English 384 Film Theory
Fall 2004
Tuesday/Thursday 2:35-4:25 – G107

Dr. Devin Orgeron  e-mail: devin_orgeron@ncsu.edu
Office Hours:  T 1:30-2:30, Th 4:30-5:30
Office: Tompkins 284

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 both the American Western 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) screened on your own time prior to class discussion. The Library’s media center – 2nd floor of D.H. Hill, 515-2977 – has most of the films we’ll be viewing this term.

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 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 515-3162 or visit 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. 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. Two absences are permitted. Beyond that you will lose 1/3 rd of a grade for each 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.
# English 384: Film Theory

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.

## I. FILM LANGUAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Th 8/19</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 8/24</td>
<td>Screening: <em>Jaws</em> (1975) Steven Spielberg (125 min.)</td>
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<td>Th 8/26</td>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Vsevolod Pudovkin: From <em>Film Technique</em> (On Editing) 7-12</td>
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<td>Sergei Eisenstein: From <em>Film Form</em>: “Beyond the Shot” 13-22 &amp; “The Dramaturgy of Film Form” 23-40</td>
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<td>Th 9/2</td>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Christian Metz: From <em>Film Language</em>: “Some Points in the Semiotics of the Cinema” 65-71 &amp; “Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film” 72-86</td>
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## II. FILM AND REALITY

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/7</td>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Sigfried Kracauer: From <em>Theory of Film</em>: “Basic Concepts” 143-153</td>
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<td>Andre Bazin: From <em>What is Cinema?</em>: “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” 166-170 &amp; “The Myth of Total Cinema” 170-173</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/14</td>
<td>SHORT PAPER #1 DUE</td>
<td>Screening: <em>Gates of Heaven</em> (1978) Errol Morris (85 min)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 9/16</td>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Maya Deren: “Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality” 187-198</td>
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## III. THE FILM ARTIST

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Th 9/23</td>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Andrew Sarris: “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962” 561-564</td>
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<td>T 9/28</td>
<td>Screening:</td>
<td><em>Mildred Pierce</em> (1945) Michael Curtiz (113 min)</td>
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<td>Th 9/30</td>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Robert Allen: From <em>Film History: Theory and Practice</em>: “The Role of the Star in Film History [Joan Crawford]” 606-619</td>
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## IV. THE FILM MEDIUM: SPECIFICITY AND DISRUPTION

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<tr>
<td>T 10/5</td>
<td>Reading:</td>
<td>Sigfried Kracauer: From <em>Theory of Film</em>: “The Establishment of Physical Existence” 303-313</td>
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<td>Noel Carroll: From <em>Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory</em>: “The Specificity Thesis” 332-338</td>
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Th 10/7   NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

T 10/12   Screening: *The Conversation* (1974) Francis Ford Coppola (113 min)

Th 10/14  Reading: Christian Metz: “Aural Objects” 366-369
           Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Grigori Alexandrov: “Statement on Sound” 370-372

V. FILM NARRITIVE AND THE OTHER ARTS
T 10/19   Reading: Andre Bazin: From *What is Cinema?*: “Theater and Cinema” 418-428
           Leo Braudy: From *The World in a Frame*: “Acting: Stage vs. Screen” 429-435

Th 10/21  PAPER #2 ASSIGNED
           Lecture/Discussion Topic: Media Reflexivity and Postmodern Theoretics

T 10/26   Screening: *One Plus One: Sympathy for the Devil* (1968) Jean-Luc Godard (104 min)

Th 10/28  Reading: “Peter Wollen: Godard and Counter Cinema: Vent d’Est” 525-533

VI. FILM GENRES
T 11/2    Reading: Leo Braudy: From *The World in a Frame*: “Genre: The Conventions of Connection” 663-679

Th 11/4   PAPER #2 DUE
           Reading: Rick Altman: “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre” 680-690

T 11/9    Screening: *High Noon* (1952) Fred Zinnemmann (85 min)


T 11/16   Screening: *Alien* (1979) Ridley Scott (117 min)

Th 11/18  Reading: Linda Williams: “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess” 727-741

VII. FILM: PSYCHOLOGY, IDEOLOGY, TECHNOLOGY
           Laura Mulvey: “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” 837-848

Th 11/25  NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

T 11/30   Screening: *Rear Window* (1954) Alfred Hitchcock (112 min)


Final Examination: Thursday, Dec. 7, 1:00-4:00pm