



ART 312: Aesthetics of Film

GENERAL NOTES ABOUT THE COURSE:

It is a rigorous and demanding course with lots of reading, writing and (you guessed it) watching movies. You should plan on spending 6 to 9 hours per week on average reading, watching videos, writing and taking assessments.

It is essential to be comfortable with whatever technology you're using for the course and confident that it's sufficient to handle streaming video. A high-speed internet connection is essential. *I do not recommend taking this course if you don't have a high-speed, reliable Internet connection at home.* In previous semesters, the amount of online activity has proved difficult for students whose main Internet connection is at work or school.

Be prepared to work with McKendree's IT department if you encounter any technical issues. I'm not able to provide technical support, though I'll work with you on deadlines, etc. if any problems keep you from doing your work.

The class takes place entirely online and is asynchronous, meaning you do not have to login at any specific time, but we will not "break" for any holiday. It is vital to do the work and not fall behind—even one week away from our activities will be difficult to recover from.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*. 13th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2014).

Corrigan, Timothy, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 7th ed. (New York: Longman, 2009). [NOTE: any edition is acceptable]

Use this book as a source to help you with writing each assignment, including style, structure, citation, and other relevant issues. Although there are no assigned readings, it is an indispensable resource with samples of writing and other resources. I will periodically refer to terms in the book for your reference throughout the semester.

Multiple required reading documents (PDF files and other notes) throughout the semester (posted in each Learning Module)

These are written by myself and other McKendree faculty and are the most vital things to read. Your weekly writing assignments are graded on how well you understand concepts that are best explained here.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to develop a general knowledge and appreciation of filmmaking techniques and cinematic concepts from inception to present day.

When you have completed this course you should be able to

- Watch a film and **describe** it accurately, using the technical language of the medium where appropriate, and your own language when necessary,
- **Identify** the **artist**, the **photographer** or **filmmaker** (**producer**, **director**, **cinematographer**, **actor**, or any other person or persons involved with the making of a film) and discuss the world in which he or she worked or works,
- **Explain** clearly what the work **means to you**, and why,
- **Compare** it to other works in the same genre or similar genres by discussing their significant similarities and differences, and
- **Analyze** short clips and full-length films in terms of aesthetic principles, including cinematography, editing, sound/music, acting, story, dramatization, and various ideologies.
- **Critique** the quality of films using your visual literacy skills.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION and LEARNING MODULES

Students work through a new Learning Module each week, which contains:

- **Objectives** to meet one week at a time
- **Reading assignments** (both online and in the textbook)
- **Video clips** from documentaries and other films or videos that introduce/explain film concepts as well as primary sources (excerpts of original films via streaming video)
- **Online dialogue assignments** using the **Discussion Board**. Please read the instructions for each assignment carefully, watch all the video clips and do any exercises that they ask you to before you begin work on your own essay. **Beginning with assignment #2, you should read the assignments posted by your classmates, and respond to at least two of them each week.**
- **Key terms and concepts as well as a slideshow** to master and use in assignments
- **Quizzes** to assess your comprehension and progress
- **Extra credit** (during selected weeks) or optional resources and activities

Additional methods of instruction:

- **My posts**, which include this syllabus, instructions for your online assignments (which are essentially short essays to help you with your assignments), announcements that I will post from time to time, and my comments on your assignments (some of which I may send via email).
- **Full-length films** which you will watch and write about in your online assignments. I hope you will find these films in your local video store or online through a service like Netflix. I will also make several films available online in a reduced-size format, but they're not optimal.

ABOUT THE ASSIGNMENTS/DISCUSSION BOARDS

You will look at photographs and films, learn to **describe** them in some detail, learn to **compare** them to one another, and learn to **explain** in significant detail what meaning you find in them, and why.

As the course progresses, you should begin to understand the significant differences in how photographers and filmmakers at different times and places have dealt with their craft and their subject matter. You will also explore your own personal responses to each of the works we study.

Each week, work through the module content methodically:

- 1) Read the required text(s)
- 2) Watch the required videos and take notes
- 3) Read the instructions for the weekly assignment. *These are often extensive and contain more videos to watch or links to resources that will help you. Prepare to spend time working through the instructions themselves.*
- 4) Write your assignment offline, posting it to the discussion board *only after you've saved it outside Blackboard.*
- 5) Within a week, respond to TWO classmates. This is a third of your grade each week. Your comments should be substantial and dialogue driven. They should NOT simply praise a colleague, and they definitely should not criticize their effort, grammar, etc. See "grading policies" below.

IMPORTANT PROTOCOL/GUIDELINES FOR THE DISCUSSION BOARDS

- I intend to participate actively in the discussions that take place on the Discussion Board, though much of my participation will be through announcements that comment on everyone's work. I want to acknowledge excellent work, but I do not want to embarrass anyone whose work is not as strong as it could be.
- **We will be reading most, perhaps all, of what you post on Blackboard. Correct punctuation and spelling are important.** Errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar can be very distracting, and they do not enhance the credibility of the writer.
- Furthermore, there is **no excuse** for **misspelling** the **name** of a movie, a character, an actor, a producer, or a director. Before you write about any film, go to IMDB (Internet Movie Database) to check the spelling of an actor's or a character's name, or the title of a film. There are also three indexes in the back of your textbook: indexes for topics, people, and titles, and you can use them as resources not only for finding things in the text but for the correct spelling of names and titles. **If you are not familiar with a name or a title when you first hear it, look it up!**
- It is customary to refer to actors, directors, producers, cinematographers, and other professionals by their **last** names or by their **first and last** names. The best method is to refer to the person by their first and last name upon first mention, and thereafter by their last name. Do not refer to an actor by his or her first: "Pitt" or "Brad Pitt", **not** "Brad"; "Roberts" or "Julia Roberts," **not** "Julia."
- Please format your essays with a 12-point Times or Times New Roman font and double-space them.
- Please *italicize* titles of films in this course.
- *I prefer that you write your initial posts (the assignments themselves) in third-person voice.* (Using third-person is **required** on your final paper; I encourage you to get used to it). Instead of saying "I think Orson Welles uses deep focus to depict..." just say "Orson Welles uses deep focus to depict..." You're writing it; by default, I assume what you write represents what you think. However...
- You should attribute any quotes, or any ideas at all, that are not your own to the proper source. We watch several documentaries, and you'll often

see “talking heads” -- filmmakers, critics, etc., commenting on movies. In the course of your discussions, you should name the relevant person, what they said, and what movie they referred to. Try to be as specific and descriptive as possible about attributing ideas that aren’t your own.

- I also encourage you to, when appropriate, to include the digital time stamp or the file/chapter number that corresponds to the clip(s) you reference. This is not required but can be quite helpful to me and other students.
- If you choose to include information you gathered from research, you must conform to standards of academic honesty and use a standard method of academic citation. See section on research and citation below.
- Post your essays in the body of a post on the discussion board – don’t simply attach them.
- There are many online resources to help you with your writing. McKendree has a [Writing Resource Center](#). Another excellent resource is the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#). If I find that you consistently have difficulty with a specific writing problem, I will urge you to get help.

PEER GROUPS

To keep the discussion robust and varied, I'm assigning students to groups based on the first letter of your last name. Each week, I'll assign discussion questions to each group. If you're in Group One, you'll discuss Question #1, and so on. Every student is required to post an essay, **according to the attached instructions**, each week. **Every week, you're also required to post two responses to classmates. Your responses must be to students in two different groups.** For example, if you're in Group Two, you should post an essay in response to Question #2, and you could respond to classmates' essays who are in Group One, and Three (or Four and Five, or whatever, as long as they're two different groups and *not your own*).

Group assignments will be posted in Module 1.

RESEARCH AND CITATION

- As it is with writing, the [Purdue OWL](#) is my favorite resource for citation issues. Check with it before you check with me.
- It is possible to do the weekly assignments (though typically not the final project) without needing to cite any sources (though I would prefer that you do so, because you are all referencing—even if you're just paraphrasing— the films you're discussing).
- Plagiarism is defined as the practice of passing off someone else's ideas as your own. Sometimes inexperienced students accidentally do this, but as with the law, ignorance is not an excuse.
- If you quote any dialogue or refer to any research online (or anywhere—even the textbook(s), you must properly attribute it.
- Direct quotations go in quotation marks and get cited (refer to the OWL for more on that if you haven't cited before).
- If you're merely borrowing a concept or idea (or using it to explain your own), paraphrase it and cite that too. For example, if you discuss color symbolism in film and use Giannetti's example of a red filter in *Alien* representing alarm and urgency, you should cite Gianetti, p. 28—even if you don't directly quote anything he says.
- As you might guess, copying a direct sentence—even just one—from anywhere (online, on paper, from a speech) is a one-way ticket to F-town.
- When citing, follow the guidelines of an academic style manual. It doesn't matter whether you use MLA, APA, AMA, Turabian or Chicago, as long as it's consistent and correct within the style guide.
- Sources: they're not all created equal. First, the most important thing to know is that **WIKIPEDIA IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE ACADEMIC SOURCE**. It's a user-generated encyclopedia and it isn't fact-checked. It can be a great starting point for research. The footnotes in Wikipedia entries can point you to more acceptable sources.
- Examples of trustworthy sources are ones produced by nonprofit institutions (like PBS), museums, libraries, archives, educational institutions, and official websites of a movie, director, or actors. I also

encourage you to utilize McKendree's online library resources, which include access to academic journals, as well as (gasp!) actual books from the physical library building. If you have doubts about using a source, email me.

ACADEMIC HONESTY/PLAGIARISM POLICIES

Presenting what someone else has written as your own work constitutes plagiarism, and the consequences for plagiarism are severe. According to McKendree academic policies, as spelled out in the 2009-2010 Catalog (pp. 4849), if you are guilty of plagiarism, here are my choices:

- a) The faculty member may allow the student to resubmit the assignment, or re-take the exam, test, or quiz for full credit.
- b) The faculty member may reduce the grade earned by the student for the specific assignment by whatever factor the faculty member deems appropriate.
- c) The faculty member may fail the student on the particular assignment.
- d) The faculty member may reduce the grade earned by the student for the course itself.
- e) The faculty member may fail the student for the course itself.

The choice I make would depend on the severity of the plagiarism, but I will NOT hesitate to utilize options C and E (for repeated offenses).

I have written my own guide to avoiding plagiarism, which is posted in Module One.

If you have any questions, please feel free to send me an email or to post your questions in the Faculty Office forum on the Discussion Board.

I may from time to time randomly submit essays that you post to SafeAssign, which will identify any similarities between what you have written and text that the program finds online. At the end of the course, you will submit your final projects using SafeAssign.

ABOUT THE QUIZZES

Each week, I post a short quiz. The quizzes are REQUIRED and must be completed by the deadline each week. The lowest grade of the eight quizzes is dropped.

If you have technical issues during a quiz, email or text me immediately so I can reset the quiz for you (I will respond as soon as possible, but you may have to wait up to 12 hours if you're taking the test late at night).

FINAL EXAM

The final features approximately 25 questions and will be cumulative (covering the entire term). It will be based heavily on vocabulary. It will also feature an two essay questions, one for extra credit. I will announce further details about the final after the midterm

GRADING POLICIES

Weekly dialogue assignments: 30% Midterm paper: 15% Final paper: 20% Quizzes: 25% (lowest grade dropped) Final exam: 10%

Extra credit is available, but taken in total, cannot amount to more than 5% of a student's overall grade. Each extra credit assignment is worth 1% of your total grade, and the optional final can boost your grade up to 2%. Extra credit is NOT a substitute for submitting assignments. If a student has missed two or more assignments or quizzes, I will not accept extra credit work.

First assignment: Assignment #1a is worth only 10 points because it doesn't require you to respond to colleagues. Everyone who submits an essay by the deadline will get a perfect score (10 points) for each assignment. I have set a deadline for both of these assignments before the 5th business day from the start of the class, primarily because of the University's policies concerning dropping a course (see the last page of this document).

Deadlines, generally: After Assignment #1, all of your assignments and quizzes, except for your final paper, will be due on Sundays. I expect that you will post your assignments on or before the date that they are due (anytime technically on the due date, by 11:59pm). Your responses are due on Sundays as well, a week later.

Communication is key: If you know that you are going to have to post an assignment late, or if, for reasons beyond your control, you were not able to post an assignment on time, I expect you to send me an email explaining why your assignment is late. This is crucial. You must communicate with me. If you do, we will work out a new deadline, and there will be no penalty. If you have ongoing problems keeping up with work, I will ask for documentation of any illness, death in the family, or other issue. Acceptable forms of documentation are usually letters (on letterhead) from a doctor, counselor or academic advisor.

If you do not communicate with me, I will assess the following penalties: **I will penalize late assignments one point per day for up to three days, and four points if they are more than three days late. I will penalize late responses .5 (1/2) point per day up to three days and two points thereafter. I will NOT accept posts or responses more than one week past their original due dates.**

Late quizzes will not be accepted without an email request prior to the due date.

Responding to the work of your classmates: *Beginning with Assignment #3*, I expect you to respond to the work of **at least two** of your colleagues. That is, *responding to the work of your colleagues is part of your assignment*. For each of these assignments (#3 through #8) you can earn up to 5 points for participation, based on the number and quality of your responses. (Please note that I expect **substantive participation**. Comments that don't go much further than "I agree," "You go, girl," "I loved your essay," or "Great job," while clearly supportive, are not in and of themselves enough to get you even one [1] point.) Your comments should focus on an idea or an observation your colleague has presented. It should be at least a paragraph long in order to give you time to develop your own ideas. You could pursue your colleague's point further, ask a question about what your colleague has said, perhaps suggest ways that what your colleague has said might apply to other films, or relate a personal experience that clarifies or strengthens what your colleague has said. **You will have one week after the deadline for an assignment to post your responses, and they should be at least 50 words apiece as a rule of thumb.**

Note that if you do not post responses to colleagues within a week, you lose 5 points and thus cannot earn more than 10/15 or 66% on the assignment.

A perfect score for the online assignments would be 15 points per assignment. A grade of 14 on an assignment is an A, a grade of 13 a B+, and so on. The highest grade you can earn on the essay itself is a 10. You can bring this grade up to a 15 with your responses to the work of your colleagues (see the paragraph above).

Please note that occasionally I may do an initial round of grading (awarding up to 10 points for your initial post), before you write your responses to colleagues. **Don't be alarmed if you see a grade of 10 or less after only one post; I will update your grade when/if you post responses.**

Your final paper will be due on the last day of the class. It will be worth 20% of your grade. **Unlike the weekly assignments, the final project is graded on a 100-point scale to allow more flexibility in points earned.**

RUBRIC for weekly assignments

For a **C 11 points**, your posts must

- demonstrate that you know and understand the topic and the purpose of your post.
- demonstrate competency in organization and in the use of support material (details from the film[s], photograph[s], or film clip[s] you are discussing, information or ideas you have found in your reading or in other video material, personal experience, and so forth), and
- meet the basic standards of punctuation and grammar.

For a **B (13 points)**, your posts must

- meet all the requirements of competency for a C, and
- demonstrate excellence in at least one area (insight into your topic, or presentation and support of the point you want to make, for example).

The “B” post indicates that you have given thoughtful consideration to the topic, **used terms we’ve studied**, and that you have developed, at least to some extent, your own ideas.

For an **A (14 or more points)**, your posts must

- demonstrate that you know and understand thoroughly the material you are writing about,

- excel in all areas but particularly in its thoughtful or thought-provoking analysis of the selected topic,
- develop complex ideas, and
- cite significant specific details, **using terms we've studied**, from your experience of the photograph(s) or the film(s) you are writing about.

I also expect that it will be, on the whole, well organized, well written, and engaging.

For a **D (10 points or below)**, it must be clear that you tried to meet the standards for a C and missed, either in the area of competency, knowledge, or mechanics. Or you did not respond to colleagues.

For an **F**, either (1) you did not do the assignment, (2) you did not try to meet the standards for a C, or (3) you have plagiarized some part of your paper. (Plagiarizing most or all of your paper could lead to an F in the course.) I will usually make comments either in your gradebook or by email explaining the problem. If you receive more than one F, we must confer via email or by phone to discuss your goals and your performance in the course.

GRADING SCALE (PERCENTAGES)

A	93 – 100%
A-	92 – 90
B+	89 – 87
B	86 – 83
B-	82 – 80
C+	79 – 77
C	76 – 73
C-	72 – 70
D+	69 – 67
D	66 – 63
D-	62 – 60
F	59 – below

COURSE SCHEDULE

	QUIZ(zes)	DIALOGUE ASSIGNMENT(S)	COMMENTS DUE THIS WEEK	PAPER	EXTRA CREDIT
Module 1	Quiz 1a: Sunday Quiz 1b: Sunday	<i>Assignment 1a:</i> <i>Friday</i> Assignment 1b: Sunday	None required	N/A	
Module 2	Quiz 2: Sunday	Assignment 2: Sunday	None required	N/A	
Module 3	Quiz 3: Sunday	Assignment 3: Sunday	Assignment 2	N/A	Shot-byshot analysis
Module 4	Quiz 4: Sunday	N./A	Assignment 3	Midterm paper <i>Amadaeus</i> Due Sunday,	
Module 5	Quiz 5: Sunday	Assignment 4/5: Sunday	N/A	N/A	
Module 6	Quiz 6: Sunday	Assignment 6: Sunday	Assignment 4/5	Final paper proposal due	Film Review
Module 7	Quiz 7: Sunday	Assignment 7: Sunday	Assignment 6		
Module 8	N/A	N/A	Assignment 7	Final paper due LAST DAY of CLASS	Final exam due LAST DAY of CLASS

MORE NOTES ABOUT THE COURSE

Keys to success:

- Reading instructions and following them to the letter. Word count, structure, and details matter.
- If you need more feedback, have trouble with concepts, or have issues (either technically or personally) getting the work done, contact the professor immediately. In an eight-week course, problems snowball quickly. Let's work together to solve any problems as soon as they happen.
- Doing the reading and *using* concepts and terms you learn in your essays. I will be able to tell how carefully you have read the assignment by what you say in your posts in the Discussion Board.
- When available, consider streaming films via Netflix or renting/borrowing/buying DVDs, especially in the final weeks when you're choosing your own full-length feature films. The videos on Blackboard are in a reduced file format and aren't as crisp as a higher-resolution video. Depending on the size of your computer screen and speakers, you'll have a much more cinematic viewing experience.
- Each assignment builds on the work you have done in the previous assignment. In your final project, you put all of this together. It is essential that you work through all of the Learning Modules in order.
- That being said, you might often benefit from looking ahead. Take the time to browse through the textbook and look at the assignments ahead. If you have the time, watch some of the other documentaries about film that I have put online (Videos > Online Films, 1900 – 2000 > Films about film, making-of documentaries, etc.)

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON DROPPING A COURSE AND REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES

Students enrolled in weekly or on-line only courses may withdraw from courses and receive refunds according to the following schedule:

1. Up to the end of the 5th business day from the start day of the class, students may withdraw from a class without any notation appearing on the permanent record.
2. Students may withdraw prior to the end of the 6th business day with a notation of "W" appearing on the permanent record.
3. After the seventh business day, a grade of WF will be assigned unless circumstances merit special consideration by the Dean of the University.
4. Prior to the end of the 5th business day, 100% of the tuition is refundable. After the 5th business day and prior to the end of the 6th business day a 50% refund is available. After the 6th business day, tuition is no longer refundable.

UNIVERSITY ADA POLICY

A student requiring assistance with the technical portions of the course should contact the Instructor or the Academic Support Center. Services for Students with disabilities are provided through the McKendree Academic Support Center (MASC) in order to help the student integrate into the entire university experience. MASC provides coordination and implementation of special accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

UNIVERSITY EMAIL POLICY

Every student is issued a McKendree email account, which is one of the major means of communication from departments such as the Office of Academic Records, Student Affairs and the Business Office. All students are responsible for checking their McKendree email accounts regularly, and are accountable for information disseminated to their email accounts. Failure to read university communications sent to McKendree email accounts does not absolve students from knowing and complying with the content of these communications.

SUBJECT TO CHANGE CLAUSE

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs.