

**Western Nevada College**  
**THTR 180 – CINEMA as ART and COMMUNICATION**  
**FALL 2008 SYLLABUS and COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

1) Understanding Movies by Louis Giannetti, 11th Edition, Prentice Hall, 2007, ISBN: 978-0-13-233699-4

**Course Description**

We are all bombarded with visual images on a daily basis. We are affected by these images whether we are aware of it or not. One current of imagery we experience are images and stories we experience through the medium of cinema. We all react positively to certain images and stories and more negatively to others. However, many of us may not know why we react the way we do to the images, stories and ideas communicated through the cinematic medium.

This course will help us begin to understand, identify, judge, and assimilate the flood of media stimuli in the form of cinema. The class is designed to help students gain an overall understanding of the impact films have on us. By breaking films apart and identifying the various elements of film, we can begin to understand the physical and emotional impact movies have on us. To this end, students will have the opportunity to view and analyze segments of popular and classic films, from the silent era to today.

We will perform a series of practical exercises that will provoke students to think about the images that bombard them in a more critical manner. I believe that careful study of the elements that make up great films can bring a new level of appreciation for the individual elements of this most powerful art form.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- a) place a film on the Realism to Formalism (R to F) scale
- b) identify elements of film that create meaning and drama in film: framing and cinematography; editing and pacing; story development and story structure; acting and mise-en-scene

c) understand better how films create emotional responses within us

d) categorize acting styles in any film

### ACADEMIC HONESTY

**All work done for this class is required to be INDIVIDUAL in nature, and not to be developed in a group setting or sharing of notes from any other students. Each journal entry, board posting, mid-term examination and final paper must be the original work of the individual student, without exception. Discussing a movie with a classmate is fine, but developing joint responses that are turned in as individual work is prohibited under all circumstances.**

There are many forms of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to a) plagiarism b) data falsification and c) contract cheating.

**Plagiarism** is claiming another's work as one's own, without proper notification, and occurs when you paraphrase without acknowledgement.

**Data falsification** includes making false claims about research performed, including selective reporting of results to exclude inconvenient data to generating bogus data. It can occur in any grade, at any institution.

**Contract cheating** involves students paying others to create ,Äüoriginal,Äù work. You may not pass off work as your own that you have not fully created.

**Western Nevada College's policy encompasses all work in the course, including: writing assignments, quizzes and exams as well as discussion board postings!**

**Cheating will not be tolerated. Engaging in any form of cheating or plagiarism or putting forth unoriginal work will result in failing the course with an F.**

### NOTICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

WNC supports equal access for students with disabilities. Susan Trist (DSS coordinator) is available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that students may require. Please contact Susan directly (445-3275) at your earliest convenience, should you want to explore the options available.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

You will find complete assignments in the home page under the icon named ASSIGNMENTS. The ASSIGNMENTS icon of the home page will be your diving board for the week. Print your assignments for the week, and then go forth and discover! Make sure to check links in case I have populated the link for the week with an assigned reading topic that comes from a source other than the textbooks.

Please note that for the purposes of this class, the “week” starts Monday and ends Sunday evening. I will release the week's assignments (under ASSIGNMENTS icon) each Sunday evening. Because of the importance of the timing of the class, I will post only a couple of weeks at a time, to prevent the A-Type personalities from jumping ahead too far.

As I have stated repeatedly, this is NOT a self-paced course. Even though there is no real time component of the class, being an active member of the class on a weekly basis – 3-4 times per week - is a large part of your grade. You are required to stay current with the weekly reading, writing and film viewing assignments to earn full credit for the course. You are expected to post at least one original posting, and respond to AT LEAST 3 additional postings for each topic required each week. Often, new questions will arise during the week’s discussions and I may pose additional questions on the boards that are impromptu and brought forth by a fellow student’s question or discussion point.

It is critical that you read the lecture notes (posted under the ASSSIGNMENTS icon on the homepage) and prepare to watch the film EARLY in the week, so you can then spend time discussing the film, and perhaps going back and watching sections again. This often happens, as debates and questions will arise as to certain aspects of a film, and you may wish to re-watch a scene or section to get a better idea of it. Plan for this, and make time for it. It will serve you, and the class, well.

## **GRADING AND EVALUATION**

The grading schema I use in this course rewards two things: the QUALITY and TIMELINESS of your responses and assignments.

My expectations for quality are simple: discussion board postings should reflect your thought process, and clearly address the issue(s) in the topic question.

Timeliness is also a critical factor. I will be reviewing the WebCT statistics weekly and expect you to remain within the mathematical guidelines of the class. If your posting level is not sufficient, your participation grade (see below) will drop.

As a courtesy to those of you who may be taking an online course for the first time, I will give everyone a reminder email or two on your posting level if you are behind. However, you are adults, and you can do the math. If the first week requires three discussion board questions, then you should have approximately 3 original postings, and a minimum of 3 response postings (depending on your interest and motivation). You can do more, but less will be docked. I will keep a running total, and making your postings up at the end will not cut the butter, so to speak.

### **Grading Schema**

100 points total

Discussion Board participation - 40 points (split into two 20-point segments of first half up to mid-term; and second half of class). Online participation on discussion boards graded both on quantity and quality as stated above in Grading and Evaluation section.

Mid-term exam - 20 points. This test will be given online, and instructions will be forthcoming as the date approaches. It will be a timed test, and you will be able to start it once.

Journal 1 and 2 assignments - 10 points each for a total of 20 points.

For your journal, you should create a Word document that you continually add to. Please clearly demarcate each entry with the DATE, MOVIE of the WEEK, and Journal Assignment NAME.

Journal assignment #1 is due in my email box by **Sunday, March 9, 2008** at midnight.

Journal assignment #2 will be due in my email box by **Wednesday May 7, 2008** at midnight.

Final Paper - 20 points Details will be given out four weeks before the due date. The paper is due **Wednesday, May 7, 2008** by midnight in my email box.

The journals and final paper are due in my email in-box by midnight PST on the date indicated. A half-point per day will be deducted for late assignments.

## **GRADING SCALE**

98-100 A+

94-97 A

90-93 A-

87-89 B+

84 \_ 86 B

80 - 83 B-

77\_ 79 C+

74-76 C

70-73 C-

67-69 D+

64 \_ 66 D

61-63 D-

Below F

## **LATE PAPER/ASSIGNMENT POLICY**

Due to the blistering pace of this course, falling behind will cause you to crash and burn. Late work will be marked down half-point per day. Please do everything you can to stay current.

I am available through the Discussion Boards and via email: to discuss any issues affecting your success in the class.

## **HOW TO SEND AND NAME ASSIGNMENTS**

Your electronic assignments should be named after this naming convention: First initial+Last name+J1 or J2 or FP

(example: MstrangeJ2 would be for my Journal #2 assignment.).

J1 = Journal #1, J2 = Journal #2 and FP = Final Paper.

Please make arrangements to use Microsoft Word, Appleworks, or a word processing application that can create either a .txt or a .rtf file. If you are using a different program, you may also send me a .pdf file.

To reiterate, I can accept the following file types:

.doc  
.rtf  
.txt  
.cwk  
.pdf

Wrong file types are not an excuse of lateness. Your assignments will be docked half-point per day if they come in at the last minute, and I cannot open them.

**PLEASE MAKE SURE TO CHECK WITH ME IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS!!!**

### **ASSIGNMENT TYPES**

Students will buff up their sensory intelligence through a series of participatory exercises, in addition to adding to discussion boards that weigh heavily in the grading. During this course, students will:

- 1) watch movies
- 2) read textbook sections
- 3) keep an electronic journal
- 4) pacing, editing, sound-awareness and other practical exercises
- 5) online midterm
- 6) write final exam paper

### **FILM VIEWING**

It is the responsibility of each student to arrange to see the required films at the appropriate time. It is UP TO YOU to either rent or borrow the films so that you can keep up with the class schedule.

Libraries at both Fallon and Carson campuses house most of the films you'll need for this course. Be aware that you can't check the films out however - you must view the films in the library. Check library hours and other information at:

<http://library.wnc.edu/aboutthelibrary/hours.htm>

You must watch the films each week or you cannot participate in the time-critical discussion boards. These discussions will be moderated and monitored for participation!

For your consideration, I strongly suggest you sign up with an online DVD rental service, such as Blockbuster Online or Netflix. They have all recently dropped their prices drastically to gain customers... it is now only dollars per month to have three DVDs out at a time. Blockbuster Online allows you to turn in discs you received through the mail at a brick-and-mortar store, and get them faster.... Check 'em out, and you may find you like the service.

### **MOVIE LIST**

So you can get started lining up your entertainment for the next few months at the video store or Netflix, here is our film list.

**\*\* IMPORTANT!!!! I have noted the director, and the year of the production, since some of them have been remade, or several versions exist. Please use this list to make sure you get the right film!!! This is not an excuse for late postings.**

This is the approximate order in which we will be viewing them:

1. Shawshank Redemption d. Frank Darabont 1994
  2. Moulin Rouge d. Baz Luhrmann 2001
  3. The Times of Harvey Milk, d. Rob Epstein, 1984
  4. Rear Window d. Alfred Hitchcock 1954
  5. Do The Right Thing d. Spike Lee 1989
  6. Battleship Potemkin d. Sergei Eisenstein 1925
  7. Wizard of Oz d. Victor Fleming 1939
  8. Godfather d. Francis Ford Coppola 1972
  9. Compare 2 films, pacing styles: - Fellowship of the Ring, d. Peter Jackson, 2001 with - Once Upon A Time in the West, d. Sergio Leone, 1968
  10. Last Picture Show d. Peter Bogdanovich 1971
  11. Singin' In the Rain d. Gene Kelly 1952
- (extra credit: The Conversation d. Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)

12. Modern Times d. Charlie Chaplin 1936
13. Apocalypse Now d. Francis Ford Coppola 1979
14. Peter Pan (d. PJ Hogan, 2003)
15. What's Up Doc d. Peter Bogdanovich 1972

You will be choosing one movie from this list for your final paper:

1. Three Kings, d. David O. Russell, 1999
2. Waking Ned Devine, d. Kirk Jones, 1998
3. Baadasssss!, d. Mario van Peebles, 2004
4. Fiddler on the Roof, d. Norman Jewison, 1971
5. Frida d. Julie Taymor 2002
6. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, d. Milos Forman, 1975

### **DISCUSSION BOARD CONDUCT GUIDELINES**

- 1) It is encouraged to relate questions to the film and/or reading assignments at hand, to engage relevant ideas, and even quote from the reading assignments.
- 2) You may pose questions to the class if one occurs to you.
- 3) Check the Administrative Issues folder for new class-related postings and announcements.
- 4) Please keep your postings on-topic. By this, I mean that if we are discussing acting styles and you are relating this to your favorite actor, don't digress into a posting "Johnny Depp is so fine!". While this course does take into consideration our personal opinions, we need to diligently keep on target with topics, or we waste each others' time. In order to give you a sense of the number of postings you will be reading this semester, we easily surpassed 3,000 postings last semester. You are required to read them all.
- 5) Harassment will not be accepted on the boards. Harassment constitutes personal attacks, or remarks that degrade another student's ideas or thoughts. Disagreement is encouraged, but put-downs will not be tolerated.
- 6) Personal emails sent through the "private" option on the boards should be limited to contact with me. I will use this option at times to reply directly to you alone, regarding one of your postings. These will show up in your WebCT email box, not on the boards. Do not use this

mode of communication to inquire about another student's identity – age, race, etc - or in any other way respond negatively to their postings.

7) If anyone breaches these guidelines be sure to email me privately and let me know so I can take appropriate action. Do not wait until the semester is over if any behavior like this is occurring.

8) Postings such as “I hated this film” or “That film was stupid” constitute weak postings. I discourage the use of “hate” or “stupid” on the boards. They are words that do not carry much meaning and are the easy way out. Opinions are part of this class, but statements of opinion must be backed up with concrete points. Example:

Instead of saying “I really hated this film” you could say something like this: “I disliked this film for three reasons. I felt the director did not respect the main character. This was evident to me in how the actor was forced to make the choice he made in the scene with his grandfather. That did not ring true. Secondly this film's jerky camera movements made me feel seasick. I didn't care for how the camera was constantly swaying like an extended MTV music video, and also I felt that the pacing and the emotional content did not support one another.”

9) One administrative point that is important for you to keep in mind: please make sure you hit “CREATE NEW” response for your first response to every topic on the boards. The WebCT system tracks your responses and puts the tally results into two pools: original and reply responses. I require you to have 1 original response to each topic, and at least 3 replies to each topic, per week. I will be checking your numbers, and part of your participation grade will be based purely on the numbers. So make sure you're making a NEW response as your original, and not hitting “reply” to a response already posted. To reiterate, you must post 1 original, and 3 reply postings, per topic.

10) Regarding class participation: regular, active participation is essential. I cannot stress enough how important this is. Your timely participation, and your interactions on the boards, are what make this class come alive. You cannot save up for 3 weeks, and do all your posting after the fact. Your participation grade will suffer, and so will the entire class. My expectation is that you will log on AT LEAST 3 times per week to check in as to what is happening, and the discussions that are developing.