a medium of mass communication while broadly orienting students to the fundamentals of film studies. We will examine the formal aspects of film that constitute its "language" (*i.e.*, narrative, cinematography, *mise-en-scene*, editing, sound). Alongside reading films, the course will introduce fundamentals of film theory (*e.g.*, auteurism, genre), the political economy of the industry, and present background on the conditions under which films on the syllabus were produced. The films that will be screened span the decades between the 1950s and the current decade and also range from commercially viable to "art house" films (as well as the interpenetration between them). The films are drawn from an eclectic array of national film industries (*i.e.*, United States, Argentina, United Kingdom, New Zealand, South Korea, Spain, Ireland) and are distinct with respect to genre.

Method of Evaluation

Semester grades will be calculated out of 750 possible points as follows:

Essay ...	150 points
Ten-Twelve Quizzes ...	130 points
Mid-Semester Exercise ... Take-Home (100 points) & In-Class (80 points) =	180
Final Examination ...	150 points
Attendance & Participation ...	160 points
Journal Entry ...	30 points
TOTAL ...	800

The essay, journal entry, and examinations will be explained in detail in subsequent handouts. Quizzes will cover material from both the films and the assigned readings. Notice that quizzes are weighted heavily to underscore the importance of being prepared for class. All quizzes are unannounced but will, nonetheless, be “predictable” since they will be administered each week. Quizzes will be distributed at the start of class and collected no later than 2:10. If you are late, the quiz will be graded as zero. There is no make-up for a quiz but it will be graded “Excused” in the event of a documented excusable absence.

Course Objectives

Practice in reading films’ text and social context; fluency in the formal language of film analysis; familiarity with some essential film theories; enhanced knowledge of film across time periods, genres and national cinemas.

Miscellaneous Policies

Campus and course announcements will often be handled via email. Students will need to check their “@slu.edu” accounts regularly.

Written work that is submitted late without an acceptable excuse will be penalized, the magnitude of which will be at my discretion. If written work is not submitted within two weeks of the due date, it will be assigned a grade of zero. Aside from excused absences (documented illness, university-sponsored excursion), attendance is expected and will be recorded at all class meetings. A student may be granted no more than three excused absences.

The student is obligated to plan doctor’s appointments and personal excursions outside of class time. Early exits from class session always present poor etiquette; do not show up for class unless you plan to stay the whole period.

Students are expected to be prepared, attentive, participatory, and courteous with the people with whom they share the academic milieu. A student should have something to say at all class meetings and make regular, substantial contributions, while displaying the sensitivity toward others that one would expect to be apportioned toward one’s self.

During screenings, it is by definition impossible to follow closely what is happening on two screens at once. Ergo, devices must be put away (telephones, laptops, and so on); no exceptions. If a student elects to do otherwise, he or she will be recorded as absent.

Eating food—with its attendant noise, smell, debris, and irreducible distraction—is not permitted in class. If a student elects to do otherwise, he or she will be recorded as absent and/or instructed to leave.

Notice that before each class session, I need to prepare audiovisual materials. Please do not approach me with questions until I have the materials ready for the whole

class' benefit.

By virtue of being enrolled in this course, the student *by definition* firmly grasps all policies described in this syllabus.

The appendices at the end of this document detail (1) the grading scale that will be employed for final grades and (2) university-wide policies (integrity, Title IX, special needs).

Materials

In addition to the films, there are three further channels for the course's required texts:

- (1) *Film Art: An Introduction* (Eleventh Edition) by David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson & Jeff Smith, available at the university bookstore;
- (2) Scanned readings distributed directly to students via email;
- (3) Readings distributed via Internet, indicated below in the "Sequence of Films and Readings" by URL.

Be forewarned that several films on the syllabus present mature and/or extremely harsh content.

Sequence of Films and Readings

WEEK I

Wednesday 4 September
Introduction to the Course

Journal Entry Assigned

WEEK II

Monday 9 September
Screening: *Arrival* (Dir: Denis Villeneuve, USA-Canada-India, 2016)

Wednesday 11 September
Discussion of *Arrival*
—Bordwell, Thompson & Smith ("Narrative as a Formal System"), 11th Edition, pp.72-99

Journal Entry Due

Sunday 15 September: Last day to drop a class without a grade of W and/or add a class -&- Last day to choose Audit or Pass/No Pass options

WEEK III

Monday 16 September

Screening: *The Secret in Their Eyes / El secreto de sus ojos* (Dir: Juan José Campanella, Argentina-Spain, 2009)

Wednesday 18 September

Discussion of *The Secret in Their Eyes*

—Bordwell, Thompson & Smith, 11th Edition (“*Mise-en-Scene*”), pp.112-146

WEEK IV

Monday 23 September

Discussion of *Heavenly Creatures* (Dir: Peter Jackson, New Zealand-Germany, 1994), available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VsTm43Q1smU&t=5885s>

—Bordwell, Thompson & Smith, 11th editions, Chapter 5 (“Cinematography”), pp.159-203 & 209-215

—Internet: Luisa F. Ribiero, “Heavenly Creatures”, at:

members.tripod.com/peter_jackson_online/hc/reviews/filmquart.htm

Wednesday 25 September

—Class Recess as on this day as the Week’s Viewing & Discussion of *Heavenly Creatures* completed by Monday 23 September

WEEK V

Monday 30 September

Screening: *Children of Men* (Dir: Alfonso Caurón, USA-UK-Japan, 2006)

Wednesday 2 October

Discussion of *Children of Men*

—Bordwell, Thompson & Smith, 11th edition, Chapter 6 (“Editing”)

WEEK VI

Monday 7 October

Screening: *Todo Sobre Mi Madre / All About My Mother* (Dir: Pedro Almodóvar, Spain-France, 1999)

Wednesday 9 October

Discussion of *All About My Mother*

—Bordwell, Thompson & Smith, 11th edition, Chapter 7 (“Sound in Cinema”)

—Scanned Reading: Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, “Introduction”

WEEK V

Monday 14 October

Screening: *Winter's Bone* (Dir: Debra Granik, United States, 2010)

Wednesday 16 October

Discussion of *Winter's Bone* and Mid-Term Exercise

—Internet: Marlow Stern, “Life after *Winter's Bone*”, at:

www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/10/24/life-after-winter-s-bone-debra-granik-on-finding-j-law-and-the-plight-of-the-female-director.html

WEEK VI

Monday 21 October

Screening: *A Quiet Place* (Dir: John Krasinski, United States, 2018)

Wednesday 23 October

Discussion of *A Quiet Place*

—Bordwell, Thompson & Smith, 11th Edition (“Form and Meaning”), pp.58-61

—Scanned Reading: Carol J. Clover, “Her Body, Her Self”

—Scanned Reading: Robin Wood, “The American Nightmare”

WEEK VIII

Monday 28 October

Screening: *When We Were Kings* (Dir: Leon Gast, United States, 1995)

Wednesday 30 October

Discussion of *When We Were Kings*

—Bordwell, Thompson & Smith, 11th edition, Chapter 9 (“Film Genres”) & pp.350-355

—Internet: Justine Smith, “How *When We Were Kings* Enshrined Muhammad Ali’s Legacy”, at: lwlies.com/articles/when-we-were-kings-muhammad-ali-legacy/

WEEK IX

Monday 4 November

Screening: *The Prestige* (Dir: Christopher Nolan, 2006, United States-United Kingdom)

Wednesday 6 November

Discussion of *The Prestige*

—Internet: “*The Prestige*—Christopher Nolan Interview”, at:

www.indielondon.co.uk/Film-Review/the-prestige-christopher-nolan-interview

—Scanned Reading: Robert Stam, “The Author”

Essay Assigned

Sunday 10 November: Last day to drop a class and receive a grade of W

WEEK X

Monday 11 November

Screening: *North by Northwest* (Dir: Alfred Hitchcock, United States, 1959)

Wednesday 13 November

Discussion of *North by Northwest*

—Internet: James Walcott, “Death and the Master”:

www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/classic/features/death-and-the-master-199904?currentPage=all

—Scanned Reading: Janey Place, “Women in Film Noir”

—Scanned Reading: Alfred Hitchcock & François Truffaut, from *Hitchcock*

WEEK XI

Monday 18 November

Screening: *Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* (Dir: Alejandro G. Iñárritu, United States, 2014)

Wednesday 20 November

Discussion of *Birdman*

—Scanned Reading: Celestino Deleyto & María del Mar Azcona, “Interview with Alejandro González Iñárritu”

—Scanned Reading: Robert Stam, “The Question of Realism”

Essay Due

WEEK XII

Monday 25 November

Screening: *Salinui Chueok / Memories of Murder* (Dir: Joon-ho Bong, South Korea, 2003)

Wednesday 27 November

Discussion of *Memories of Murder*

—Internet: Minette Walters, “This Man is No Hannibal Lector, He’s an Inadequate Underachiever” at: www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/dec/17/suffolkmurders.focus

WEEK XIII

Monday 2 December

Screening: *The Magdalene Sisters* (Dir: Peter Mullan, 2002, Ireland-United

Kingdom)

Wednesday 4 December

Discussion of *The Magdalene Sisters*

—Internet: Peter Bradshaw, “The Magdalene Sisters” at:

www.theguardian.com/culture/2003/feb/21/artsfeatures1

—Internet: *The Journal*, “Enda Kenny’s State Apology to the Magdalene Women”, at:

www.thejournal.ie/full-text-enda-kenny-magdalene-apology-801132-Feb2013/

WEEK XIV

Monday 9 December

Fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepción (Campus Holiday)

Wednesday 11 December:

Activity To Be Announced & Final Examination Review

WEDNESDAY 18 DECEMBER at 3:30: FINAL EXAMINATION

APPENDIX I: FINAL GRADE SCALE

91% or above: "A"; 89.0-90.9%: "A-"; 86.0 – 88.9%: "B+"; 83.0 – 85.9%: "B"; 80.0-82.9: "B-"; 77.0 – 79.9%: "C+"; 73.0 – 76.9%: "C"; 70.0 – 72.9: "C-"; 61.5 – 69.9%: "D"; Less than 61.5%: "F"

APPENDIX II: AUTUMN 2019 CALENDAR

Available at: <https://www.slu.edu/madrid/services-and-departments/registrar/academic-final-exams-calendar.php>

APPENDIX III: UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Assessment of Student Learning: In order to maintain quality academic offerings and to conform to accreditation requirements, SLU-Madrid regularly assesses its teaching, services and programs for evidence of student learning. For this purpose, SLU-Madrid keeps representative examples of student work from all courses and programs on file, including assignments, papers, exams, portfolios and results from student surveys, focus groups and reflective exercises. Copies of your work for this course may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes. If you prefer SLU-Madrid not to retain your work for this purpose, you must communicate this decision in writing to your professor.

Academic Honesty/Integrity: *Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors.* The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU fulfills its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost's Office [website](#). Additionally, SLU-Madrid has posted its academic integrity policy [online](#). As a member of the University community, you are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions and appeals.

The professor will review these matters during the first weeks of the term. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program or the Academic Dean of the Madrid Campus.

Title IX Statement: Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX deputy coordinator, Patrice Burns, whose office is located on the third floor of San Ignacio Hall, Calle Amapolas, 3 (patrice.burns@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 241) and share the basic facts of your experience with her. The Title IX deputy coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible

resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the SLU-Madrid's Counseling Services on the third floor of San Ignacio Hall (counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 230) or Sinews Multipletherapy Institute, the off-campus provider of counseling services for SLU-Madrid (www.sinews.es; 917-00-1979). To view SLU-Madrid's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please [our policy posted online](#). Additional information is available at the University's website "[SLU is here for you.](#)"

Disability Accommodations and Learning Resources: In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor. University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Academic Dean's Office (San Ignacio Hall) or by reviewing the [Academic Resources website online](#).

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also **must** notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course. Please contact Disability Services at disabilityservices-madrid@slu.edu or +915 54 58 58, ext. 230 for an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services. For more information about academic accommodations, see the [Disability Services webpage](#).

Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact Disability Services.

Basic Needs Security Statement: Students in personal or academic distress and/or who may be specifically experiencing challenges such as securing food or difficulty navigating campus resources, and who believe this may affect their performance in the course, are encouraged to contact Marta Maruri, SLU-Madrid's Director of Student Life (marta.maruri@slu.edu or 915 54 58 58, ext. 213) for support. Furthermore, please notify the instructor if you are comfortable in doing so, as this will enable them to assist you with finding the resources you may need.