

Department: Dramatic Arts

CourseNo: 110

Credits: 3

Title: Introduction to Film

Contact: David A. Stern

Content Area: CA1-Arts and Humanities

Catalog Copy: DRAM 110, Introduction to Film, Either semester, Three credits. Two class periods and one 2-hour laboratory period.

A basic study of film as both a means of communication and as an art form.

Course Information: a. A brief (2-3 sentences) course description that includes course goals and objectives.

The purpose of Drama 110 is to acquaint non-specialists with the world of the cinema -- its social, industrial and propagandist history, representative examples from the medium and the artistic techniques used to realize them. As the leading art form of the 20th and at least so far, the 21st centuries, the cinema is, or should be, of vital significance to all. Screenings, lectures, PowerPoint presentations, readings.

b. Course requirements: Specify exam formats, nature and scope of weekly reading assignments, nature and scope of writing assignments, problem sets, etc.

A. EXAM FORMAT: Three exams (2 mid-terms and 1 final) adding up to 100 multiple-choice questions. The first exam is 30%, the second 35% and the final 35%. The exams are non-cumulative. Exams cover information provided in the text packet and daily notes, lectures, PowerPoint presentation materials, in class discussions.

B. REQUIRED TEXTS:

The only 'required' texts for this class are the films screened on Friday mornings. However, a packet of articles on the directors and specific films used each semester (which are changed each semester) and detailed, daily/weekly bulleted notes, are recommended.

c. List the major themes, issues, topics, etc., to be covered.

Antecedents of the cinema.

Cinema before projection.

Films before D. W. Griffith.

D. W. Griffith.

German Expressionism and the development of mise en scene.

Classical Soviet Montage

The Avant-Garde and experimental film making.

The Documentary.

Hollywood/Classicism.

The Studio System.

Vertical Integration.

Hollywood/American film making in the 1950s – the breakup of industrial film making in the US.

Various National - European and Asian – schools most notably Italian Neo Realism and the French New Wave.

Contemporary cinema.

The mechanics of film making

The Camera

Film

Techniques of organizing and writing a script.

Directing and performing techniques.

Technology – color, widescreen, camera moves, etc.

Social and industrial history of the medium

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: B. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility;

Drama 110 deals with the many and varied theoretical approaches to what is generally considered to be the most vital popular art medium of the 20th century. The subject matter of movies is human life and interaction with others and with social systems. In studying films, students are exposed to almost all of the major intellectual movements current during the last 100 years. Cinema, being the most technologically dependant of any art form in history, also introduces students to the vital role played by technology in our lives.

C. Acquire critical judgement;

In presenting the theoretical and technical background of the medium in the context of the broad intellectual movements of the 20th century, students are encouraged to develop a critical, discriminatory sensibility so that they can differentiate the genuine and original in both ideas and formal approach, from the conventional – which is the basis of critical judgment

D. Acquire moral sensitivity;

As the subject matter of movies is the human condition – morality plays a very large role in this medium. Cinematic story telling almost always posits a conflict to be resolved, and in the various resolutions proposed by various filmmakers in various national contexts, we study and consider the meaning of true morality, courage, standing for one's genuine principles in opposition to going with the crowd, etc.

E. Acquire awareness of their era and society;

Sometimes consciously, sometimes not, films reflect the societies that make them – and so in Drama 110 students study not only the reflection of their own society in the contemporary films screened in class, but of those societies immediately previous to our own, and to those of other cultures.

CA1 Criteria: A. Investigations and historical/critical analyses of human experience; Films, presentations, lectures and texts both present a historical/critical perspective on the societies, cultures and institutions which generated the major cinematic movements and the works created by them.

B. Inquiries into philosophical and/or political theory;

Sorry to repeat myself yet again – but as the medium takes as its subject the relationship of humans to each other and to larger social institutions, politics – ideology – must perforce be right at the center of all meaningful study of the medium. In this way the overwhelming role played by the cinema in the virtual reengineering of the USA in the last 50 –60 years can be quite easily seen and understood.

C. Investigations into the modes of symbolic representation;

With the exception of Georg W. Pabst – German realist film maker – and perhaps Jean Renoir in some of his films, virtually all film makers in all places from the time of D. W. Griffith (before 1920) have dealt almost exclusively in symbolic representation. The explanation and explication of this approach is central to this course.

D. Comprehension and appreciation of written, graphic and/or performance art forms;

One can't have a good film without a good script – the study of writing (in relation to structure in particular) plays a large role in this class. An even larger role is played by imagery as the cinema is the only human language current in which ideas are communicated visually. By the same token, most films are narratives enacted by performers – and so performance plays another important role in this class.

Role of Grad Students: On the Storrs campus, one graduate student is assigned to the 110 professor, primarily for logistical and administrative support. The graduate assistant runs the film screening lab on Friday morning and assists in the preparation of questions for, and helps proctor the exams. The sections on regional classes are small and taught without graduate assistants.