

Middlesex Community College

COM 154 - Film Study & Appreciation

ON-LINE via Blackboard Learn

CRN # 1901 - 3 credits

Spring 2015

John Shafer, Professor

Office Hours: Mon.-Thur. 11:00-12:00, or by appointment

Room 414 Snow Hall; Phone: 860-343-5811

email: jshafer@mxcc.edu

SYLLABUS

Course Description & General Objective:

This course is an introduction to the art, history, and influence 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. 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, 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 some writing, students should have either completed or placed in ENG 101 or completed necessary prerequisite courses for it.

Graduation Credit and Transfer Information:

This course fulfills 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 some institutions.

Film Viewings:

Films will be assigned for viewing regularly each week (see Calendar). Students are responsible for seeing all assigned films (films should be discussed in the Discussion Forum). Assigned feature films are available through on-line film services such as **Netflix**, **Amazon.com**, and **Apple's iTunes Store** for a nominal fee of \$2-4 each. DVD's of films are also available for check-out from MxCC's library at the reserve desk under the course number, COM154, and other local libraries (especially Middletown's). Some short films and segments will be available on the course web site on Blackboard.

Other Course Resources:

There is no text required for this course, as extensive information on film exists on-line. Some resources are available on the course web site through Blackboard including PowerPoints and detailed notes on each film. See "Course Content." Links to other web sites and specific articles will also be available. For this course, **Wikipedia** is an acceptable and even recommended resource. **Filmsite.org** is also highly recommended.

Grade Breakdown & Course Requirements:

- (3) Quizzes @ 10% each 30%
- Discussion Forum Participation (12 times @ 5% each) 60%
- Film Recommendation 10%

(3) Quizzes (10% each = 30%) Due Dates: February 25, April 8, May 15

There will be three quizzes during the course that will test you on relevant factual information, film analysis techniques, filmmakers, filmic terms, genres, and important historical developments of film as well as your understanding of key aspects of the films viewed. Quizzes will be based on information covered in class through PowerPoint presentations as well as recommended resources. Quizzes will be available for designated periods in the “Quizzes” assessment tool. Additional guidelines will be provided through course announcements.

Discussion Forum Participation (12 times @ 5% each = 60%) WEEKLY

You are required to participate in the on-line discussion forum on Blackboard **every week** (with two exceptions – see note below). This is both an equivalent to class discussion and a form of written expression, and is an essential part of this class.

You are required to contribute a minimum of (3) posts per discussion forum, per week, which typically covers one feature film (except the first two forums). You must make at least one substantial original post on the assigned feature film for each discussion; and you should respond to at least two student posts (not necessarily for each film). Original posts should run a couple paragraphs in length and will receive credit based on their depth, insight, and relevance. Response posts need only be one paragraph but should still say something relevant and meaningful, not just “I like your post.” Good original posts are worth 2 points. Good response posts are worth one point. Minimal posts are worth half a credit. If a post is either totally irrelevant or otherwise inappropriate you will not receive credit for it. For each discussion forum, 4 points are worth an “A”, 3 points worth a “B”, 2 points worth a “C”, etc. You can also earn extra credit for longer or additional posts (up to 4.5 points).

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION: While you are required to participate in (12) Discussion Forums, there will actually be (14). This means you may miss participating in (2) Discussion Forums without penalty, as you choose, during the semester. If you do participate in all the Discussion Forums, then your two lowest grades will be dropped.

More specific guidelines for the Discussion Forum will be provided separately on BB.

Film Recommendation (10%) Due: March 25

The last film to be shown in class will be nominated and selected by students. As part of the selection process, each student is asked to recommend one film and provide written background information and justification for why the film should be shown. These will be submitted on-line on Blackboard. Recommended films should adhere to the general objectives of the class. I will also review the recommendations and determine which films best meet the class criteria. There will then be an on-line selection process involving the class to select the final film. Specific guidelines will be provided separately.

Blackboard - Course Web Site

This on-line course is administered through Blackboard Learn. To access Blackboard go to: <http://my.commmnet.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 tech support at 860-343-5756.

Grading Concerns:

Grades are posted on the web site under "My Grades." 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 an assignment or your final grade for the course, please ask me about it. If a mistake is discovered, I will change your grade appropriately. For this reason, **it is important that you always save all graded assignments returned to you.**

Withdrawals and Incomplete Grades:

Spring 2015 Withdrawal Deadline: APRIL 15

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 picking up 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. If there is little or no work or participation I will assign a grade of "N" (no basis for a grade). A grade of "W" or "N" 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. Again this is provided you communicate with me before the end of the semester. Incomplete grades require a form to be filled out and signed by both of us.

Academic Honesty & Ethics Statement:

At Middlesex Community College we expect the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in accordance with the Board of Regents Proscribed Conduct Policy. This policy prohibits cheating on exams, unauthorized collaboration on assignments, unauthorized access to examinations and course materials, plagiarism, and other proscribed activities. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another's ideas or phrases and representing those ideas as your own, either intentionally or unintentionally. If you use someone else's words or ideas, you must acknowledge their use via an appropriate reference.

ADA Accommodations Statement:

Students with physical or learning disabilities who may require special accommodations are encouraged to Disability Support Services Office (860-343-5879). After disclosing the nature of the disability, students are urged to discuss their needs with their instructors. This should be done at the beginning of the semester. Instructors, in conjunction with appropriate college officials, will provide assistance and/or special accommodations only to those students who have completed this process.

Additional College Policies . . .

are available on the college web site at the following address:

<http://mxcc.edu/catalog/campus-policies>

CALENDAR

Week Topic, Film & Assignment

- JAN 21 Course Intro / realizing the potential of film / film short: **Passengers**
- 28 **Early Cinema Shorts** / the birth of cinema / Edison, Melies, Porter, Griffith, Pickford
- FEB 4 **CITY LIGHTS**, 1931, Charlie Chaplin, 87 min, --
Chaplin: the silent master of romantic tragi-comedy and social critique
- 11 **CITIZEN KANE**, 1941, Orson Welles, 120 min. – film aesthetics, power & politics
- 18 **THE BICYCLE THIEF**, 1948, Vittorio DeSica, 93 min. -- Italian Neo-Realism
- 25 **SINGIN' IN THE RAIN**, 1952, Gene Kelly / Stanley Donen, 103 min.
-- classic Hollywood studio films; musical comedy and Silent-to-Sound history
[Quiz 1]
- MAR 4 **VERTIGO**, 1958, Alfred Hitchcock, 128 min. - master of suspense & narrative
- 11 **APOCALYPSE NOW**, 1979, Francis Ford Coppola, 153 min.
War, the sixties, Vietnam and the “Heart of Darkness.”
- 18 [Spring Break]
- 25 **BLADE RUNNER**, 1982, Ridley Scott, 117 min. -- Film Noir meets Science Fiction
[Film Recommendation Due]
- APR 1 **DO THE RIGHT THING**, 1989, Spike Lee, 120 min - film and race in America
- 8 **PULP FICTION**, 1994, Quentin Tarantino, 154 min. – Postmodern American film
[Quiz 2]
- 15 **HERO**, 2002, Zhang Yimou, 99 min. -- China, the 5th Generation
- 22 **BOYHOOD** 2014, Richard Linklater, 165 min. -- new approaches to film naturalism
- 29 **BIRDMAN**, 2014, Alejandro González Iñárritu, 119 min. –
surrealism and filmic process; cinema and theater myths verses realities
- MAY 6 **Student Selected Film** (TBA)
- 15 [Final Quiz]