



## **Howard Hawks and the Coen Brothers**

English 492N 0002 / MDS 496N

Spring 2004

12:25-2:15 Monday/Wednesday

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Dr. Devin Orgeron

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Office Hours: Monday: 11:00-12:15

Tuesday: 5:00-6:00

Office: Tompkins 284

### **Required Texts:**

- *Howard Hawks: American Artist*. Jim Hillier and Peter Wollen, eds. British Film Institute
- *The Films of Joel and Ethan Coen*. Carolyn R. Russell. McFarland and Co.
- Electronic Reserve Materials (as indicated on syllabus) <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/rbr/>

### **Course Description:**

Though they are situated at opposite ends of the American film timeline, the careers of Howard Hawks and the Coen Brothers illustrate the complex business and art of American image-making. Analysis of key films and critical readings will illuminate what we might consider the “worldviews” of these cinematic talents: their tonal/stylistic consistencies, their thematic interests. Our discussions will be rooted in an understanding of these directors’ historical moments, which will allow for a more complete understanding of how, in two discrete cinematic eras, these filmmakers were/are able to negotiate the American system. Students will write two term papers and have a final examination.

### **Course Requirements:**

#### **Screenings:**

You are required to be present for **all** screenings. If you have a **documented emergency** and must skip a screening, you are responsible for viewing the film(s) screened on your own time prior to class discussion.

#### **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 seen and read so always bring the text being covered to class (even e-reserve materials) along with the notes that you have taken during or after the screenings. 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 films and essays.

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 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. 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, both *about* 8 pages. The due dates for both papers 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 about using NCSU’s *free* Writing Tutorial Services. Call 515-3162 or visit [http://www.ncsu.edu/tutorial\\_center/writespeak/index.htm](http://www.ncsu.edu/tutorial_center/writespeak/index.htm) 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. Any act of academic dishonesty will result in failure in the class and referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

### **Attendance:**

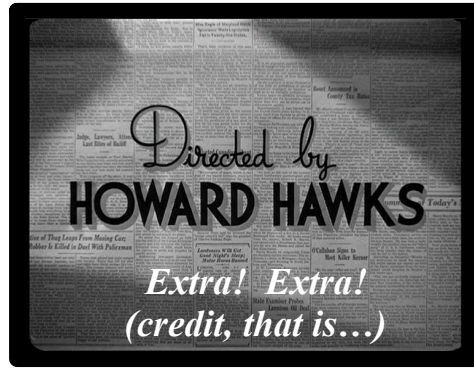
Attendance is required. If you miss a class, please ask another student for class notes and find out if you missed any assignments. More than two absences will result in the lowering of your grade by 1/3 per additional absence (an “A” student with four absences will receive a “B+” for the course).

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### **Grades:**

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

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



During the term, several Howard Hawks films will be screened outside of class. You may earn up to 5 pts. toward your homework/quiz grade by attending these screenings and submitting a two-page write-up (for a total of 10 possible extra credit points). Here's what you do in about *two pages*:

- Briefly summarize points made in introduction. Were the presenter's points/insights useful? Did they provide context?
- Briefly analyze the film (identify, describe, and interpret a scene or two)... What makes this a Hawks film? What Hawksian icons are present (use your scenes as evidence)?

Films screened at NCSU Witherspoon Theater. All films are free and begin at 7:00 p.m.:

Jan. 29: *I Was a Male War Bride* (1949) 105 min.

Feb. 5: *The Thing From Another World* (1951) 87 min.

Feb. 12: *Monkey Business* (1952) 97 min.

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Note: **This syllabus is subject to change.** You are responsible for all changes announced in class. If you miss some or all of a class session, contact a classmate about changes to the syllabus.

Always read the assigned text for the class session on which the assignment appears.

## PART I. – Howard Hawks

**M 1/12**      Screening: *Scarface* (1932) 99 min.

**W 1/14**      Screening: *Bringing up Baby* (1938) 102 min.  
**Reading:**      “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962” (ER-515-518)

**M 1/19**      **NO CLASS: MLK**

**W 1/21**      **Testing The Auteur Theory: Genre and Studio Hopping**  
**Reading:**      From *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*: “The Auteur Theory” (ER 519-535)  
                          “*Scarface* and Howard Hughes” (ER-43-52)  
                          Excerpt from *Who The Devil Made It* (ER-274-279)  
                          “Leopards in Connecticut: *Bringing Up Baby*.” Stanley Cavell (Hillier, 129-143)

**M 1/26**      Screening: *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939) 121 min.

- W 1/28      Hawksian Morality and the Male Bond**  
**Reading:**      “*Barbary Coast* and *Only Angels Have Wings*.” Graham Greene (Hillier, 18-20)  
                          “The Genius of Howard Hawks.” Jacques Rivette (Hillier, 26-31)  
                          “Retrospect.” Robin Wood (Hillier, 162-173)
- T 2/2      Screening: *His Girl Friday* (1940) 92 min.**
- W 2/4      The Hawksian Love Duel**  
**Reading:**      “The Hawksian Woman.” (ER 96-102)  
                          “The Hawksian Woman.” Naomi Wise (Hillier, 111-119)  
                          “A Comment on ‘The Hawksian Woman.’” Leigh Brackett (Hillier, 119-122)
- M 2/9      Screening: *The Big Sleep* (1946) 114 min.**
- W 2/11      Elementary Noir and Narrative Confusion**  
**Reading:**      “Hawks and Faulkner.” Bruce Kawin (Hillier, 144-151)  
                          “Excerpt from *Who The Devil Made It* (ER 333-336)
- M 2/16      Screening: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) 91 min.**
- W 2/18      “A Travesty on Sex” or “I never made a musical and I thought it’d be fun...”**  
**Reading:**      “*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*: Anita Loos/Howard Hawks/Marilyn Monroe.” Laura Mulvey (Hillier, 214-227)
- M 2/23      Screening: *Rio Bravo* (1959) 141 min.**
- W 2/25      How the West was Done (or “The Male Bond Pt. II.”)**  
**Reading:**      “The Western” (ER 112-114)  
                          “*Rio Bravo*.” Robin Wood (Hillier, 87-102)  
                          “The Business of Movies” (ER 27-30)

**PART II. – Joel and Ethan Coen**

- M 3/1      Screening: *Blood Simple* (1984) 99 min.**  
**PAPER #1 DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS**
- W 3/3 – CLASS CANCELLED (PLEASE KEEP UP ON READING – see Wednesday, 3/17)**  
**M 3/8 – NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK**  
**W 3/10 – NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK**
- M 3/15      Screening: *Raising Arizona* (1987) 94 min.**
- W 3/17      Testing the Auteur Theory Pt. II.**  
**Reading:**      “Introduction”, “*Blood Simple*” & “*Raising Arizona*” (Russell, 1-44)
- M 3/22      Screening: *Miller’s Crossing* (1990)**

- W 3/24**      **Machine-gun Dialogue and The Gangster Film Revisited**  
**Reading:**      “*Miller’s Crossing*” (Russell, 45-68)
- M 3/29**      **Screening: *Barton Fink* (1991)**
- W 3/31**      **The Writer’s Game**  
**Reading:**      “*Barton Fink*” (Russell, 69-90)
- M 4/5**      **Screening: *The Hudsucker Proxy* (1994)**
- W 4/7**      **Comic Invention**  
**Reading:**      “*The Hudsucker Proxy*” (Russell, 91-116)
- M 4/12**      **Screening: *Fargo* (1996)**
- W 4/14**      **Blanc or Noir?**  
**Reading:**      “*Fargo*” (Russell, 117-141)  
                     “The Human Condition, Part 2: Wide-Angle Lenses” (ER 81-85)
- M 4/19**      **Screening: *The Big Lebowski* (1998)**
- W 4/21**      **Postmodern Generic Cocktail**  
**Reading:**      “*The Big Lebowski*” (Russell, 142-168)  
                     “The Production Design: Brunswick, Fluxus, Googie, Noir (Though Not  
                     Necessarily in That Order)” (ER 87-104)
- M 4/26**      **Screening: *O’ Brother Where Art Thou?* (2000)**
- W 4/28**      **The Male Bond**  
**PAPER # 2 DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS**

**Final Examination: Monday, May 3 – 1-4pm**  
 ...No alternate days, no make ups...  
 Bring an examination booklet, a pen



E-Reserve Information.

**To Access Materials:**

Items marked (ER) on syllabus are available electronically at <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/rbr/>. As indicated, you will need to provide your professor's name OR the course number. Depending on your connection, these might take some time to download and print; give yourself plenty of time and, whenever possible, try to access these materials from on-campus labs.

**Bibliographical information:**

Materials are extracted from the following sources. Listed after each source are the articles/chapters/section extracted.

Bogdanovich, Peter. *Who The Devil Made It: Conversations With Legendary Film Directors*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1997.

- 1/21: Excerpt from "The Rules of the Game": 274-279
- 2/11: Excerpt from "The Rules of the Game": 333-336

Braudy, Leo and Marshall Cohen, eds. *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

- 1/14: Sarris, Andrew. "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962": 515-518
- 1/21: Wollen, Peter. From *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*: "The Auteur Theory": 519-535

Cooke, Tricia, ed. With William Preston Robertson, text. *The Big Lebowski: The Making of a Coen Brothers Film*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998.

- 4/14: "The Human Condition, Part 2: Wide-Angle Lenses": 81-85
- 4/21: "The Production Design: Brunswick, Fluxus, Google, Noir (Though Not Necessarily in That Order)": 87-104

McBride, Joseph. *Hawks on Hawks*. University of California Press: Berkeley, 1982.

- 1/21: "Scarface and Howard Hughes": 43-52
- 2/4: "The Hawksian Woman": 96-102
- 2/25: "The Western": 112-114
- "The Business of Movies" 27-30