English 384 Film Theory  
Spring 2010  
Tuesday/Thursday 10:15-12:05 – G107

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Office Hours:  T 9:00-10:00, Th 12:15-1:15  
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Required Text:  

Course Description:  
This course will introduce students to a variety of critical approaches to and debates within film studies. We will consider the aesthetics of cinematic form and discuss the constituent elements of “film language”; we will enter the longstanding debates regarding film “authorship” and examine the work of one contemporary “auteur”; we will discuss the importance of “the star”; we will investigate theories of genre, exploring Film Noir and the horror film; we will study the cinema’s complex relationship to notions of “the real”; we will discuss film’s relationship to the other arts; and, finally, we will analyze issues of cinematic spectatorship and identification.

Course requirements:  
Screenings:  
You are required to be present for all screenings (these are indicated on the syllabus). If you have a documented emergency and must skip a screening, you are responsible for viewing the film(s). The Library (919.515.3365) and the film lab (Tompkins G116) have most of the films we’ll be viewing this term (LAB: T 10-2, W 3-7, and Th 1-3 –contact Terry Hobgood- tah8780@gmail.com - to make arrangements).

Reading:  
You are required to complete all reading for each class session. Read carefully and closely, making comments in the margins of the text and taking notes in order to help your oral responses in class and prepare you for the papers and final examination.

Class Discussion/Oral Participation:  
Discussions will revolve around the materials we’ve read and seen so always bring the text being covered to class along with any notes that you have taken. I frequently call on students to respond to questions or to provide topics for discussion, so be ready to participate on a daily basis. You should feel free to express your opinions and ideas, but also be prepared to draw upon supporting evidence from the essays read or the films screened.

While I do not officially quantify oral participation in determining your grade, participation influences borderline grades. An avid participator with a high B (mathematically) will often receive an A in the course, while someone who does not participate regularly with a borderline B/C will receive a C in the course. Students who participate usually receive the highest grades in the course, largely because they use each class session to test their own ideas.

Administrative:  
If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations please contact me as soon as possible. In order to take advantage of these accommodations, students must register with Disability Services at 2815 Cates Ave, Suite 1900 - Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. For more information, visit http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss/.
If you will be participating in a sport or other University sponsored event this semester you should provide me with documentation so that we can make arrangements for you to make up for any missed class sessions.

**Written Work:**
There are two formal papers in this course. The due dates are noted on your syllabus. You are encouraged to discuss paper topics or any other assignment with me in advance via email or during my office hours. This is one of the best ways to avoid writing an inappropriate paper. Proofreading and revision are essential to good writing and getting another person to read your work often reveals problems that you might miss. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the day that they are due. **Late papers drop a grade per class day that they are late.**

Please consider using NCSU’s **free** Writing Tutorial Services. Call 515-3163 or visit [http://www.ncsu.edu/tutorial_center/writespeak/index.html](http://www.ncsu.edu/tutorial_center/writespeak/index.html) for more information.

**FINAL EXAMINATION**
This class also includes a final exam that will be cumulative. **There are no make-up exams.** You are responsible for all material covered in the readings, screenings, lectures, and discussions.

**Academic Integrity:**
Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes plagiarism, cheating on assignments or exams, turning in work that has been written (partially or entirely) by someone else, fabricating information or citations, or helping another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. I reserve the right to give students a failing grade in the course for any violation of academic integrity.

**ATTENDANCE:**
Attendance is required. If you miss a class, please ask another student for class notes and find out if you missed any assignments. Missing more than 4 classes will result in a 1/3 grade drop for each additional day missed.

**Grades:**
Your final grade will be determined as follows:

- 20% Quizzes/In-Class Writing/Homework
- 20% Paper #1
- 30% Paper #2
- 30% Final

All assignments will be graded with letter grades using a plus/minus scale, or on an equivalent point system.
I. FILM LANGUAGE

T 1/12  Introduction
Screening: Jaws (1975) Steven Spielberg (125 min.)

Th 1/14  Reading: Vsevolod Pudovkin: From Film Technique (On Editing) 7-12
Sergei Eisenstein: From Film Form: “Beyond the Shot” 13-24

T 1/19  PAPER #1 ASSIGNED
Reading: Sergei Eisenstein: “The Dramaturgy of Film Form” 24-40

Th 1/21  CLASS CANCELED

II. FILM AND REALITY

T 1/26  Reading: Christian Metz: From Film Language: “Some Points in the Semiotics of the Cinema” 65-71 + “Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film” 71-77

Th 1/28  Reading: Sigfried Kracauer: From Theory of Film: “Basic Concepts” 147-158
Andre Bazin: From What is Cinema?: “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” 159-163 + “The Myth of Total Cinema” 163-166

T 2/2  SHORT PAPER #1 DUE
Screening: Gates of Heaven (1978) Errol Morris (85 min)


III. THE FILM ARTIST


Th 2/11  Reading: Andrew Sarris: “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962” 451-454

T 2/16  Screening: Mildred Pierce (1945) Michael Curtiz (113 min)


IV. THE FILM MEDIUM: SPECIFICITY AND DISRUPTION


Th 2/25  PAPER #2 ASSIGNED + Lecture/Discussion Topic: Media Reflexivity and Postmodern Theoretics
T 3/2  Screening: *The Conversation* (1974) Francis Ford Coppola (113 min)


V.  FILM NARRITIVE AND THE OTHER ARTS

T 3/9  Reading: Andre Bazin: From *What is Cinema?*: “Theater and Cinema” 345-355


Reading: Devin Orgeron: “La Camera-Crayola: Authorship Comes of Age in the Cinema of Wes Anderson” 40-65 (ER)

T 3/16–Th 3/18 – NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

VI.  FILM GENRES


Th 3/25  PAPER #2 DUE
Reading: Rick Altman: “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre” 552-563

T 3/30  *Touch of Evil* (1958) Orson Welles (95 min)

Th 4/1  CLASS CANCELED – SPRING HOLIDAY

T 4/6  Reading: Paul Schrader: “Notes on Film Noir” 581-591

Th 4/8  Screening: *Alien* (1979) Ridley Scott (117 min)

T 4/13  Reading: Linda Williams: “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess” 602-616

VII.  FILM: PSYCHOLOGY, IDEOLOGY, TECHNOLOGY

Laura Mulvey: “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” 711-722

T 4/20  Screening: *Rear Window* (1954) Alfred Hitchcock (112 min)


T 4/27  Reading: Anne Friedberg: The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change (802-813)

Th 4/29  REVIEW

Final Examination: Thursday, May 6, 8:00-11:00am