

EXPRESSIVE CULTURE: FILM [V55.0750]

SPRING 2008

Professor:	Bill Simon	<u>Office Hours:</u> Tuesday, 10:00-12:00 Room 311B, 719 Broadway
Preceptors:	Lisa SangJoon Wyatt	TBA TBA TBA

Course Syllabus

Course Requirements:

- * 3 brief (1-page) response essays
- * 2 brief (3-page) essays
- * 1 Mid-Term essay exam
- * 1 Final essay take-home exam (8-10 pages)
- * Class participation

Grade Distribution:

10%
20%
20%
40%
10%

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

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.

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 Eighth Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

All other readings listed below will be available on Blackboard.

Course Schedule

- January 23:** Introduction to Course Subject Matter and Methodology
- Film:** *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)
- Readings:** James Patterson, "The Polarized Sixties: An Overview." Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), chapter 15, pp. 442-457.
- Robin Wood, "Psycho." Hitchcock's Films Revisited (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), chapter 6, pp. 142-151.
- 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

(Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), pp. 215-229.

Joseph Gelmis, "The Film Director as Superstar: Stanley Kubrick." Gene Phillips, ed., Stanley Kubrick Interviews (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), pp. 89-104.

- 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: Jean-Louis Comolli and Andre Labarthe, "Bonnie and Clyde: An Interview with Arthur Penn." *Evergreen Review*, vol. 12, no. 55 (June 1968), pp. 15-19.

Joseph Gelmis, "Interview with Arthur Penn." The Film Director as Superstar (New York: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 220-230.

Bosley Crowther, "Bonnie and Clyde Arrives." Arthur Penn's Bonnie and Clyde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 177.

Stephen Prince, "The Hemorrhaging of American Cinema." Arthur Penn's Bonnie and Clyde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 127-147.

- 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: Richard Slotkin, "Cross-over Point." Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America (New York: Atheneum, 1992), chapter 17, pp. 578-623.

Stephen Prince, "The Aesthetic of Slow Motion Violence in the Films of Sam Peckinpah." Savage Cinema: Sam Peckinpah and the Rise of the Ultraviolent (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), pp175-201.

- 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)

Readings: Eric Norden, "Playboy Interview: Stanley Kubrick." Stanley Kubrick Interviews (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), pp. 45-55.

Michel Chion, "Style." Kubrick's Cinema Odyssey (London: British Film Institute, 2001), pp. 75-111.

- 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)

Readings: Robin Wood, "The American Nightmare: Horror in the '70s." Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), chapter 5, pp. 70-94.

Robin Wood, "Normalcy and Monsters." Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), chapter 6, pp. 95, 114-121.

- For recitation sections on February 29:

Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 329-332

- March 5:** Chicago 1968
- Film:** *Medium Cool* (Haskell Wexler, 1969)
- Readings:** Patterson, pp. 690-709.
- Robert Sklar, "When Looks Could Kill: American Cinema of the Sixties." *Cineaste*, vol. 2, no. 16, pp. 50-53.
- Michael Renov, "The 'Real' in Fiction: Brecht, *Medium Cool*, and the Refusal of Incorporation." The Subject of Documentary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). Chapter 2, pp. 21-42.
- For recitation sections on March 7:

Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 338-381
- Assignment:** Midterm: 3-page essay
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- March 12:** The Mafia and Post-War America
- Film:** *The Godfather, Part One* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)
- Readings:** Glenn Man, "Ideology and Genre in *The Godfather* Films." Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather Trilogy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), chapter 4, pp. 109-123.
- Mitchell Ryan and Douglas Kellner, "Francis Coppola and the Crisis of Patriarchy." *Camera Politica* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), chapter 3, pp. 65-75, 115.
- For recitation sections on March 14:

Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 136, 229-230, 341
- March 19:** Spring Break

March 26: The Outlaw Couple

Film: *Badlands* (Terence Malick, 1973)

Readings: Noel Carroll, "The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies." February, Spring, no. 20 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), pp. 51-81.

Anne Latta. "Innocents Abroad: The Young Female Voice in *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven*." In Hannah Peterson, ed. *The Cinema of Terrence Malick: Poetic Visions of America*. Wallflower Press (London, 2003) pp.86-99.

Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 293-300

Assignment: Response essay

April 2: Private Eyes and Capitalism

Film: *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974)

Readings: Herbert J. Gans, "Chinatown: An Anticapitalist Murder Mystery." *Social Policy* (March-April 1974). pp. 48-49.

John Cawelti, "Chinatown and Generic Transformation in Recent American Films." Film Theory and Criticism (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 559-578.

John Belton, "Language, Oedipus, and *Chinatown*." *MLN*, vol. 106, no. 5, *Comparative Literature* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 933-950.

April 9: Paranoia and Conspiracy, I

Film: *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974).

Readings: Brian de Palma, "The Making of *The Conversation*: An Interview with Francis Ford Coppola." *Filmmakers Newsletter*, 1974. pp. 30-34.

Ryan and Kellner, pp. 95-105.

- For recitation sections on April 11:

Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 291-292

Assignment: 3-page essay

April 16: Paranoia and Conspiracy II

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

Readings: Andrew C. Bobrow, "The Parallax View: An Interview with Alan Pakula." *Filmmakers Newsletter*, 1974, pp. 20-24.

Art Simon, "The Parallax View/ Winter Kills/ Blow Out." Dangerous Knowledge: The JFK Assassination in Art and Film (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), pp. 183-190.

April 23: Assassination Complex, I

Film: *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976)

Readings: David Thompson and Ian Christie, "Taxi Driver." Scorsese on Scorsese (New York: Faber & Faber, 1989), pp. 53-67.

Richard Thompson, "Paul Schrader: Screenwriter." *Film Comment* vol. 12, no. 2 (March-April 1976), pp. 10-14.
Robin Wood, Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan, pp. 46-55.

- 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.

Connie Byrne and William O. Lopez, "Nashville." *Film Quarterly* (Winter 1975-1976), pp. 13-25.

Thomas Elsaesser, "Nashville: Putting On The Show." *Persistence of Vision*, vol. 1, pp. 35-43.

Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 332-336

- No recitation sections will be held this week.

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