

**Department:** Modern and Classical Languages

**Course No:** 284 W

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** German Film in Cross-Cultural Perspective

**Contact:** Roger Travis

**Content Area:** CA1-Arts and Humanities

**Diversity:** CA4 International

**WQ:** Writing

**Catalog Copy:** GERM 284. German Cinema in Cross-Cultural Perspective. Either Semester, three credits. Cross-cultural comparison of film genres using examples from German film history and other cinematic traditions.

**Course Information:** a. This course will investigate seven film genres, in each case using one German film and one from another country as examples. Comparing these films will bring out the ways in which different cultures adapt cinematic traditions for their own purposes. b. two in-class midterms about concepts and socio-historic background, 15 - 20 pages of readings in secondary sources on film theory, 3 papers of 5 pages each in which students will be asked to compare two films from different cultures that belong to the same genre. Papers will be returned for revisions with suggestions on how to improve organization, language, style, format and content. Students cannot pass the course without getting a passing grade on all three papers. c. Genres covered: Western (US, East Germany), Coming of Age films (US, East and West Germany), Social Drama (East Germany, Italy), Literary Adaptations (West Germany), Disaster Movies (US and Nazi Germany, Road Movies (US, West Germany), Crime/Thriller (US, West Germany).

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed:** (Numbers refer to the numbered goals of gen. ed.): 1) Students learn to articulate arguments in support of a thesis they have formulated and 3) to base aesthetic judgements on a critical assessment of the cultural artifacts they discuss rather than on using the prevalent "thumbs up or down" approach. 5) Students learn about their own era, society and its traditions of cultural expression by contrasting it with that of another culture, thus 6) they will be able to appreciate their own cultural tradition as one among other equally valid modes of expressing human experience.

**CA1 Criteria:** 1) Using one example of the same genre of film from each country students will be able to understand how parallel socio-historic processes (such as the youth movement or the Cold War) were represented differently in the two cultures

3) The course enables students to understand the specific symbolic language of film and to experience that appreciating films means learning this language: Students will be introduced to the "Classic Hollywood Cinema" with its emphasis on continuity editing and psychological realism. Close analysis of

this mode of filmmaking will allow the students to see the constructedness of what is meant to appear realistic and natural. This forms the basis of understanding other modes of filmmaking that rely on techniques that by contrast emphasize the artificial and arbitrary character of the symbolic language of film by using montage, alienation effects and other techniques. Furthermore, by its emphasis on genre development, students learn to appreciate that societies transmit ideological messages in the language of cultural traditions such as genres. The social function of a film in a certain genre relies on how the stock elements of the genre are arranged (like the words of a language) to produce the film's specific meaning. Decoding a film belonging to a certain genre requires students to extract meaning from how these building blocks are put together in the film.

**CA4 Criteria:** (numbers refer to the goals for Group 4 courses) 1) The course emphasizes that there are varieties of human perceptions of socio-historic events by comparing films from one cultural tradition (German) to that of another (US). 2) A thorough investigation and comparison of two modes of filmmaking help students understand that perceptions of historic and social processes are culturally constructed. They understand that parallel historic developments are perceived differently from one culture to the other.

**W Criteria:** (letters and numbers refer to the GEOC W criteria): a. and 1. the papers ask students to compare two films of the same genre, but originate from different culture. Thus students will be asked to expand on discussions in-class in a more detailed and formally organized manner. The three papers are worth 66% of the grade, but students must receive a passing grade on all three. b. and 2. the course requires 15 pages and revisions in terms of style, organization, language, format and content. Students receive detailed written feedback on all their papers, individual conferences as seems necessary. The students will be given models they can use for organizing their arguments. c. and 3. students cannot pass the course without getting a passing grade on all three papers. Students will have to submit an entirely revised version of the original d. yes

**Supplemental Information:** the course has also been submitted for approval as Group 4b) of the old gen ed requirement to bridge the time for current students between now and until the new gen ed goes into effect.