

FLME 1010: Aesthetics and Analysis (Spring 2020)

School of Film, Media & Theatre
Georgia State University
Sparks Hall 300, MW 12:30-1:45PM

Instructor

INSTRUCTOR: Alexandra Chace.

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OFFICE: 25 Park Place, #1021C.

HOURS: Monday & Wednesday, 2–3PM (**appointments encouraged**).

Description

FLME 1010 explores moving images (film, television, music videos, etc.) as the public literature and graphic art of our time. This course is designed to give you not just a broad overview of film style, but also an introduction to film theory prerequisite to and inviting further study in advanced film courses. Cultural, thematic, formal, and stylistic elements of film will be explored through lectures, discussions, readings, screenings, discussions, and short papers. As a result, students will become knowledgeable of the language and syntax of film texts, as well as the sociocultural role of moving images in our society.

Materials

Book

- Maria Pramaggiore & Tom Wallis, *Film: A Critical Introduction*, 3rd Edition (**Buy this book immediately—you will need it from day one.**)
- Harry Benshoff & Sean Griffin, *America on Film*, 2nd Edition.

Readings

Other readings will be available online or via link below. **Make sure you do the reading before coming to class.** You will not pass the course if you do not do your reading.

Films

You are expected to come to class having already watched the assigned film(s). You will not pass the class if you do not watch the films—It is your responsibility to find them. Many are available via Georgia State’s SWANK streaming service, but others are not. These are typically available via popular streaming and online rental services. For physical DVDs and Blu-Rays, please consider renting from Videodrome (617 North Highland Avenue).

Some films will be sexually explicit or may contain other sensitive material. It is up to you to decide what you are comfortable with—but you will be expected to have seen each film in its entirety.

Assignments

Essays

You will write three medium-length essays for this class. Alternatively, you may prepare creative video essays on the same topics. In this case, please limit your video essays to 15 minutes **max**. Additional requirements will be posted on iCollege.

Film Analysis Essay

In the first essay, you will choose a single film (or TV show, or vlog—any kind of moving image is apt) and analyze elements of its style and narrative. This will require addressing a particular scene (or multiple scenes) and critically evaluating their *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing, etc. You may also want to talk about elements of its production, i.e. how the film was shot, the technologies employed, and the industrial context in which it was made.

Auteur Essay

In the second essay, you will choose an *auteur* (we will discuss this in class) and develop an essay comparing several of their works. Your goal should be to articulate your chosen auteur’s distinct film style as shown across several different films—including *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing, and sound. You may also contrast this with other film auteurs, and you may choose to include relevant biographical information and comparisons with similar auteurs (e.g. Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese).

Genre Essay

In the third essay, you will choose a genre and, using several films (please use films we have not covered in class), discuss common features and issues pertinent to your chosen genre. Essays should consider the history and origin of the genre, its aesthetic conventions, as well as its sociocultural context. How has the genre changed over time?

What kinds of social issues does it explore, and what does it show differently from other genres? You are heavily encouraged to choose a genre we discuss in class, but this is not required.

Discussion Posts

Once per week, students will be required to prepare a short discussion post to be posted on iCollege. You can simply choose to summarize one (or more) of the readings, but you may also want to contextualize each piece in other reading you've done, or to give your own response (or rebuttal) to a reading's arguments. **Some of the assigned readings will be difficult or lengthy—I do not expect you to fully grasp each piece before class, only that you make your best effort to read and summarize.** These posts should be one page, double spaced, and are due before class begins. You will be allowed to miss up to three responses without penalty. Discussion posts are due **before** class on the day the chosen reading is assigned. **Late discussion posts will not be accepted whatsoever, under any circumstances, do not ask.**

Grading Summary

20% — Film Analysis Essay.

25% — Auteur Essay.

25% — Genre Essay.

20% — Discussion Posts.

10% — Attendance & Participation.

Class Policies & Campus Information

Absences

Regular class attendance and participation are expected and are directly correlated to your success in the course. Attendance will be taken everyday and will factor into your final grade. Don't come to class? You won't pass. **Do ask me what you missed.**

Missed Assignments

I do not accept late assignments under any circumstances unless credible documentation can be provided—this is also true for makeup exams. Please make arrangements with me **prior to** missing an assignment or exam.

Names & Pronouns

GSU recently implemented a preferred name system and faculty *should* receive a roster with students' correct names on it. The deadline to submit Preferred Name requests at

the university level is no later than 5PM on the last day of the first week of classes each semester (see: <https://registrar.gsu.edu/academic-records/name-changes-and-corrections-of-records/preferred-name-change/>).

If you have not yet submitted a request or decide that you would prefer another name at any point during the semester, please contact me via email or come to office hours and let me know! This is also true for pronoun preferences: GSU faculty do not receive documentation of students' pronoun preferences. Unfortunately, this means that the onus falls on you if you feel that you might have to make your preference explicit. Please don't feel afraid to tell me about it (or better yet: come to office hours!)

Electronic Devices

You are free to use whichever electronic devices that you wish, with a few caveats:

- Pay attention in class. You will not pass the course if you do not listen and participate.
- Don't distract others. Keep devices on silent and avoid flashy or annoying websites/content on your screen.
- Know that it's usually pretty obvious when you're goofing off, and this will absolutely affect your attendance & participation grade.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is frequent and easy to spot with tools like TurnItIn. Please refer to the university's policy on Academic Honesty: <https://deanofstudents.gsu.edu/files/2019/07/Academic-Honesty-Policy.pdf>. In case of plagiarism or other forms of dishonesty, you will receive a grade of zero and disciplinary action may be pursued.

Formatting & Citation

You may use any citation schema that you wish and are reasonably familiar with, provided it lists author, date, title, etc. and you cite your sources appropriately.

Assignments should be double spaced, Calibre/Times New Roman/Palatino fonts, 1-inch margins on all sides. Frontmatter should include your name, date, class time, and assignment name.

Email

Please write "FILM 1010", followed by the subject of your email, in the subject line of your email(s). I will respond to urgent emails as quickly as possible, however students should not expect instant messaging-like access over email. Students should also begin

emails with appropriate formality, e.g., “Dear/Hi Professor Chace,” and should conclude with a salutation and their name (at least for the first in a string of emails).

I will not answer questions via email that are explicitly answered on the syllabus. I will not answer emails about missed lectures—it is your responsibility to come to class or make arrangements to share notes with another classmate. Substantial questions cannot be answered over email and students should come to my office hours instead. I cannot answer email queries about papers, such as: “I don’t know what to write about for the paper, can you help me?” The answer is that I can help you, but you must come to office hours, and you also must do more than say “I don’t know” and begin to formulate at least an attempt at a topic.

Disability

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so via the Access and Accommodations Center (AACE) at <https://access.gsu.edu/>. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance of a signed Accommodation Plan by the AACE Center (see: <https://access.gsu.edu/testing-services/>) and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which accommodations are sought.

Sexual Misconduct & Harassment

In instances of sexual misconduct, the present instructor(s) and teaching assistants, are designated as Responsible Employees who are required to share with administrative officials all reports of sexual misconduct for university review. If you wish to disclose an incident of sexual misconduct confidentially, there are options on campus for you do so. For more information on this policy, please refer to the Sexual Misconduct Policy which is included in the Georgia State University Student Code of Conduct (<http://codeofconduct.gsu.edu/>).

We will be covering sensitive topics in this class, including gender and sexuality. Many of the readings and films will be sexually explicit or sexually charged. This is not an excuse for harassment in any form or fashion.

Student Evaluations of Instructor

Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

Schedule

The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

Aesthetics & Foundations

January 13 — Introductions

CLIP: Sophie Fiennes, "The Pervert's Guide to Cinema" (2006).

READ: Syllabus.

January 15 — Watching Movies

READ: Greg Smith, "It's Just a Movie: A Teaching Essay for Introductory Media Classes".

READ: Pramaggiore & Wallis, Ch. 1-2 in *Film: A Critical Introduction*.

January 20 — Martin Luther King Day (No Class)

January 22 — Mise-en-scène

CLIP: Chuck Jones, "Duck Amuck" (1953).

CLIP: Franklin J. Schaffner, "Patton" (1970).

CLIP: George Lucas, "THX 1138" (1971).

READ: Pramaggiore & Wallis, Ch. 5 in *Film: A Critical Introduction*.

January 27 — Cinematography

CLIP: Neil Jordan, "The Brave One" (2007).

CLIP: Spike Lee, "Do The Right Thing" (1989).

CLIP: Steven Spielberg, "Schindler's List" (1993).

READ: Pramaggiore & Wallis, Ch. 6 in *Film: A Critical Introduction*.

January 29 — Editing

READ: Pramaggiore & Wallis, Ch. 7 in *Film: A Critical Introduction*.

February 3 — Sound

CLIP: Francis Ford Coppola, "The Conversation" (1974).

CLIP: Danny Boyle, "Trainspotting" (1996).

CLIP: Andrew Stanton, "WALL-E" (2008).

READ: Pramaggiore & Wallis, Ch. 8 in *Film: A Critical Introduction*.

February 5 — Narrative

READ: Pramaggiore & Wallis, Ch. 4 in *Film: A Critical Introduction*.

Cinema, Culture & Technology

February 10 — Classical Hollywood Cinema

READ: John Belton, "The Studio System".

READ: Benschhoff & Griffin, Ch. 2 in *America on Film*.

February 12 — Casablanca

WATCH: Michael Curtiz, "Casablanca" (1942).

February 17 — Film Noir

CLIP: Robert Siodmak, "The Killers" (1946).

READ: John Belton, "Film Noir: Somewhere in the Night".

WATCH: Stanley Kubrick, "The Killing" (1956).

February 19 — Making Images

READ: TBD.

Auteurism

February 24 — Auteur Theory

READ: François Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" — <http://www.newwavefilm.com/about/a-certain-tendency-of-french-cinema-truffaut.shtml>.

READ: Pramaggiore & Wallis, Ch. 14 in *Film: A Critical Introduction*.

WATCH: Darren Grant, "Diary of a Mad Black Woman" (2005).

February 26 — Counterpoints to Auteur Theory

READ: Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (1967).

READ: Andrew Sarris, "Notes On the Auteur Theory in 1962" (1962).

Film Genre

March 2

READ: Leo Braudy, "Genre: The Convention of Connections" (1976).

READ: Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" (1972).

DUE: Film Analysis Essay.

Westerns

March 4 — Westerns

CLIP: George Stevens, "Shane" (1953).

READ: Prince, "The Western".

READ: Benshoff & Griffin, Ch. 5 in *America on Film*.

WATCH: John Ford, "My Darling Clementine" (1946).

March 9 — Django Unchained

READ: William Luhr, "The Scarred Woman Behind the Gun: Gender, Race, and History in Recent Westerns".

READ: Benshoff & Griffin, Ch. 4 in *America on Film*.

WATCH: Quentin Tarantino, "Django Unchained" (2012).

March 11 — The Ballad of Little Joe

READ: Benshoff & Griffin, Ch. 13 in *America on Film*.

WATCH: Maggie Greenwald, "The Ballad of Little Jo" (1993).

March 16 — NO CLASS

March 18 — NO CLASS

Crime/Neo-Noir

March 23 — Taxi Driver

WATCH: Martin Scorsese, "Taxi Driver" (1976).

READ: Pauline Kael, "Underground Man" — <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1976/02/09/underground-man> (1976).

READ: Barbara Mortimer, "Portraits of the Postmodern Person in Taxi Driver, Raging Bull, and the King of Comedy" (1997).

March 25 — Joker

WATCH: Todd Phillips, "Joker" (2019).

READ: Alex Abad-Santos, "The fight over Joker and the new movie's "dangerous" message, explained" — <https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/9/18/20860890/joker-movie-controversy-incel-sjw> (2019).

READ: Martin Scorsese, "I Said Marvel Movies Aren't Cinema. Let Me Explain." — <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/04/opinion/martin-scorsese-marvel.html> (2019).

Documentary

March 30 — Documentary Modes

CLIP: Godfrey Reggio, "Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance" (1982).

CLIP: Leni Riefenstahl, "Triumph des Willens" (1934).

READ: Bill Nichols, "What Types of Documentaries Are There?"

WATCH: Michael Moore, "Roger & Me" (1989).

DUE: Auteur Essay.

April 1 — Moi, un noir

CLIP: George Butler, "Pumping Iron" (1977).

CLIP: Albert & David Maysles, "Salesman" (1969).

CLIP: James Marsh, "Man on Wire" (2008).

WATCH: Jean Rouch, "Moi, un noir" (1958) — <https://vimeo.com/294911765>.

Queer Cinema

April 6 — Queer as Folk

READ: Benjamin H. Shephard, "The Queer/Gay Assimilationist Split" — <https://monthlyreview.org/2001/05/01/the-queergay-assimilationist-split/>.

WATCH: Cowen & Lipman, "Queer as Folk" (US Version), S1E1-2 (1999).

April 8 — Pose/Paris is Burning

CLIP: Jennie Livingston, "Paris Is Burning" (1990).

READ: Benschhoff & Griffin, Ch. 4 in *America on Film*.

WATCH: Murphy, Falchuk & Canals, "Pose", S1E1-2 (2018).

Horror

April 13 — Horror

READ: Robin Wood, "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s".

READ: Noel Carroll, "Why horror?".

April 15 — The Exorcist

READ: Barbara Creed, "Horror and the Monstrous Feminine".

WATCH: William Friedkin, "The Exorcist (Director's Cut)" (1973).

April 20 — Psycho

READ: Carol Clover, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film" (1987).

WATCH: Alfred Hitchcock, "Psycho", (1960).

Cyberpunk

April 22 — Cyberpunk

CLIP: Ridley Scott, "Blade Runner: Final Cut" (1982).

READ: Christophe Den Tandt, "Cyberpunk as Naturalist Science Fiction".

April 27 — Johnny Mnemonic

CLIP: Mamoru Oshii, "Ghost in the Shell" (1995).

READ: Takayuki Tatsumi, "Transpacific Cyberpunk: Transgeneric Interactions between Prose, Cinema, and Manga".

WATCH: Robert Longo, "Johnny Mnemonic" (1996).

April 29 — Genre Essay Due Online (no class)