

Introduction to Film Media (FLM 101, sec. 4)

Fall 2015 Syllabus and Assignment Descriptions

Meetings/Screenings: Wednesdays 6-9:45pm

Location: Washburn Hall 132

Instructor: Jacob Richman | **email:** jacob_richman@uri.edu

Teaching Assistant: Dannielle Farrall | **email:** dfarrall@my.uri.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays, 3-5pm (and by appointment), Fine Arts Center F202

Course Sakai handle, 2159-FLM1010004: Intro. Film Media

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Film 101 is an introductory course designed to teach the fundamental technical, conceptual, and cultural/historic vocabulary of filmmaking. We will discover the tools filmmakers use to express their creative ideas, and also learn the basic language used by film theorists and historians to describe a film on its own, as well as in its historical and cultural context. We will achieve this through a series of written analyses of a broad assortment of sample films, as well as technical exercises using filmmaking tools, and group presentations and creative projects. The main objective of this course is to learn to analyze not just whether a film is “good” or not, but to be able to recognize, describe, and evaluate how filmmakers use particular tools and techniques to express themselves and tell their stories.

GRADING

Class Attendance and Participation in Discussion/Demos- 15%

Weekly Response Papers - 15%

In-Class Quiz - 10%

Leading Class Discussion - 10%

Still Photo Sequence Project - 5%

Mid-Term Essay - 15%

Final Essay - 30%

FILMS

All films will be screened during the second half of class. Excerpts of these and others will also be shown during lecture as examples. This list is subject to change.

Moonrise Kingdom (2012) *Ex Machina* (2015), *Rashomon* (1950), *Cidade de Deus* (2002), *The Big Lebowski* (1998), *Do the Right Thing* (1989), *Triumph of the Will* (1935), *Battle of Algiers* (1966), *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *The Third Man* (1949), *In the Mood for Love* (2000), *12 Angry Men* (1957), *Blade Runner* (1982), *The Hurt Locker* (2008), *High School* (1968), *Upstream Color* (2013), *Eraserhead* (1977), experimental work by Nam June Paik, Stan Brakhage, Bill Viola, Krzysztof Wodiczko, others.

Please note: Some of these films include depictions of violence, sex, or strong political/ideological stances. If you have trouble with any of these issues, or any others related to viewing films in class, please let me know as soon as possible. You can find descriptions of the films ahead of time on IMDB.com.

TEXTS

The weekly readings will include excerpts from the following texts, as well as supplemental essays and writings from pertinent filmmakers and theorists. All readings will be made available as PDFs on the class SAKAI resource page. Please bring digital or paper copies of the readings to class for discussion.

- Sikov, Ed. *Film Studies: An Introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Ascher, Steven and Edward Pincus. *The Filmmaker's Handbook*. London: Plume, 2012
- Braudy, Leo and Marshall Cohen. *Film Theory and Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.
- Andrew, Dudley. *Concepts in Film Theory*. Oxford: Oxford UP. 1984.
- Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is crucial to this course. Your participation in discussion with your peers about the complexities of the film media is as important as simply viewing/reading the material. Absences will be excused in cases of illness (with doctor's note) or legitimate emergency (family or otherwise) and students must contact me in advance. One unexcused absence will result in a halving of the attendance portion of your final grade (7.5%); two will result in a full docking of 15%. Three or more unexcused absences will result in a **FULL LETTER GRADE DROP** of your final grade per absence.

PLEASE NOTE: leaving unexcused before the screening will count as an unexcused absence from that day's course.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Use of cell phones, email, web browsing, and social media is not permitted during class.

Laptops and tablets may only be used for note taking and to reference reading.

→Use of all electronic devices is prohibited during film screenings.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Unexcused late assignments will result in a loss of one half grade on that assignment each day it is late (e.g. if the assignment is graded a B, one day late = B-, two days, late = C+, etc.) Please contact me as soon as possible if you are struggling with a particular assignment, and consider making an appointment at the Writing Center if you are having difficulty with a written assignment.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is passing others' written work off as your own. It includes copying work from a webpage, book, article, or another student's work without proper citation, as well as having another person write the work for you. I will check for plagiarism. **If you plagiarize, you will fail the assignment and I will report the activity to the Dean's office.**

OTHER RESOURCES

WRITING CENTER (FROM WC WEBSITE)

Located on the Roosevelt Hall's 4th floor, the Writing Center offers one-to-one tutoring appointments, group appointments, drop-in tutorials, and resources for writers. Our tutors can help student writers understand assignments, conduct research, and learn proofreading strategies. Encourage your students to make an appointment online by visiting [WCOnline](#). For more information, visit the Writing Center's Web site at <http://harrington.uri.edu/about-main/student-experience/learning-spaces/writing-center/>.

SPECIAL SERVICES

Please contact me if you have a documented disability or learning difference as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with Disability Services for Students Office at 302 Memorial Union, Phone 401-874-2098 (<http://www.uri.edu/disability/dss/>).

COUNSELING CENTER (FROM URI CC WEBSITE)

The URI Counseling Center provides services to enhance the personal, academic, emotional, social, and life planning effectiveness of students. These services may include crisis intervention, individual counseling, group counseling, referrals for psychiatric assessment, and mental health screening. The Center also assists the University community in creating and maintaining a learning environment conducive to psychological and educational development. Students may seek counseling for a variety of concerns including but not limited to: anxiety and stress; test anxiety; relationship problems; acute crisis, including trauma; depression and suicidal thoughts; eating disorders; alcohol and other drug abuse problems; self-esteem; sexuality; improving academic performance; referral services. Call us at 401.874.2288 or to drop by our office at 217 Roosevelt Hall if we can be of assistance. <http://www.uri.edu/counseling/>

ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments will have a prompt and more detailed instructions handed out in class or on SAKAI.

WEEKLY RESPONSE PAPERS

Each week students will be asked to write a short response paper (1-1.5 page, double spaced, 1 inch margins) based on a prompt that will be available at the class SAKAI site Assignment Page on the Weds after class. The weekly reading will also be listed at the SAKAI site Resource Page. The prompt will ask the students in various ways to describe the cinematic techniques used in the recently viewed film and relate the film and its effect to the topics covered in the reading.

→ Response papers will be due at SAKAI 5pm on Wednesday before class

GROUP LEADING OF CLASS DISCUSSION

Each week, a group of three students will present their response to the weekly prompt at the beginning of class. They will also lead class discussion on the film and reading by posing questions in response to the week's material and their presentation (10-15min total). They will need to meet as a group to prepare their presentation, and use video clip examples from the film

in their presentation. All members of the group must take part in the presentation and following discussion.

→ **Students presenting in class will not need to turn in a response paper for that week**

IN-CLASS QUIZ

A brief (~20min) in-class quiz will be given to test students' ability to describe various aspects of filmmaking techniques used in example shots and clips using the new terminology and techniques they have learned.

→ **Wednesday October 14, at the beginning of class**

MIDTERM ESSAY

Students will be asked to write a 5-7-page paper (double spaced, 1 inch margins) on a prompt that will be available on SAKAI two weeks before the due date. Papers will need to be uploaded to the SAKAI site. Please use your lastname_midterm as the file name of the paper (for example, my Word doc midterm file would be named "richman_midterm.doc"). Also give the paper a title, and include your name, the course number (FLM 101-202) and date in the document. Contact me and/or the Writing Center as early as possible if you are struggling with the prompt or assignment. Please properly cite your sources.

→ **DUE Wednesday October 21, 5pm**

STILL PHOTO SEQUENCE PROJECT

In groups of three, students will make a sequence of 10-15 still images (photos) that tell a story. Students should use the concepts of filmmaking tools (framing, composition, editing, other *mise-en-scene*) they have learned to treat the stills as moving image, or a silent film, in which characters or themes (either literal or abstract) are created and developed. A zip folder with the images, their order, and any other directions for their presentation should be uploaded to SAKAI, and we will play them back as a slide show and discuss them in class.

→ **DUE Wednesday November 18, 10am (note earlier time)**

FINAL ESSAY

Students will be asked to write a 7-10 page paper (double spaced, 1 inch margins) on a prompt that will be available on SAKAI four weeks before the due date. Papers will need to be uploaded to the SAKAI site. Please use your lastname_final as the file name of the paper (for example, my Word doc midterm file would be named "richman_final.doc"). Also give the paper a title, and include your name, the course number (FLM 101-004) and date in the document. Contact me and/or the Writing Center as early as possible if you are struggling with the prompt or assignment. Please properly site your sources.

→ **Draft Due Wednesday December 2, 5pm**

→ **Final Due Monday December 14, 11:59pm**

CLASS/HOMEWORK SCHEDULE

Courses will begin with a discussion of the previous week's film and readings, continued by an introduction to new topics for the week and short examples or demonstrations. There will be a brief break around 7:30pm before the weekly film screening, which will take place 7:45-9:45pm.
→ **Please Note:** The reading assignments are due the class meeting after they are assigned. Reading documents and response paper prompts will be available on Sakai. Film and reading selections may change.

Weds 9/9 – Representation and Reality

Introduction, syllabus, course goals

FILM: *12 Angry Men* (1957, dir. Sidney Lumet)

READINGS: Sikov (Preface and Introduction), Bordwell (“Studying Cinema”)

Weds 9/16– Mise-en-Scène 1: The Frame & Composition

The “frame,” composition, mise-en-scène introduction

FILM: *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012, dir. Wes Anderson)

READINGS: excerpts from Sikov and Ascher/Pincus

→ **Response Paper 1 Due**

Weds 9/23– Mise-en-Scène 2: Camera Movement

Cinematography: tools/techniques/expression

FILM: *In the Mood for Love* (2000, dir. Wong Kar Wai)

READINGS: excerpts from Sikov and Ascher/Pincus

→ **Response Paper 2 Due**

Weds 9/30 – Lighting

Practical and expressive uses of lighting, class demo

FILM: *Blade Runner* (1982, dir. Ridley Scott)

READING: excerpts from Sikov and Ascher/Pincus

→ **Response Paper 3 Due**

Weds 10/7 – Sound

Practical and expressive uses of sound

FILM: *Upstream Color* (2013, dir. Shane Carruth)

READING: excerpts from Chion, Sikov, and Ascher/Pincus

→ **Response Paper 4 Due**

Weds 10/14 – Art Direction, A Film’s “Look,” + Recap

→ **IN-CLASS QUIZ AT BEGINNING OF CLASS**

Lecture topic: Creating the visual “world” of a film: set design in concert with editing and cinematography

→ Discuss Midterm

FILM: *The Big Lebowski* (1998, dir. the Cohen Bros.)

READING: excerpts from Sikov

→ **Response Paper 5 Due**

Weds 10/21– Editing 1: Basics – Continuity + Montage

Introduction to editing, continuity/montage, class demo

FILM: *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991, dir. Jonathan Demme)

READING: excerpts from Sikov, Ascher/Pincus, Eisenstein (excerpts from *Film Sense*), and Pudovkin

→MIDTERM PAPER DUE

Weds 10/28 – Editing 2: Alternative Styles

Alternative and more complex/expressive editing styles, historical + contemporary examples

FILM: *The Hurt Locker* (2008, dir. Kathryn Bigelow)

READING: excerpts from Braudy/Cohen

Weds 11/4 – Objectification and Identification in Film

Exploring the portrayal of women and people of color in film, introduction to feminist film theory, “black spectatorship,” and cultural theory concepts

FILM: *Do The Right Thing* (1989, dir. Spike Lee)

READING: excerpts from Laura Mulvey, Manthia Diawara, Bell Hooks

→Response Paper 6 Due

Weds 11/11 – Veteran’s Day (NO CLASS)

Weds 11/18 – Politics and Spectacle

The political uses of film

FILM: Excerpts from *Triumph of the Will* (1935, dir. Leni Riefenstahl), *Battle of Algiers* (1966, dir. Gillo Pontecorvo), contemporary Western propaganda and Islamist propaganda videos

READING: essays by Kracauer, Rentschler

→STILL PHOTO SEQUENCE

Weds 11/25 – NO CLASS (gobble gobble)

Response Paper 7 DUE

Weds 12/2 – Documentary

Techniques and analysis of documentary films

FILM: *High School* (1968, dir. Fred Wiseman)

READING: excerpts from Nichols (*Representing Reality*)

→DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE

Weds 12/9 – Experimental Film

Brief introduction to experimental uses of film/video in art installation and performance

FILM: brief excerpts from work of Krzysztof Wodiczko, Bill Viola, Nam June Paik, Jacob Richman

*****FINAL SCREENING: STUDENTS’ CHOICE!!! (there will be snacks!)*****

→Monday 12/14 – FINAL PAPER DUE (upload to SAKAI)