COURSE SYLLABUS AND CALENDAR
TFM 310 FILM, TELEVISION AND MEDIA CRITICISM
FALL 2013

Instructor: Stuart Voytilla
Classroom & Meetings:
  Section 1: COM-105, 4:00-6:40 PM, WED
  Section 2: PSFA-318, 4:00-6:40 PM, TUES

Office/Hours: COM-109 Tues/Wed 2:30-3:30pm, and by appointment.
Telephone: 858-270-7204 (off-campus office)
E-mail: SVoytilla@mail.sdsu.edu

Course Description: Critical approaches to the study of film, television, and new media. Analyses of media perspectives, to include ideology, semiotics, genre, gender, and spectatorship.

This course will provide an overview of the different approaches taken in media analysis and criticism. How do films, television programs, video games, and new media interfaces create meaning? How do audiences and consumers engage with media? What roles do film, television, and the Internet play in our broader media and consumer culture, and how is media culture continuing to change in the era of new media? And finally, what is the role of the media critic and media criticism in our contemporary culture?

We will look at media analyses from a variety of angles, including questions of narrative, ideology, structuralism, semiotics, genre, formalism versus realism, spectatorship, social audiences, and convergence. We will view a variety of screenings from film, television and new media. Major film and video theorists from various historical periods will be analyzed according to their contribution to the field.

Course Objectives: The purpose of this course is to expose students to important theories, concepts and contexts for understanding and manipulating media.

By the conclusion of this course, you will be able to

- Assess and analyze formal and thematic elements of media texts, drawing on tools such as semiotic and ideological theory
- Interrogate aspects of contemporary media (such as websites, videogames, and social media) that previously may have passed unnoticed
- Produce nuanced analyses of media engagement, spectatorship, and cultural identity
- Evaluate and contribute to debates on the social relevance and impact of media entertainment and media criticism

How We Get There:

Class meetings will be a combination of the following:
1) Lecture, 2) Class viewings of media texts, and class discussion of media texts and assigned reading, 3) Online responses and discussions to viewings and assigned readings (via Blackboard) 4) Three (3) written “Flash” Responses to in-class screenings, 5) Final Project, 6) Final Exam.
Required Texts:

TFM 310 Course Reader (CR) (available in Bookstore and Course Reserves in Library)

Online Required Reading (BB) (listed in Calendar and posted in Blackboard)

Corrigan, Timothy. A Short Guide to Writing About Film (7th or 8th Edition) (in bookstore)

Note: Additional course reading (posted in BB) and outside viewing may be assigned depending upon the specific needs of the class.

Recommended Texts:


Additional Material Costs:

Scantron Green Form and #2 Pencil are required for Final Exam.

Tickets to two TTF Productions as follows:
  a. One evening of the TFM Film Festival
  b. One SDSU theatre production (your choice)

See Course Calendar and the TTF Website (in BB External Links) for schedule and ticket information. For credit, turn in your ticket stapled to your 1 page typed personal response.

Assignments:

Online Discussions: Each of you has been assigned a discussion group (in Blackboard, select “My Groups” below the left menu), and each week you are responsible to check into your Group Discussion to address the online Forums. I will post the Forum after the week’s class session. The forums will be based on class material (including course readings) and outside personal screenings.

Your discussion participation is composed of two parts: one Response (target 250 words) to the week’s Forum topic (due by Sunday 11:59 pm before our next class meets), and one written Reaction (target 150 words) to one of your group members’ responses (due by Monday 11:59 pm before our next class). Whenever possible, please respond to a student who hasn’t received a response. Your participation in each week’s discussion is worth 8 points. Please proofread your work for grammar and spelling, and avoid texting abbreviations/acronyms.

“Flash” Responses: You will be writing three (3) “flash” responses to in-class viewings, incorporating the course reading. These are unscheduled and will not be pre-announced. The media texts may not be available in the media center, so it’s important to attend class so that you don’t miss out on the screening and related class discussion. There are no make-ups for the “Flash” Responses. Responses are due the following week at the beginning of class.

Each “Flash” response will include a first draft and final revised draft. The first draft will not be graded but will help demonstrate that you took time and thought in the final revisions/proofing of your response. The final draft should be 1 page (double-spaced) in length MAX, and reflect your understanding of the topic and course material, and your engagement with the media text(s) presented in class. Your responses (including first drafts) are to be typed, using 12 point Times New Roman. Your first drafts can include your handwritten editing notes. Staple your work with the revised draft in front.
Each “Flash” Response is worth 10 points. Please proofread your work for grammar and spelling. Responses will be graded based on content and on form.

Reference your sources with full citation using MLA (Modern Language Association) formatting. MLA resources are available in Blackboard (Course Documents and External Links), and in the Corrigan textbook.

Final Project: You have four choices listed below, but if you have another idea for a focus that doesn’t quite fit in these categories, feel free to run it by me. In every case, your final paper/project must draw on a minimum of three of the required readings. Reference all your sources with full citation using MLA (Modern Language Association) formatting.

1) Write a 5-7 page close analysis of a television program or film of your choice, drawing on the readings and discussions. If appropriate for your analysis, you may consider advertising, exhibition, scheduling, and reception.

2) Write a 5-7 page paper connecting the ideas we have discussed in class (be it narrative, ideology, semiotics, etc.) to a video game or transmedia text.

3) Write 7 one page film or television (episode) reviews. These reviews should be informed by the ideas we’ve encountered in readings and discussions, but they can be written in a more informal, popular, or playful tone. If you choose to write TV reviews, these reviews can span multiple TV programs, or you can choose one TV program. As you work on this project, take into consideration how each individual review would read on its own and how they will read together. Ideally these reviews will be unified by thematic concern and/or by review style. Remember, the reviews as a whole must draw on a minimum of three of the required readings. Reference all your sources with full citation using MLA (Modern Language Association) formatting.

4) Create a short (3-7 minute) film, visual essay (vid), webisode, or script that addresses the themes raised in class. In addition, write a 2-3 page paper in which you connect your creative work to the ideas raised in class and in the theory readings. The project must draw on a minimum of three of the required readings. Reference all your sources with full citation using MLA (Modern Language Association) formatting.

Submitting Your Final Project: All written portions of your Final Project will be posted online BlackBoard via Turnitin. You are required to submit a first draft for Grammar/Proofing and Authenticity reports via Turnitin, and a final revised draft.

The first draft will not be graded but will help demonstrate that you took time and thought, using the Turnitin reports, for the final draft of your project.

IMPORTANT: Completion of the Final Project is a requirement to pass this course.

About the use of Wikipedia: For your written work, Wikipedia is not considered a primary resource for citation. You are free to consult Wiki for general information about your topic, but please consult primary resources for any references/citations.

Final Exam:

Final Exam will be multiple choice, T/F and short answer essay.
Grading:

Grading weights are as follows:

- Attendance to two SDSU Productions: 20 points
- "Flash" Responses (3 Responses, 10 points each): 30 points
- Online Discussions (6 Discussions, 8 points each): 48 points
- Final Project/Paper: 50 points
- Final Examination: 52 points

**TOTAL:** 200 points

Your final grades are based as follows:

- A: 185-200 points
- A-: 180-184 points
- B+: 175-179 points
- B: 165-174 points
- B-: 160-164 points
- C+: 155-159 points
- C: 145-154 points
- C-: 140-144 points
- D+: 135-139 points
- D: 125-134 points
- D-: 120-124 points
- F: 0-119 points

**In-Class Media Screenings:**

We learn from past accomplishments of "the masters" (and "the not-so-masterful") in our field. I draw extensively from film, television, and other media (in part or whole) to supplement the lecture and reading material. These selections are as essential "texts" in providing theories and applications as the required texts (books) and will be treated with equal weight in material covered in course assignments.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Some of the films and film excerpts shown in class are rated R. These clips will be properly introduced and their context within the course material explained; however, if you have a problem with watching this type of material, please see the instructor immediately and we will work together to provide you with alternative examples.

**Attendance:**

Attendance will be critical for a student to have the best opportunity to understand the theories we will discuss. I will not formally take roll, but you need to be here and be on time for each session. Make-up assignments will only be allowed with a valid excuse of your absence.

**Technology in Class:**

Please set Cell Phones and Pagers to silent mode before each class - and put them away. Class isn’t a time for texting or checking in with your social media accounts. You are welcome to use laptops in class; however, I do not allow video or audio recording of lectures. Laptops need to be shut down during screenings. If I notice laptops being used for non-class activities, then the transgressor(s) will be asked to leave the class and the class laptop policy will be re-evaluated. Please, no talking during screenings.
Learning Challenges:

If you have any learning challenges, such as dyslexia, please see instructor immediately to discuss how we can work together.

Improper Behavior:

Cheating on exams, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are completely unacceptable. The first incident will cause the student to fail that assignment. A second incident will cause the student to receive a failing grade for the entire course. All cheating will be reported to the dean of student affairs.

You must cite all your sources. Write with your own words. It is clear when a student borrows from another author; don’t take this risk. If you have any concern about how to integrate sources appropriately, please email or meet with me.

Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. If you are removed from the classroom, the incident will be reported and I reserve the right to drop you from the course.

IMPORTANT DATES:

August 26       First Day of Classes
September 9     Last Day to ADD/DROP Classes
Nov 28-Dec 1     Thanksgiving Recess
December 11     Last Day of Classes before Final Exams
December 12-18  Final Examinations

FINAL EXAM: (Bring Scantron Green and #2 Pencil)
Section 1: Wednesday, December 18th 4-6 pm
Section 2: Tuesday, December 17th 4-6 pm
TFM 310 COURSE SYLLABUS FALL 2013/VOYTILLA

TFM 310 COURSE CALENDAR
FALL 2013 – Section 2 (Tuesdays)

Special Note: The following schedule is subject to change depending upon the needs of the class and the events in the real reel world.

WEEK 1: (8/27) Introduction.

WEEK 2: (9/3) Narrative Theory: From Aristotle to Warner Bros. Television
Case Studies: Reality Television, Sitcoms

READING:
Voytilla, Stuart. “TFM 310 Course Syllabus” (seriously, read it carefully, and bring any questions you have to class)
Corrigan, Timothy. “Preface”, Chapter 1
Bordwell, David. “Studying Cinema” (BB, Assignments)
Juul, Jasper. “Games Telling Stories? – A brief note on games and narratives”
BLACKBOARD (BB, Assignments)

WRITING RESPONSES:
Visit Group Discussion in Blackboard for Posted Forum (in Blackboard, select ‘Groups’)

WEEK 3: (9/10) Narrative Theory: Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s Journey
Case Studies: “Raiders of the Lost Ark”, “Titanic” (Selections)

Student Home-Viewing Assignment: View a Pixar Feature (your choice).

READING:
Corrigan, Timothy. Chapter 2
Voytilla, Stuart. Hero’s Journey, Sample Charts. (BB, Course Documents)
Hull, Jim. “Not Everything is a Hero’s Journey” (BB, Assignments)
Bunn, Austin. “Welcome to Pixar Planet” (BB, Assignments)
Wang, Wallace. “Pixar Story Telling Secrets” (BB, Assignments)

WRITING RESPONSES:
Visit Group Discussion in Blackboard for Posted Forum

TFM Student Film Festival (9/12, 9/13). 7 pm. Don Powell Theatre. You are required to attend one night. Turn in your ticket with 1-page personal response for credit. Check TTF website for Ticket information.

WEEK 4: (9/17) Genre: Action/Adventure + Romance = the Adventure-Romance
Case Study: “The African Queen”

Student Home-Viewing Assignment: View a Pixar Feature (if you haven’t completed this yet)

READING:
Corrigan, Timothy. Chapter 3, Chapter 4

WRITING RESPONSES:
Visit Group Discussion in Blackboard for Posted Forum

WEEK 5:  (9/24)  Foundations of Film Art and Film Theory
Case Studies:   Selections

READING:
Pudovkin, V.I. “The Plastic Material” (CR)
Eisenstein, Sergei. “Collision of Ideas” (CR)

WRITING RESPONSES:
Visit Group Discussion in Blackboard for Posted Forum

WEEK 6:  (10/1)  Formalism versus Realism: Montage and Mise-en-scene
Case Studies:   Selections from “The Godfather”, “Close Encounters of the Third Kind”

READING:
Bazin, Andre “The Evolution of the Language of Cinema” (CR)
Arnheim, Rudolf. “Film and Reality,” “The Making of a Film” (CR)
Kracauer, Siegfried. “Basic Concepts” (CR)

WRITING RESPONSES:
Visit Group Discussion in Blackboard for Posted Forum

DUE: Preliminary Topic/Thesis Statement for Final Project (Guidelines Posted in BB)

WEEK 7:  (10/8)  Explorations in Realism
Case Study:  TBA

WRITING RESPONSES:
Visit Group Discussion in Blackboard for Posted Forum

READING:
Corrigan, Timothy. Chapter 5, Chapter 6
Maysles, Albert. “The Documentary” (BB)

WEEK 8:  (10/15)  Semiotics/Structuralism
Case Studies:  Hitchcock’s “The Birds” (sequence)

(MORE)
WEEK 8 CONT’D:

READING:
Wollen, Peter. “The Semiology of the Cinema” (CR)
Seiter, Ellen. “Semiotics, Structuralism, and Television” (CR)

WRITING RESPONSES:
Visit Group Discussion in Blackboard for Posted Forum

ASSIGNMENT: Bring a Magazine Print Advertisement to class.


WEEK 9: (10/22) The Gaze, Hegemony and Music Videos

Case Studies: “Dreamworlds 3” (selections), Music Video selections.

READING:
“Dreamworlds 3” Presskit (BB)
“A Professor’s Class Video Runs Into an MTV Protest” (BB)
Pareles, Jon. “Pop View: Sex, Lies, and the Trouble with Videotapes” (BB)

WRITING RESPONSES:
Visit Group Discussion in Blackboard for Posted Forum

DUE: Revised Topic/Thesis Statement for Final Project, with Outline and Bibliography (Guidelines Posted in BB)

October 18-27. TTF Theatre Production, “A..My Name is Alice”, Experimental Theatre (Attend 1 Theatre Production. Turn in your ticket with 1-page personal response for credit) Check TTF website for Times, Ticket information.

WEEK 10: (10/29) Ideology and Genre I

READING:
Althusser, Louis. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)” (CR)
Altman, Rick. “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre” (CR)

WRITING RESPONSES:
Visit Group Discussion in Blackboard for Posted Forum

November 1-10. TTF Theatre Production, “Little By Little”, Experimental Theatre (Attend 1 Theatre Production. Turn in your ticket with 1-page personal response for credit.) Check TTF website for Times, Ticket information.

WEEK 11: (11/5) Ideology and Genre II

READING:
Corrigan, Timothy. Chapter 7

WRITING RESPONSES:
Visit Group Discussion in Blackboard for Posted Forum
November 1-10. TTF Theatre Production, “Little By Little”, Experimental Theatre (Attend 1 Theatre Production. Turn in your ticket with 1-page personal response for credit.) Check TTF website for Times, Ticket information.

WEEK 12: (11/12) Auteur Theory

READING:
Sarris, Andrew. “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962” (CR)
Duckworth, A.R. “A Couple of Squared Circles, Sarris and Kael -- Part II” (BB)

WRITING RESPONSES: NONE (WORK ON YOUR FINAL PROJECT)


WEEK 13: (11/19) Auteurism on TV and the Internet

Case Studies: Joss Whedon (selections)

READING:
Jenkins, Henry. “Transmedia Storytelling 101” (BB)
Pomeranz, Dorothy. “The Web Auteur: Joss Whedon is teaching Hollywood to stop worrying and love the Internet” (BB)

WRITING RESPONSES:
FIRST DRAFT OF FINAL PROJECT DUE (post online via Turnitin)


WEEK 14: (11/26) OPEN CLASS (TBA)

WRITING RESPONSES:
FINAL PROJECTS DUE (post online via Turnitin)

THANKSGIVING RECESS – November 28-December 1

WEEK 15: (12/3) Spectatorship and the Audience Eye

WEEK 16: (12/10) Bringing it all together. Review for the Final.

CASE STUDY: A “Mystery” Film (required for final exam)

December 12th, TFM Filmmakers Showcase. Don Powell Theatre. Turn in your ticket with 1-page personal response for credit. Check TTF website for Times, Ticket information.

FINAL EXAM: (Bring Scantron Green and #2 Pencil)

Section 2: Tuesday, December 17th 4-6 pm