

## Middlesex Community College

### COM 154 - Film Study & Appreciation

ON-LINE via Blackboard Learn

CRN # 3032 - 3 credits

Fall 2017: August 29 – December 18

John Shafer, Professor

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## SYLLABUS

### Course Description & General Objective:

This course is an introduction to the art, history, influence, and meaning of film. Students will learn about significant genres and styles of film, influential films and directors, film language and technique. The overall objective of this course is to gain an appreciation of film as an art form and the way in which it reflects society and life in a meaningful way. Students should come to appreciate that film is more than just entertainment, it serves as the primary vehicle through which our society tells its stories, conveys our values, probes cultural and philosophical questions, and seeks understanding and deeper meaning. The course will attempt to introduce students to a representative selection of some of the most important and influential films in history, highlighting significant periods, genres, and filmmakers. Selected films will be viewed and analyzed weekly.

### Specific Learning Objectives:

- To gain an appreciation of film as an art form and the way in which it reflects society and life.
- To better understand film technique, such as writing, drama, cinematography, sound, editing, acting.
- To learn how the study of film can increase an understanding of one's own culture and history as well as other foreign cultures.
- To learn relevant factual information about important genres, films, and filmmakers.
- To understand the identifying characteristics of distinctive periods, genres, filmmakers, and film styles.
- To learn relevant film terminology.
- To learn relevant historical events and their relation to films from the past.
- To improve writing ability and critical analysis capabilities in the process of analyzing films.

### Prerequisite: placement in, or eligible for, English 101

As this course requires writing, students should have either completed or placed in **ENG 101 - Composition** (college-level writing) or completed necessary prerequisite courses for it.

### Graduation Credit and Transfer Information:

This course fulfills Aesthetic Dimensions, Communication, Humanities, and Liberal Arts electives at MxCC, as well as fulfilling the "D" (Diversity) requirement. It should transfer to accredited four-year institutions and fulfill the same types of general education requirements. It also fulfills Fine Arts electives at many institutions.

### Required Text:



**LOOKING AT MOVIES: AN INTRODUCTION TO FILM**, 5<sup>TH</sup> Edition, by Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan. W.W. Norton & Company, 2016. \$118 new, \$88 used (Bookstore), \$20 rental (Amazon.com). The text contains in-depth explanations of film concepts and tools for analysis that will be used for analyzing films. Most of the material on quizzes will be based on assigned readings in the text and concepts will be used for the analysis paper.

### Film Viewings:

Films will be assigned for regular viewing each week (see Calendar). Students are responsible for seeing all assigned films (films should be discussed in the Discussion Forum). Most assigned feature films are available through on-line film services such as **YouTube Red, Amazon.com, Google Play, Vudu, or Apple's iTunes Store** for a nominal fee of \$2-4 each. A few early films will be available in the Media Gallery on Blackboard. DVD's of most films are also available for check-out from MxCC's library or other local libraries (especially Middletown's).

### Other Course Resources:

In addition to the text and films, there will be supporting articles and notes about assigned films available on Blackboard or through web links. Additional resources will be available through Blackboard, including short films and instructional videos located in the **Media Gallery**; PowerPoints and film notes and articles located in **Course Content**, and supporting text materials located in the **Text Resources** menu. Links to other useful web sites will also be available under **Web Links**. For this course, **Wikipedia** is an acceptable and even recommended resource. **Filmsite.org** is also recommended.

### Grade Breakdown & Course Requirements:

- (10) Discussion Participation / Film Responses @ 5% each 50%
- (4) Quizzes @ 10% each 40%
- (1) Film Analysis Exercise (due December 13) 10%

#### (4) Quizzes (@ 10% each = 40%)

There will be four quizzes during the course. Most of the questions on the quizzes will be based on assigned chapter readings in the text as indicated below. Each quiz will cover two chapters. There will be some additional questions covering relevant factual information, filmmakers, filmic terms, genres, and important historical developments of film as well as your understanding of key aspects of the films viewed. In addition to the text, additional information will be based on PowerPoint presentations, instructional videos, as well as recommended resources. Quizzes will be available for designated periods in the "Quiz" assessment tool. Additional guidelines will be provided through course announcements.

Quiz	Chapters Covered	Due Date
Quiz 1	Chapters 1 & 2 (+10)	Wed, Sep. 27
Quiz 2	Chapters 3 & 4 (+10)	Wed, Oct. 18
Quiz 3	Chapters 5 & 6	Wed, Nov. 8
Quiz 4	Chapters 8 & 9	Wed, Nov. 29

### Discussion Forum Participation / Film Responses - WEEKLY

(10 times @ 5% each = 50%)

You are required to participate in the on-line discussion forum on Blackboard **each week, due by midnight on Mondays and Wednesdays** (with two exceptions – see note below). This includes writing responses to the assigned films for the week and is both an equivalent to class discussion and a form of written expression. It is an essential part of the class.

You are required to contribute a minimum of (3) posts per discussion forum, which typically covers one feature film (except the first forum based on early film shorts). You must write at least one substantial original post on the assigned feature film for each discussion; and you should respond to at least two other students' posts. More posts and more in-depth posts receive higher grades. Original posts should run at least a couple full paragraphs in length and will receive credit based on their depth, insight, and relevance. Original posts are your responses to the films and should include things you found notable about them, which could include aspects of the filmic technique, or its artistic, social, cultural, historical, political, or philosophical meaning, etc. Try to look beyond just discussing the basic plot and characters. You are encouraged to make comparisons to other films or real life situations in society. Your original responses should not be reviews of the films where you say if you liked the film or not, or what's wrong with it; and they should not be plot summaries. Response posts to other students need only be one paragraph but should also be relevant and meaningful; not just "I like your post." Responses to other students are due a few days after original responses. If a post is either totally irrelevant or otherwise inappropriate you will not receive credit for it. Posts are graded cumulatively for each discussion.

**IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION:** You are required to participate in (10) Discussion Forums, but there will actually be (13). This means you may miss participating in (3) Discussion Forums without penalty, by your choice, during the course. If you do participate in all the Discussion Forums, then your three lowest grades will be dropped.

## Discussion Forum Participation / Film Responses Schedule

Films / Discussion Forum	Due Date For Original Film Responses (by midnight)
(Introductions – not graded)	Tue, Sep 5
1. Practice Analysis	Tue, Sep. 5
2. Early Cinema Shorts	Mon, Sep. 11
3. City Lights	Mon, Sep 18
4. Citizen Kane	Mon, Sep. 25
5. Singin' In the Rain	Mon, Oct. 2
6. The 400 Blows	Mon, Oct. 9
7. Psycho	Mon, Oct. 16
8. The Godfather	Mon, Oct. 23
9. Brazil	Mon, Oct. 30
10. Do the Right Thing	Mon, Nov. 6
11. Hero	Mon, Nov. 13
12. TBA	Mon, Nov. 20
13. Boyhood	Mon, Dec. 4

Note: Responses to other students' posts are due on the Wednesday following the dates above.

### Final Formal Film Analysis Exercise (10%)

**Due: December 13**

At the end of the course, you will be asked to write a formal film analysis in which you apply all the filmic elements you've learned about from the text and instructional videos in analyzing a scene from one of the films we've viewed during the course. Specific guidelines for this assignment and a sample paper will be provided separately as well as a choice of scenes to analyze. Your paper will discuss how the formal elements of the scene convey the story and meaning.

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### Time Management / Hours-Per-Week Expectation: 8

This course follows a normal semester schedule of 15 weeks. This means students should expect to put in an average of 8 hours per week, which combines class time and homework for a normal class. However, because it is an on-line course where students effectively work independently, it is important that students set aside sufficient time each week to work on the course on whatever days fit your schedule.

### Blackboard - Course Web Site

This on-line course is administered through Blackboard Learn. To access Blackboard go to: <http://my.comnet.edu/>. If you've never logged on to MyCommnet before, follow the link above the LOGIN box "Example Faculty/Staff NetID click here" for login directions. After logging in, look for the Blackboard link in the upper right corner of the screen. If you have problems logging on or using Blackboard, call on-line tech support at 860-343-5756.

### Weekly Announcements / Learning Modules

Each week an announcement will be posted in the **Announcements** module, usually on or before Sunday, with a description of the week's activities and a list of activities to complete. Weekly activities will also be available in the **Learning Modules**. The Learning Modules also contain links to all activities, so they are a recommended method for helping you make sure you can easily access all assignments and resource materials.

### Grading Concerns:

Grades are posted on the web site under "**My Grades.**" Once multiple grades are entered, there will be a "Final Grade-to-Date" column that shows you what your current course grade is. Please check your graded work carefully. Though I take great care to be accurate, occasionally a mistake is made. If you have any questions about the grade you received on a quiz or assignment or your final grade for the course, please ask me about it. If a mistake is discovered, I will change your grade appropriately.

**Grade Scale for Converting Percentages to Letter Grades:**

Grades Scored Between	Will Equal	Grades Entered as	Will Calculate as
97% and 100%	A+	A+	98.5%
93% and less than 97%	A	A	95%
90% and less than 93%	A-	A-	91.5%
87% and less than 90%	B+	B+	88.5%
83% and less than 87%	B	B	85%
80% and less than 83%	B-	B-	81.5%
77% and less than 80%	C+	C+	78.5%
73% and less than 77%	C	C	75%
70% and less than 73%	C-	C-	71.5%
67% and less than 70%	D+	D+	68.5%
63% and less than 67%	D	D	65%
60% and less than 63%	D-	D-	61.5%
0% and less than 60%	F	F	55%

NOTE: Although this scale includes an A+ grade category, please be aware that the college itself does NOT include an A+ grade category, so A+ grades will convert to A on your college transcript. But, you can have the personal satisfaction of knowing you earned an A+, and it can benefit your total grade average in the course to have an A+ category. Also, any grades below 50% (including missed assignments) will automatically be converted to 55% as the numerical value for “F” for final grade calculations.

**Withdrawals and Incomplete Grades:**

**Fall 2017 Withdrawal Deadline: Friday, November 10**

If for some reason you are unable to complete the course and do not wish to receive a grade, you may withdraw from the course and receive a “W” by requesting a withdrawal form from the records office before the deadline above and sending me an email requesting to withdraw. Otherwise, I will assign a grade based on the work you have completed, including an “F” if there is little or no work. A grade of “W” does not affect your grade point average. If you have completed a substantial amount of work but are unable to finish before the end of the semester due to unavoidable circumstances, I am usually willing to give an incomplete grade, which will give you an additional semester to complete the work. Incomplete grades require a form to be filled out and signed by both of us.

**College Policies** -- Information on important college policies for students (listed below) is available on the college web site at: <http://mxcc.edu/catalog/syllabus-policies>

- Academic Misconduct (Plagiarism And Cheating)
- Accessibility & Disability Services
- Attendance Expectations
- Audio Recordings In The Classroom
- E-Mail Accounts For Students
- Grade Appeal Process (Review Of Academic Standing)
- Non-Discrimination Policies / Non-Discrimination Statement
- Religious Accommodation Statement
- School Cancellations Due To Weather Or Emergency Situations
- Student Code Of Conduct
- Withdrawing From Class

**CALENDAR**

<b>Due Dates *</b>	<b>Films / Assignments / Quizzes</b>	<b>Assigned Readings from <i>Looking at Movies</i></b>
Tue, Aug. 29	Course Begins / Introduction	
Tue, Sep. 5	Analysis videos / <b>PASSENGERS</b> / Practice Analysis	
		Ch.10, pp. 406-423
Mon, Sep. 11	<b>Early Cinema Shorts</b> (see Learning Module for specific films, available in the Media Gallery)	Ch. 1 - Looking At Movies
Mon, Sep 18	<b>CITY LIGHTS</b> , 1931, Charlie Chaplin, 87 min.	Ch. 2 - Principles of Film Form
Mon, Sep. 25	<b>CITIZEN KANE</b> , 1941, Orson Welles, 120 min.	Ch. 10, pp. 452-453
Wed, Sep. 27	<b>Quiz 1</b> on ch. 1 & 2, + ch.10 pp. 406-423 / 452-453	
Mon, Oct. 2	<b>SINGIN' IN THE RAIN</b> , 1952, Kelly/Donen,103 min.	Ch. 3 – Types of Movies Ch. 10, pp. 424-433
Mon, Oct. 9	<b>THE 400 BLOWS</b> , 1959, Francois Truffaut, 99 min.	Ch. 4 – Elements of Narrative
Mon, Oct. 16	<b>PSYCHO</b> , 1961, Alfred Hitchcock, 115 min.	Ch. 10, pp. 447-452
Wed, Oct. 18	<b>Quiz 2</b> on chapters 3 & 4, + ch.10 pp. 424-433	
Mon, Oct. 23	<b>THE GODFATHER</b> , 1972, Francis Coppola, 3 hours	Ch. 5 – Mise-en-Scene
Mon, Oct. 30	<b>BRAZIL</b> , 1985, Terry Gilliam, 144 min.	Ch. 6 - Cinematography
Mon, Nov. 6	<b>DO THE RIGHT THING</b> , 1989, Spike Lee, 120 min.	
Wed, Nov. 8	<b>Quiz 3</b> on chapters 5 & 6, + ch. 10 pp. 447-452	Ch. 10, pp. 440-441
Mon, Nov. 13	<b>HERO</b> , 2002, Zhang Yimou, 99 min.	Ch. 8 – Editing
Mon, Nov. 20	TBA	Ch. 9 - Sound
Mon. Nov. 27	(no film - Thanksgiving break; Quiz 4 prep)	
Wed, Nov 29	<b>Quiz 4</b> on chapters 8 & 9	
Mon, Dec. 4	<b>BOYHOOD</b> , 2014, Richard Linklater, 165 min.	Ch. 6, pp. 265-268
Wed, Dec. 13	<b>Final Formal Film Analysis Exercise Due</b>	

\* Note: Dates indicate the deadline when original film responses should be posted to the “Discussion Forum.” Obviously, the films must be viewed prior to this date. Responses to other students’ posts are due on Wednesday. Likewise, test dates are the deadline when tests need to be completed. Tests will be available at least one week prior to the deadline.