



Spring 2020

CLASS: TUESDAYS, 2:50-5:50PM, TC 112

SCREENINGS: THURSDAYS, 7-9:30PM, RAZZO HALL

PROF. ROX SAMER

EMAIL: RSAMER@CLARKU.EDU

OFFICE: 202 TRAINA CENTER

OFFICE HOURS: FRIDAYS, 1:30-2:30PM, & BY APPOINTMENT

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course surveys theoretical paradigms central to the study of cinema. It is organized historically and thematically to give students a clear sense of the range of theoretical approaches taken by Screen Studies scholars as well as psychologists, art historians, and philosophers devoted to the study of what Ricciotto Canudo termed in 1923 "the seventh art." These approaches and the ideas and arguments they make possible regain relevance as debates around CG technologies, streaming platforms, and "new media" raise the specters of the decades-old question of what is cinema.

Students should leave the class with:

- A thorough introduction to the key philosophies and approaches of film theory
- Deeper knowledge of the history of Screen Studies as a discipline
- Greater confidence in their skills of film analysis and theoretical writing

REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts required for this course will be available as PDFs on Moodle.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING POLICIES

Participation: 10% of final grade

Discussion Leading: 15%

Paper 1: 15%

Paper 2: 15%

Paper 3: 15%

Conference Presentation: 10%

Final Video Essay: 20%

Your final grade will be calculated as a score out of 100 possible points for the semester. A standard 90-80-70-60 scale will be applied.

“A” work extends and expands our in-class discussions and offers original and creative thought. It meets all elements of the assignment or exam prompt and responds with a high degree of organizational foresight. “A” is reserved for outstanding work.

“B” work responds to the assignment or exam prompt insightfully, revealing strong command of the material we have covered. “B” is reserved for good work. “B” work, however, is less bold, less original, and/or less organized and well written than “A” work.

“C” work completes assignments and meets assignment requirements, while demonstrating a partial understanding of course content and minimal original thinking.

“D” work meets the technical requirements enumerated in the assignment or exam prompt, while failing to demonstrate any significant course-specific learning.

“F” work fails to meet the requirements of the assignment or exam, including but not limited to: lack of concrete textual analysis, inability to answer prompts, insufficient length, excessive grammatical and/or spelling errors, or late submission.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

This class meets only once each week, and you are expected to attend every class meeting. While we will have weekly readings, much of the course content will appear in the form of lectures and class discussions. Students who miss class will be ill prepared for the paper assignments. If you must miss class because of illness or an emergency, it is your responsibility to secure notes from a classmate and/or meet with the professor during office hours to learn about what you missed. Good class participation involves contributing to the discussion in an informed manner, being attentive to that conversation, and being respectful of the participants in it.

This course, like all other 1 credit courses at Clark, comes with the expectation that over the course of the semester students will devote 180 hours to its study. This means that in addition to the forty or so hours we will spend together in the classroom you should plan

to devote another 140 hours to your readings, screenings, and assignments. Much of this time should go to reading (and arguably re-reading) each week. If you consistently put in this time, you ought to be prepared to serve as a productive class participant.

Phones, laptops, and tablets must be put away for the duration of the class. Devices are a distraction in a class of this size. You are expected to bring the required books (or photocopies of assigned chapters) to class and print all PDF readings. Please take notes in a notebook and bring this notebook to class.

Although you are welcome to re-watch our weekly films at the Traina Resource Library, attending our weekly Wednesday night screenings is mandatory. Screening a film in a theater with an audience is vastly different than watching a film at home on your laptop. During screenings, all devices should be away. Attendance will be taken.

LEADING SEMINAR DISCUSSION

Each student will be required to co-lead one 1-hour discussion of a reading. Prepare 1) a brief introduction to the scholar whose work we are discussing (including an accompanying single Powerpoint, Google or other slideshow platform slide); 2) a list of eight to ten thoughtful, open-ended questions about the reading, including its arguments, examples, and methodologies; and 3) one clip from the given week's film. Students are expected to lead discussion with minimal consultation of their notes and practice thinking on their feet. Print an extra copy of your notes to submit for grading.

PAPERS

Each student will write three 2,000-word papers. A prompt will be provided for each paper. However, in each of these papers you must write about one of twelve recent films, and each paper must be on a different one of these twelve films:

Call Me By Your Name (Guadagnino, 2017)

Lady Bird (Gerwig, 2017)

Get Out (Peele, 2017)

Phantom Thread (Anderson, 2017)

The Shape of Water (del Toro, 2017)

Wonder Woman (P. Jenkins, 2017)

Let the Sunshine In (Denis, 2017)

Black Panther (Coogler, 2018)

If Beale Street Could Talk (B. Jenkins, 2018)

Roma (Cuarón, 2018)

Wild Nights with Emily (Olnek, 2018)

Booksmart (Wilde, 2019)

No more than three students may write about any given film at a time. At least one of your three films must be directed by a woman (Gerwig, P. Jenkins, Denis, Olnek, Wilde).

VIDEO ESSAY

For your final assignment, you will create a video essay of 5-7 minutes in length. You will be asked to draw on one reading from unit IV as well as one or more readings from earlier in the semester. You will select one of the three films you have already written about to work with. While a prompt will be provided, in short you will be given the opportunity to craft your own film theory for our cinematic present.

SUBMITTING WORK VIA EMAIL

Submit all assignments as Word docs via email. When submitting work, be sure to include a header at the top of your assignment that includes your name. Also be sure

to save all files as "LastName_Assignment," i.e. "Smith_Paper1" or "Smith_Paper2." Students who fail to do as much will be penalized a third of a letter grade.

EXTRA CREDIT

Over the course of the semester, I will announce a number of screenings and events, both on and off campus, related to our course. You are strongly encouraged to attend Prof. Laura Horak's talk on February 3rd as well as Prof. Sarah Keller's talk on March 25th and will receive a full point of extra credit for each. Attending all others will earn you a half point of extra credit. Max EC earned: 4pts.

COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT I: THE SEVENTH ART	What is Film Theory?
Jan. 14	Read: Ricciotto Canudo, "The Birth of a Sixth Art" (1911) & "Reflections on the Seventh Art" (1923); Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures" (1934); and Martin Scorsese, "I Said Marvel Movies Aren't Cinema. Let Me Explain." (2019)
Jan. 16	<i>City Lights</i> (Chaplin, 1931)
	Formalist Film Theory
Jan. 21	Read: Sergei Eisenstein, "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form" (1929); and Rudolph Arnheim, "Film and Reality" and "The Making of a Film" from <i>Film as Art</i> (1933)
Jan. 23	Screen: <i>The 400 Blows</i> (Truffaut, 1959)
	Realist Film Theory
Jan. 28	Read: Kracauer, "Basic Concepts" from <i>Theory of Film</i> (1960); and Andre Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," "The Myth of Total Cinema," "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," and "Charlie Chaplin" from <i>What Is Cinema? Vol. 1</i> (1967)
UNIT II: PSYCHOANALYSIS, SEMIOTICS & IDEOLOGY	

Psychoanalysis & Semiotics

Jan. 30 Screen: *Boogie Nights* (Anderson, 1997)

Feb. 3 Laura Horak, "'Representing Ourselves into Existence': Tracing the History of Trans Filmmaking in the United States and Canada," 7:30pm, Razzo Hall

Feb. 4 Read: Christian Metz, "Some Points in the Semiotics of the Cinema" from *Film Language* (1974); and Christian Metz, "Identification, Mirror," "The Passion for Perceiving," and "Disavowal, Fetishism" from *The Imaginary Signifier* (1977)

Ideology

Feb. 6 Screen: *The Social Network* (Fincher, 2010)

PAPER #1 DUE February 6th at 12pm

Feb. 11 Read: Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus" (1970); Teresa de Lauretis, "Technology of Gender" (1987); and Douglas Kellner, "Film, Politics, and Ideology: Reflections on Hollywood Films in the Age of Reagan" (1991)

Third Cinema

Feb. 13 Screen: *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash, 1991)

Feb. 18 Read: Solanas and Getino, "Toward a Third Cinema" (1969); Teshome Gabriel, "Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films" (1985); and Manthia Diawara, "Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance" (1988)

UNIT III: AUTEURS, GENRES & SOUND

Feb. 20

Screen: *The Long Goodbye* (Altman, 1973)

Feb. 25: Guest Lecture by
Prof. Hugh Manon

Read: Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962" (1962); and Rick Altman, "Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism" (1980)

Genre Theory

Feb. 27 Screen: *Grizzly Man* (Herzog, 2005)

PAPER #2 DUE February 27th at 12pm

Mar. 10 Read: Rick Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre" (1984); Bill Nichols, "How Can We Define Documentary Film?" (2001); and Michael Renov, "Towards a Poetics of Documentary" (1993)

Sound

Mar. 12 Screen: *The Piano* (Campion, 1993)

Mar. 17 Read: Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space" (1980); Claudia Gorbman, "Narratological Perspectives on Film Music" from *Unheard Melodies* (1987); and Michel Chion, "The Acousmêtre" and "The Screaming Point" from *The Voice in Cinema* (1999)

UNIT IV: PHILOSOPHY, PHENOMENOLOGY & FILM THEORY AFTER FILM

Philosophy & Film

Mar. 19 Screen: *Strangers on a Train* (Hitchcock, 1951)

Mar. 24 Read: Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave" (380 BC); Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" from *Simulacra and Simulations* (1981)

Phenomenology

Mar. 25 Sarah Keller, "Both Sides of the Coin: Maya Deren's Experimental Film Practice," 7:30pm, Razzo Hall

Mar. 26 Screen: *Soft Fiction* (Strand, 1979) & *The Odds of Recovery* (Friedrich, 2002)

PAPER #3 DUE March 26 at 12pm

Mar. 31 Read: Vivian Sobchack, "Phenomenology and the Film Experience" from *The Address of the Eye* (1992);

and Laura U. Marks, "Video Haptics and Erotics" from *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (2002)

Film Theory After Film

Apr. 2

Screen: *Life of Pi* (Lee, 2012)

Apr. 7

Read: Lev Manovich, "Digital Cinema and the History of a Moving Image" from *The Language of New Media* (2001); D.N. Rodowick, selections from *The Virtual Life of Film* (2007); and Kara Keeling, "I = Another: Digital Identity Politics" (2011)

UNIT V: WRAPPING UP

Apr. 9

Screen: Video Essays playlist

Apr. 14

Read: Kristen Warner, "The Sustainability of Film and Media Studies" (2018)

Listen: Aca-Media podcast episode 17 and episode 51 interviews with Catherine Grant of *[in]Transition*

Apr. 16

Conference Presentations

Apr. 21

Conference Presentations

Finals Period

Final Video Essay Due

SCREENING CONTENT WARNING

Screenings contain physical violence, sexual violence, suicide, and other forms of upsetting content. Please speak to me immediately if you have any concerns.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

College can be stressful. This stress can be exasperated by crises. If you suspect you might be experiencing excessive anxiety, depression or some other mental health concern, please visit Clark's Office of Counseling and Personal Growth. They are located at 114 Woodland Street and open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm (closed 12-1pm for lunch). Their phone number is (508) 793-7678. Their website also has a great list of resources: <https://www.clarku.edu/offices/counseling/mental-health-toolbox/>.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

If you require accommodations in this course due to a disability or a personal circumstance that will affect your learning in this course, please contact me, so we can discuss the best ways to meet your needs. Any student who needs accommodations for disabilities should also register with the Office of Disability Services. For information,

please contact Adam Kosakowski, Director of Disability Services, at 508-798-4368 or at <AKosakowski@clarku.edu>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is a basic value for all higher learning. Simply expressed, it requires that work presented must be wholly one's own and unique to that course. All direct quotations must be identified by source. Academic integrity can be violated in many ways: for example, by submitting someone else's paper as one's own; cheating on an exam; submitting one paper to more than one class; copying a computer program; altering data in an experiment; or quoting published material without proper citation of references or sources. Attempts to alter an official academic record will also be treated as violations of academic integrity.

To ensure academic integrity and safeguard students' rights, all suspected violations of academic integrity are reported to the College Board. Such reports must be carefully documented, and students accused of the infraction are notified of the charge. In the case of proven academic dishonesty, the student will receive a sanction, which may range from an F in the assignment or course to suspension or expulsion from the University.

The complete academic integrity policy is available with Academic Advising at <http://www.clarku.edu/offices/aac/integrity.cfm>

NOTICE: FACULTY MEMBERS ARE “RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYEES”

This notice is to inform you that the faculty member associated with this course is considered a “Responsible Employee” by Clark University. As such, I am required to report all alleged sexual offenses to the University’s Title IX Coordinator, Lynn Levey, llevy@clarku.edu. The only exceptions to this reporting responsibility are the community members who have been designated and/or trained as “Confidential” Sources. This includes the professional staff in Clark's Center for Counseling and Personal Growth and the medical providers at the Health Center, as well as other individuals listed at <http://bit.ly/2eUOGGx>

DISCLAIMER

As the professor, I reserve the right to make changes to any information contained in this syllabus at any time during the semester. Changes will be announced, and an updated version of the syllabus will be posted on Moodle and/or distributed to students.

All grade decisions are final.