EXPRESSIVE CULTURE: FILM
[V55.0750]  

Professor: Bill Simon
Preceptors: Lisa TBA
            SangJoon TBA
            Wyatt TBA

SPRING 2008
Office Hours:
Tuesday, 10:00-12:00
Room 311B, 719 Broadway

Course Syllabus

Course Requirements:
* 3 brief (1-page) response essays 10%
* 2 brief (3-page) essays 20%
* 1 Mid-Term essay exam 20%
* 1 Final essay take-home exam (8-10 pages) 40%
* Class participation 10%

Grade Distribution:

Course Policies:

Attendance to all lectures and recitation sections is mandatory. We will take
attendance in each class, and three or more unexcused absences will result in a
lowering of your grade.

All work must be handed in on time except in the case of serious illness, medical
emergency, or some other compelling mitigating circumstances. Failure to hand
in work on time will result in the lowering of your grade. Incomplete grades and
extensions will not be given without documented evidence of hardship (e.g.,
medical problems).

Plagiarism (quoting, presenting, or paraphrasing someone else’s ideas as if they
were your own without appropriate footnote and bibliographic citation) will result
in a grade of F.

Educational Objectives:

This course will examine a certain tendency in American narrative cinema
during the 1960s and in the first half of the 1970s. This tendency can be
generally defined as putting into dialogue two characteristics: 1) innovation in
narrative structure and the use of genre; and 2) a critical perspective towards
aspects of American culture and politics. The course is designed to provide an
introduction to film as an art form and as an instance of cultural production as

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well as a case-study for understanding film in relation to historical, political, social and cultural discourses. In pursuing the study of film in this manner, the course proposes a central methodology for understanding film as well as other artistic and cultural products. The introductory function of the course includes developing an understanding of the specificity of film form and style and the critical vocabulary we use to understand film form, style, and narration.

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The following book is required for the course and is available for purchase at the N.Y.U. Bookstore, 18 Washington Place:

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Film Art: an Introduction

All other readings listed below will be available on Blackboard.

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Course Schedule

January 23:  
Introduction to Course Subject Matter and Methodology

Film:  
Psycho  (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

Readings:  


• For recitation sections on January 25:

Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 218-263, 201-202

January 30:  
The Cold War and the Arms Race

Film:  
Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb  (Stanley Kubrick, 1964)

Readings:  
William G. Simon, “Dr. Strangelove or: The Apparatus of Nuclear Warfare.” Camera Obscura / Camera Lucida

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• For recitation sections on February 1:

  Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 74-109, 111-161

**February 6:**

Outlaws, Violence, and Radical Chic

**Film:**

*Bonnie and Clyde*  (Arthur Penn, 1967)

**Readings:**


• For recitation sections on February 8:

  Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 317-337, 397-401, 463-468

**Assignment:**

Response essay

**February 13:**

The Western and the Vietnam War

**Film:**

*The Wild Bunch*  (Sam Peckinpah, 1968)

**Readings:**


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- For recitation sections on February 15:

  Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 162-217, 328-329

Assignment: Response essay

February 20:

Space, Evolution, and Radical Narrative

Film: 2001: A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick, 1968)


- For Recitation Sections on February 22:

  Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 264-303, 176

Assignment: 3-page essay

February 27:

Normalcy and Monsters

Film: Night of the Living Dead (George Romero, 1968)


- For recitation sections on February 29:

  Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 329-332

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March 5:  
Chicago 1968

Film:  
Medium Cool (Haskell Wexler, 1969)

Readings:  
Patterson, pp. 690-709.


• For recitation sections on March 7:

Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 338-381

Assignment:  
Midterm: 3-page essay

March 12:  
The Mafia and Post-War America

Film:  
The Godfather, Part One (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)

Readings:  


• For recitation sections on March 14:

Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 136, 229-230, 341

March 19:  
Spring Break

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March 26:  
The Outlaw Couple  
Film:  
*Badlands* (Terence Malick, 1973)  
Readings:  
Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 293-300  
Assignment:  
Response essay  

April 2:  
Private Eyes and Capitalism  
Film:  
*Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974)  
Readings:  

April 9:  
Paranoia and Conspiracy, I  
Film:  
The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974).  
Readings:  
Ryan and Kellner, pp. 95-105.  
• For recitation sections on April 11:  
Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 291-292  

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Assignment: 3-page essay

April 16: Paranoia and Conspiracy II

Film: The Parallax View (Alan J. Pakula, 1974)


April 23: Assassination Complex, I

Film: Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976)


* For recitation section on April 25:

Bordwell and Thompson pp. 464

April 30: Assassination Complex, II

Film: Nashville (Robert Altman, 1975)

Readings: "Robert Altman Seminar." Dialogue on Film vol. 4, no. 5, American Film Institute, pp. 2-24.


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Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 332-336

• No recitation sections will be held this week.

Assignment: Final take-home essay exam (8-10 pages)