



Albertus Magnus College Course Syllabus

Course Code and Title: CO 341 – Film Appreciation (C)

Course Description: From childhood onward, we've all seen our share of movies and, along the way, have been dazzled by their spectacle, enlightened by their perspectives, moved by their emotion, and captivated by their creativity. We've seen our lives and our world reflected back to us on the screen, and we've also seen things realized in films that surpass our most fantastic imaginings. But how, exactly, do movies work, and what has empowered the cinema to instill itself so profoundly into our popular consciousness?

In this course, students will develop a deeper connection with and understanding of film as a medium and an art form, building a fundamental understanding of film language, film production, film history, and the theoretical lenses through which movies can be considered and appreciated. By learning to analyze films in-depth and in context (aesthetic, cultural, social, ethical, psychological, and so on), students will cultivate critical thinking skills that will not only make them more conscious and engaged film viewers, but will also provide an interpretive framework and an analytical mindset that can be readily applied to other disciplines, as well.

PROGRAM AND COURSE OFFERING INFORMATION

Program: Communications

Session (Mod or Semester): January Term 2022

Class Meetings (Days of Week & Times): Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Delivery Method: Virtual / Synchronous

Number of Credits: 3

Textbook and Supplementary Readings:

- Monaco, James. (2009). *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, and Beyond* (4th Ed.). New York, NY. Oxford University Press. (ISBN: 978-0-19-532105-0)
- Additional supplementary readings to be provided via eLearning

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Nick Rocco Scalia

College e-mail: nrscalia@albertus.edu

Office Hours: Available for online conferences (by appointment) at students' convenience

Instructor Biography: Nick Rocco Scalia has taught undergraduate students in both Communications & Media Studies and English since 2011. He graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in Cinema from the University of Hartford's College of Arts & Sciences and received his M.A. with distinction in Writing, Rhetoric, and Media Arts from Trinity College. Prior to teaching, he spent the majority of his professional career in the newspaper industry, producing both feature journalism and video/multimedia content for the *New Haven Register* and its affiliates. He is a full-time corporate/commercial video production professional, filmmaker, and the showrunner and co-host of the podcast *Precinct 13: The Movies and Music of John Carpenter*. His written criticism and commentary on independent cinema is regularly featured in the long-running publication *Film Threat*. He lives on the Connecticut shoreline with his wife, their daughter, and their dog.

COURSE POLICIES

Tradition of Honor: As a member of the Albertus Magnus College Community, each student taking this course agrees to uphold the principles of honor set forth by this community, to defend these principles against abuse or misuse, and to abide by the regulations of the College. To this end, every student must write and sign the following statement at the end of each examination: ***“I declare the Honor Pledge.”***

Intellectual Honesty: Plagiarism is a serious offense against academic integrity and intellectual honesty. In completing written assignments, the student must work independently unless the class instructor indicates otherwise. It is important for students to understand that they must reference the sources for all direct quotes, for the rephrasing of information from an outside source, and for ideas borrowed from readings. Failure to cite appropriate references in any of these instances results in an act of plagiarism, intentional or unintentional. If it has been determined that a student plagiarized a written assignment, the student may be dismissed from the program. The instructor will report instances of plagiarism to the college administration.

Writing Guidelines: APA style and formatting, with in-text citations and reference listings for all outside research material, should be adhered to in all written work in the course. Resources on APA style and citations for various types of media will be provided via eLearning; please contact your instructor for additional APA assistance and further resources, if needed.

Appropriate Classroom Conduct: Students are expected to show a respect for order, the rights of others, and to exemplify a sense of honor and integrity in the classroom. Student conduct is considered an integral part of the educational process. Therefore, no student should be denied the right to learn as a direct result of disruptions

in the classroom. Active learning, open inquiry, and the free expression of informed opinion are the foundations of a liberal education at Albertus Magnus College. However, student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct the class is prohibited. Students are expected to be considerate and respectful of the rights, views, and interests of other students and faculty. The faculty member will take appropriate action if students do not abide by these rules.

Accommodations for Special Needs: Please advise the instructor of any special problems or needs at the beginning of the semester. Those students seeking reasonable accommodations based on disabilities should contact the Director of Academic and Student Disability Services, Aquinas Hall, Room 114 at (203) 672-1050, or email asejdic@albertus.edu, to obtain a Faculty Accommodation Letter. Albertus Magnus College complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

In order to respect the independence, rights and dignity of students with disabilities, the College initiates services only after a student makes a voluntary disclosure of a disability to the Office of Academic and Student Disability Services. Students who are approved for accommodations are responsible for approaching instructors in a timely manner to provide faculty accommodation letters and to arrange how accommodations will be implemented. Accommodations cannot be retroactive, so we strongly advise students to make accommodation appointments as soon as possible.

In providing reasonable accommodations, the College shall not fundamentally alter the nature of programs, services, or activities; require waiver of essential academic standards or violate accreditation requirements.

Blended and Online Course Etiquette: This course involves use of the Albertus eLearning system online. It is important to maintain appropriate professional interactions with your classmates and Instructor in the online environment. Please click the following link to review the Albertus policies regarding proper etiquette for interaction in all blended and online course work: [Link to Albertus' Netiquette Guide](#)

Withdrawing from a Course: It is the responsibility of the student to officially drop or withdraw from a course. The policies on course withdrawals and administrative withdrawals may be found online at <http://www.albertus.edu/policy-reports/academic-policies-regulations-eug#apgr>

Albertus Magnus College Definition of a Credit Hour: Albertus Magnus College adheres to the definition of a credit hour as defined by Federal Regulation 34CFR600.2 as passed by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education. The College's definition of a credit hour is as follows:

A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that reasonably approximates not less than –

- (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
- (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the College including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. *[from: eLearning site, "Faculty Resources."]*

COURSE GRADING AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance Policy: Students are required to attend all scheduled class sessions and complete all course requirements as assigned, in accordance with College policy. As a three-week intensive course, all class sessions are extremely important, and there are strict penalties for missing a virtual class. These penalties are considered “no fault” penalties. In other words, the reason for a student missing the class does not matter; the penalties will apply no matter how legitimate or frivolous the reasons for their absence.

You may miss one class session without penalty to your attendance. If you miss two classes, your final course grade will automatically be penalized by 5%. A third, fourth, and fifth absence will result in your final course grade being automatically penalized by 5% for each (finally resulting in an overall penalty of 2 letter grades). If you miss more than five class sessions, you will need to meet with the professor to discuss dropping the class. Signing in late to a virtual class meeting OR signing out early four times will equal one absence, and your grade will be subject to the penalties as listed above.

Class Cancellations: When classes are canceled due to inclement weather or another emergency, the instructor will make arrangements to cover the material missed during this class session. This may be done through e-mail, an assignment submitted through eLearning, or with an additional session. It will be up to the instructor's discretion to determine how this will be handled.

Instructor Expectations Regarding Assignment Due Dates: In addition to the attendance policies listed above, there will be late penalties for any assignments that are not submitted by the assigned date and time. Late assignments will have their grades reduced by 5% per day. Assignments will not be accepted more than one week late, resulting in a grade of zero for that assignment. In the case of an absolute emergency, students need to communicate with the professor in advance to receive accommodations.

Grading Policy and Methods of Assessment: Students in this course will be expected to 1. Attend and participate in all class sessions, 2. Complete all assigned readings from the textbook and other sources by assigned dates, 3. Complete all required film viewing assignments (outside of class time) by assigned dates, 4. Submit twice-weekly Discussion Journal assignments (six in total), and 5. Submit a final film analysis paper, incorporating key concepts from course material, on a film and topic of their choice.

Assignment	Score or Percentage of Grade
<u>Attendance and Participation</u>	30.00%
<u>Discussion Journals (6)</u>	45.00% (7.5% each)
<u>Film Analysis Essay</u>	25.00%

Overview of Requirements:

***Students will be assigned readings as well as films to be viewed outside of class, and this material will be the basis of both our in-class discussion AND your twice-weekly Discussion Journal assignments. Assigned film viewing, twice per week, should be completed by the start of class on Wednesdays/Fridays so that those films may be discussed on those days. Viewing assignments are unfortunately subject to change due to availability of films, but the instructor will provide ample notice if a substitution to the schedule needs to be made.**

Attendance and Participation

25%

This three-week course will be heavily discussion-oriented, so, in addition to the attendance responsibilities discussed above, each student will be expected to actively participate in each day's session and make regular contributions to our discussions during class time. Inactivity and inattentiveness during class sessions will reflect negatively on a student's participation grade. As stated above, students should complete readings and film viewing assignments by assigned days so that they may productively discuss and comment on that material during class.

Discussion Journals

45%

These assignments, due each week on Wednesday and Friday by 11:59 p.m., will consist of responses to multiple discussion questions based on the previous days' discussions, readings, and film viewings. Each response should be well-developed, reflect a solid understanding of the material, and correctly cite its sources throughout. Complete requirements and guidelines for these assignments will be posted on eLearning.

Film Analysis Essay

25%

The final assignment in the course will be a written essay that incorporates key concepts and competencies from the course in a focused analysis of a film of your choice. In other words, your essay should focus on one specific thematic, aesthetic, or technical aspect of one particular film (i.e. religious themes and symbolism in Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets*; expressiveness of shot framing in Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*; femininity and motherhood in James Cameron's *Aliens*, etc.), discussing that specific topic using concepts and terms covered within the course.

*You may not choose one of the six assigned films covered in class to analyze in this assignment; the goal is to apply your knowledge and critical thinking to a film that has not been extensively analyzed in our discussion (however, other films we have viewed a clip or scene from during our class discussions will be fair game!). You will be required to let your professor know in advance what your planned film and topic will be; I won't necessarily shoot down any ideas, but I will provide some early feedback if needed to get your essay off on the right foot.

Grade Equivalencies:

Letter grades are based on suggested numerical equivalents as follows:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	94–100
A–	90–93
B+	87–89
B	84–86
B–	80–83
C+	77–79
C	74–76
C–	70–73
D+	67–69
D	60–66
F (Failure)	00–59

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the completion of this course, each student will be able to:

- Identify, define and discuss the fundamental elements of cinema that form the basis of film studies and critical film discussion
- Understand the various roles and disciplines that are integral to the filmmaking process, and articulate the communicative and aesthetic effects that each of their contributions have on the finished film
- Develop a working knowledge of film history and the evolution of the cinematic medium
- Understand film studies as an academic discipline
- Discuss and compare several major film theories, and apply them critically to both individual films and larger bodies of work

By the completion of this course, each student should know/demonstrate:

- The ability to analyze, discuss, and write about films with a strong working knowledge of cinematic “language,” film production, and film history
- An understanding, as audience members, of the specific effects of aesthetic and technical choices made by filmmakers
- A basic understanding of film theory, and a critical skillset that allows one to make meaningful connections between the work of film critics/theorists and films themselves

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week One – Part 1

Topics: Introduction; What is a film?; Elements of cinema

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the medium of film from a technical, aesthetic, narrative (and non-narrative) perspective
- Understand the basics of film language/grammar, including the shot, the sequence, framing, montage, etc.
- Define the various elements of cinema, such as mise-en-scène, cinematography, diegetic and non-diegetic sound, and so on

Assignment(s): Readings [from *How to Read a Film*, Chapter 3 and 5], Film viewing, Discussion Journal #1

Week One – Part 2

Topics: The filmmaking process

Learning Objectives:

- Understand film as a uniquely collaborative medium
- Develop a working knowledge of the various roles and departments that contribute to films, including (but not limited to) direction, cinematography, production design, sound design, performance, and VFX
- Be able to critically evaluate films using this understanding of the specific roles played in their creation

Assignment(s): Readings [from *How to Read a Film*, Chapter 2], Film viewing, Discussion Journal #2

Week Two – Part 1

Topics: Film history

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the development of cinema, including the establishment of cinematic conventions and film's relationship to previously existing media such as visual art, drama, photography
- Review the contributions of developing world cinemas in the early 20th century to the medium, such as montage (USSR), expressionism (Germany), and continuity editing (U.S.)
- Understand key technical developments in cinema history – including synchronous sound, color photography, the expanded (“widescreen”) aspect ratio, etc. – and their effects on the medium.

Assignment(s): Readings [from *How to Read a Film*, Chapter 4], Film viewing, Discussion Journal #3

Week Two – Part 2

Topics: Introduction to film theory; signs and symbolism in the cinema; feminist film theory

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the fundamental aspects of film theory and film criticism, and define the separate but related disciplines of popular film criticism (i.e. Roger Ebert) and academic film criticism (i.e. André Bazin)
- Discuss signs, signifiers, and symbols in cinema, and the “close readings” of films, based upon the work of Peter Wollen and others
- Examine the concept of the “male gaze” and other aspects of feminist film theory, as expressed in the work of Laura Mulvey, Carol Clover, and others

Assignment(s): Readings [from *How to Read a Film*, Chapter 3, plus supplementary material], Film viewing, Discussion Journal #4, Pre-writing for Film Analysis Essay

Week Three – Part 1

Topics: Genre Theory

Learning Objectives:

- Explore the framework of genre theory in analyses of large bodies of film work
- Understand common film genres, such as horror, romantic comedy, film noir, etc., the characteristics of each, and the relationships between genres and social, cultural, historical, and psychological realities
- Develop an analytical skillset for considering films as expressions of genre

Assignment(s): Readings [from *How to Read a Film*, Chapter 4, plus supplementary material], Film viewing, Discussion Journal #5

Week Three – Part 2

Topics: Auteur Theory

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the concept of filmmaker as *auteur*, as expressed in the work of André Bazin, Andrew Sarris, and others
- Analyze the thematic, stylistic/aesthetic, narrative, etc. similarities present in multiple works by the same filmmaker
- Explore the bodies of work produced by notable domestic and international filmmakers within the overall foundation of auteur theory

Assignment(s): Readings [from *How to Read a Film*, Chapter 4], Film viewing, Discussion Journal #6, Film Analysis Essay