

**LC 150, Reading Film: Introduction to Film Studies**  
**Department of Languages, Literature, and Cultures, Fall 2018**



Lola rennt, Tom Tykwer, 1998

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<b>Moodle password</b>	film

**Course Description**

This course introduces students to the language of cinema through close studies of, and foundational readings on film theory, narrative/documentary structure, camera technique, lighting, sound, casting, and location. Students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of film language through scholarly analysis of both canonical and contemporary cinema texts; they will move beyond the passive reception of an image-based world by working towards increased intellectual adaptability in terms of engaged film reading skills. These learning outcomes to be targeted throughout the semester will be developed through a number of concentrated themes ranging from an analysis of the discreet elements

that make a film such as sound, light and motion, over the changing significance of film genres, such as the horror film, from noir and comedy, to the film industry itself which builds on the intersection of reception, audience response, marketing and distribution of specific works as related to the history of a film's critical and commercial success. At the end of the semester, students can choose to showcase what they have learned either by writing a scholarly comparative essay on two films, or by collaboratively producing their own short film in a context which simulates challenges analogous to those encountered in film production (brainstorming and pitching, production, task delegation, execution design/ storyboarding, image capturing, editing, response to feedback, public presentation).

### **Required Materials**

- David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, Jeff Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction*, referred to as FA in the syllabus (*available at the Franklin Bookstore*)
- Texts on Moodle
- Films made available on internet; open viewing on Wednesday evenings in class room

### **Course Goals**

The goals of this course include the following:

- to develop critical thinking about the various elements that go into making and reading films, such as light, sound, movement, space, composition and narrative
- to learn about the contexts in which films are made, such as marketing, financing and distribution
- to develop cinematic literacy—they will recognize, and use the basis critical and technical vocabulary of motion pictures;
- to practice synthesizing information from classroom discussions, viewings, and readings;
- to present this information in a variety of formats, including class discussion, oral presentation, and homework assignments;
- and to demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively and use technology effectively in making a short film of their own.

### **Student Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this class, students should:

- be able to analyze various aspects of a film, for instance a mise-en-scène, or the lighting and sound of a scene, using appropriate critical and technical vocabulary;
- understand how technology of the cinema related to the art of film making;
- understand the role of genre in film
- increase their ability to watch films actively and critically
- be able to use film stills, film clips and full-length films to understand the world around us.

**Class Requirements:**

- attendance and participation (10%)
- presentation (20%)
- one short formal analysis of a short film, 4-5 pages (15%)
- mid-term (25%)
- a collaborative, short film (ten minutes) (30%)
- **OR**
- a comparative analytical essay on two full-length films, 8-10 pages (30%)

**Presentation**

One formal 15-minute presentation that discusses the main points of the theoretical readings of the day, links it to the film of the week and asks three questions to start class room discussion.

**Short formal analysis of film**

Analyze one of the films we have viewed using one or more of the concepts we have discussed (mise-en-scene, editing, narrative, cinematography, etc). The essay should be between 4 to 6 pages, using times 12, double-spaced. Please submit in word (not pdf) so I can comment on the paper.

**Mid-term**

The mid-term exam will test your understanding of the theory, and your ability to use basic critical and technical vocabulary to analyse film.

**Final project**

Choose two to three films and write a comparative analysis (8/10 pages) OR in groups of three to four, create a short film of up to ten minutes that includes a short, 2-page analysis.

**Attendance Policy**

This is a class that lives from regular viewing, reading and writing, stringent thinking, regular scholarly risk-taking, and ongoing, open-minded conversation. It is yours to take responsibility for and to shape and mould with engaged presence. You will do well if you hand in your assignments on time, come regularly and participate avidly. That said, I do understand that sometimes attendance is impossible. For this reason you can miss two classes, no questions asked. Save these freebies for your parents' or friends' visits, for that extra-long week-end or for staying home with a cold. For a third and fourth absence to be excused, I require a doctor's note. All absences after that will result in automatic withdrawal from the course.

**Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism**

Do not cheat and do not plagiarise—I have a zero-tolerance policy on this issue. You do either and you're out with an F. If you are unsure what constitutes cheating or plagiarising, please come and see me. For the rest, please refer to the College Handbook's Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism.

## Course Calendar (subject to change in accordance with class needs)

Please note: the readings are due on the day on which they are indicated; the screenings of the week are indicated every Monday, and must be viewed by Thursday of the same week.

### Part I: History, Form, Narrative, Style

M August 27

Introductions, logistics, how to use the text book  
Assignment of group presentations

Assignment: Formal Analysis of a film  
Please write an analysis of 4 to 6 pages on one of the films we have viewed. Rough draft due: October 1; final essay due: October 8.

Screening- *Springtime in an English Village*. What do you see? What questions do you ask?

Please write a short text.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QbHhm4620I>

T August 30

ON FILM ART AND FILM MAKING

Reading- FA, 2-24

Discussion of *Springtime in an English Village*

M Sept 3

Screening- *Lola rennt* (Tom Tykwer, Germany, 1998)

Reading- FA: 24-48

Presentation:

T Sept 6

FORM, NARRATIVE AND STYLE

Reading- FA: 50-71: The Significance of Film Form

Presentation:

M Sept 10

Screening- *Citizen Kane* (Orson Wells, USA, 1941)

Reading- FA: 72-94: Narrative Form

Presentation:

T Sept 13

Reading- FA: pp. 94-110: Narrative Form cont.

Presentation:

M Sept 17

Screening- *Collateral* (Michael Mann, USA, 2004)

Reading- FA, pp. 112-134: Mise-en-Scene

Presentation:

T Sept 20

Reading- FA, pp. 134-158: Mise-en-Scene, cont.

Presentation:

M Sept 24	CINEMATOGROPHY, EDITING AND SOUND <i>Screening- Boyhood</i> (Richard Linklater, USA, 2014) Reading- FA, 159-179: Cinematography Presentation:
T Sept 27	Reading- FA, 179-215: Cinematography, cont. Presentation:
M Oct 1	<i>Due- draft of first essay</i> <i>Peer session (come to class with 2 copies of your paper or one copy and your computer!)</i>
T Oct 4	Optional individual meeting with students on their papers
M Oct 8	<i>Screening- City of God</i> (Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, Brasil, 2003)  Reading- FA, 217-241: Editing <i>Due on Moodle by midnight—final copy of first essay.</i> Presenter:
T Oct 11	Reading- FA, 241-262, Editing, cont. Discussion of class conference and assignment of groups
M Oct 15	Mid-term exam
T Oct 18	Discussion: final project: either making your own short film (15 minutes) or writing a comparative essay (8-10 pages) <i>Assignment: Final project</i> Choose two to three films and write a comparative analysis (8/10pages), or in groups of three to four, create a short film of up to ten minutes. <i>Rough draft due December 3<sup>rd</sup>, final paper/film due during final's period on Moodle.</i> Brainstorming of possibilities with short presentations of 2 minutes.
<i>Academic Travel, October 22 to November 2 2(Happy Trails!)</i>	
M Nov 5	<i>Screening, partly in class- The Piano</i> (Jane Campion, Australia, 1993) Reading- FA, 263-280, Sound Presenter:

T Nov 8	No class  Due by midnight on Moodle-ideas for what you would like to focus on, and group assignment for the film group
M Nov 12	Screening- <i>Moonrise Kingdom</i> (Wes Anderson, USA 2012) Reading-FA, 280-302 , Sound, cont.  Presenter:
T Nov 15	Reading- FA, 303-324: Style  Presenter:
<b>Part II: Genres, Analysis, History</b>	
M Nov 19	DOCUMENTARY FILM Screening- <i>The White Helmets</i> (Orlando von Einsiedel, UK, 2016)  Reading- FA, 326-349 Film Genres  Presenter:
T Nov 22	Reading- FA, 350-364 Documentary  Presenter:
M Nov 26	CRITICAL FILM ANALYSIS Screening- <i>Meet Me in St Louis</i> (Vincente Minelli, USA, 1944) Reading, 401-446  Presenter:
T Nov 29	<b>Due-</b> topic for final project. Please come prepared to present to class (2 minutes each)
M Dec 3	FILM HISTORY Reading, FA, 452-491  Presenter:
T Dec 6	PEER REVIEW SESSION <b>Due-</b> rough draft of final paper
Final's period (tba)	Presentations of final projects & fare-wells!  <b>Due on Moodle-</b> final copy/video of final project