



Class:
Office Hours:
Office:

Instructor: Dr. Jake Bohrod
Email:

S A M P L E COURSE DESCRIPTION AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is a critical survey of the development of American cinema through the artistry and industrial impact of international filmmakers working in Hollywood. Tracing the aesthetic, economic, and social formation of American cinema from the silent era to the present moment, the class examines the outsized influence of global filmmakers on Hollywood and American film culture. We will discover how the dominance of American cinema and the characteristics of the Hollywood style are not solely domestic inventions, but rather the result of diverse international contributions, exemplified by filmmakers such as Ernst Lubitsch, Maya Deren, Haile Gerima, Ang Lee, and Alejandro Iñárritu. As a seminar on American film, we will use these expatriate filmmakers to guide our inquiry into American ideology and help us locate Hollywood from the outside in.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the key contributions of global filmmakers to American cinema style, industry, and ideology
- Formally present original analysis and synthesis of readings in front of a group
- Construct arguments about what it means for a movie to be “American”
- Author a video essay with the aid of basic editing software
- Contextualize the global nature and function of American cinema today

REQUIRED READINGS

All readings will be on BrightSpace.

Instructions to Access Brightspace: Go to <https://brightspace.lmu.edu> → Enter your username and password → Click on your course title → If you have trouble logging in Brightspace, contact ITS Help Desk.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This class is a graduate-level, critical examination of the history of American film from the perspective of global filmmakers working in the United States. It will consist of lectures, discussion, student presentations, and screenings. Each week will explore a different era in American cinema through the prism of a global Hollywood filmmaker. Most of these filmmakers had established careers in other countries prior to their work in the U.S. industry, yet in all cases their American films would have a lasting impact on domestic film culture and even come to typify the American style of filmmaking. Accordingly, most of the movies featured in this course take as their subject America itself, specifically the shifting definitions of what it means to be American in the context of the 20th and 21st centuries. Therefore the class prioritizes questions of American ideology and its filmic representation in the major American genres and cinematic movements.

While there are no prerequisites for this course, a tolerance of critical thinking is required.

There are a variety of ways to earn credit, bring your own tastes to class, and develop your own critical voice – written exercises, class discussion, presentations, and a final video essay project. When it is possible I will utilize class time for weekly screenings, but oftentimes it will be necessary for students to watch the assigned films in their own time prior to class on Wednesdays.

Your weekly attendance and active **participation** is central to the success of the class, as is your thoughtful engagement with the course readings. Much of class will consist of a thorough discussion of the readings and their relationship with that week's topic; therefore, it is paramount you complete the readings before class on Wednesday, and come to class with your questions and comments.

Each student will give one assigned formal **presentation** throughout the course. Each week, one student will be responsible for presenting on that week's topic, offering a summation of the readings and a synthesis of their ideas. Presentations will need to use and submit via BrightSpace a visual aid of some kind (i.e. Powerpoint), and should be 20-25 minutes in length. Students may use examples of related films and filmmakers as long as they are consonant with the topic - some additional research may be required. Students are likewise encouraged to offer their own informed viewpoint on the material; think about this presentation as a mini lecture.

Students will also respond to weekly course material in a written **class diary**. This diary consists of informal but serious-minded responses to the given week's topic, readings, and screening. Due every Tuesday by 11:59pm on BrightSpace, each entry should be 300-400 words. Ten (10) total responses are required. Late responses will be accepted for half credit.

As a final project, students will use basic editing software to author their own **video essay** detailing a global filmmaker working in the American cinema industry of their choosing. The essays must be at least four (4) minutes in length and require a works cited. A more detailed prompt and discussion of this assignment will come later in the semester.

Grading breakdown: Participation	=	20%
Presentation	=	20%
Class diary (10)	=	30%
Video essay	=	30%

TOTAL GRADE BREAKDOWN:

A	Exceeds Expectations	100%-90%
B	Meets Expectations	89%-80%
C	Satisfactory	79%-70%
D	Poor	69%-60%
F	Failure	59%-

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Email is the preferred method of communication. I will communicate with the class and individual students using campus email, so it is essential that you regularly check your email account or the preferred email address to which you forward. Please allow up to 48 hours for me to respond before you follow up.

OFFICE HOURS

Use the Google doc posted on BrightSpace to schedule a meeting during my office hours. My office hours are a time set aside for you. Students are highly encouraged to make use of this time and come chat with me about course concepts, assignments, questions you may have or media you are interested in. If the times are inconvenient, I am happy to arrange appointments for another time. Just email me with a few available times.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 08/30/23	<p>Topic: Introduction to course</p> <p>In class: <i>Sunrise</i> (Murnau, 1927)</p>
Week 2 09/06/23	<p>Topic: American Silent Cinema</p> <p>Reading: Kleinman and McDonald, “Silent Film and the Socialization of American Immigrants: Lessons from an Old New Medium” • Bergstrom, “Murnau’s <i>Sunrise</i>: In-Camera Effects and Effects Specialists”</p> <p>In class: <i>Ninotchka</i> (Lubitsch, 1939)</p>
Week 3 09/13/23	<p>Topic: Hollywood (German) Studio Style</p> <p>Reading: Thomas, “Mutual Influences” • McCormick, “Screwball Politics: American Populism and European Politics, 1935-41”</p> <p>Homework: watch <i>Yankee Doodle Dandy</i> (Curtiz, 1942)</p>
Week 4 09/20/23	<p>Topic: Musicals and Hollywood’s WWII</p> <p>Reading: Grossman, “Double-Time in America: Yankee Doodle Dandy” • Portuges, “Hungarians in Hollywood” • Griffin, “Singing a Song of Freedom: World War II”</p> <p>Homework: watch <i>North By Northwest</i> (Hitchcock, 1959)</p>
Week 5 09/27/23	<p>Topic: Postwar and the American Underground</p> <p>Reading: Worland, “Hollywood, Hitchcock, and the Postwar Era” • Naremore, “Spies and Lovers: North By Northwest” • Rapfogel, “American Underground Film”</p> <p>In class: Maya Deren and Jonas Mekas • discuss final video essay</p> <p>Homework: watch <i>Once Upon a Time in the West</i> (Leone, 1968)</p>

<p>Week 6</p> <p>10/04/23</p>	<p>Topic: (Post)modernist Westerns</p> <p>Reading: Landy, “Which Way is America? Americanism and the Italian Western” • Carolan, “The Evolving Western: From America to Italy and Back in <i>Once Upon a Time in the West</i> and <i>Kill Bill</i>” • Frayling, “Once Upon a Time in the West”</p> <p>In class: <i>Bush Mama</i> (Gerima, 1979)</p>
<p>Week 7</p> <p>10/11/23</p>	<p>Topic: The L.A. Rebellion and Blaxploitation</p> <p>Reading: Field, Horak, and Stewart, “Introduction: Emancipating the Image” • Horak, “Tough Enough: Blaxploitation and the L.A. Rebellion”</p> <p>In class: <i>Robocop</i> (Verhoeven, 1987)</p>
<p>Week 8</p> <p>10/18/23</p>	<p>Topic: Hollywood and the Future of the 1980s</p> <p>Reading: Jefford, “Back to the Future: Hollywood and Reagan’s America” • Chapman and Cull, “Rust-belt Messiah: <i>Robocop</i> (1987)” • Ahmed, “The Legacy of <i>Robocop</i>”</p> <p>In class: <i>A Dry White Season</i> (Palcy, 1989)</p>
<p>Week 9</p> <p>10/25/23</p>	<p>Topic: Transnational Women and Diaspora Hollywood</p> <p>Reading: Nixon, “Cry White Season: Anti-Apartheid Heroism and the American Screen” • Demissie, “Navigating the African diaspora through film: interview with Euzhan Palcy” • McHugh, “The World and the Soup: Historicizing Media Feminisms in Transnational Contexts”</p> <p>In class: the video essay continued</p> <p>Homework: watch <i>Face/Off</i> (Woo, 1997)</p>
<p>Week 10</p> <p>11/01/23</p>	<p>Topic: Hollywood’s Hong Kong Masculinity</p> <p>Reading: Gates, “The Man’s Film: Woo and the Pleasures of Male Melodrama” • Williams, “<i>Face/Off</i>: Cultural and Institutional Violence Within the American Dream” • Yacowar, “An Expatriate’s Film: Facing <i>Face/Off</i>”</p> <p>Homework: watch <i>Hulk</i> (Lee, 2003)</p>

Week 11 11/08/23	<p>Topic: Superhero Blockbuster Auteurs</p> <p>Reading: Dilley, ““The Ultimate Outsider: <i>Hulk</i>” • Flanagan, “ ‘<i>The Hulk</i>, an Ang Lee Film’: Notes on the blockbuster auteur” • Beaty, “The Blockbuster Superhero”</p> <p>Homework: watch <i>Birdman</i> or (<i>The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance</i>) (Iñárritu, 2014)</p>
Week 12 11/15/23	<p>Topic: Digital Hollywood</p> <p>Reading: Dolores Tierney, ““Alejandro González Iñárritu: Mexican Director Without Borders” • Azcona and Deleyto, “The texture of the age: Digital construction of unbounded Space in <i>Birdman</i>”</p> <p>Homework: watch <i>I Am Not Your Negro</i> (Peck, 2017)</p>
Week 13 11/22/23	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Week 14 11/29/23	<p>Topic: Streaming American Documentary</p> <p>Reading: Wiedeman, “Reality Check” • Pressley-Sanon, “Techniques for truth-telling from <i>Haitian Corner</i> to <i>I Am Not Your Negro</i>”</p> <p>In class: <i>Nomadland</i> (Zhao, 2020)</p>
Week 15 12/06/23	<p>Topic: Global Hollywood</p> <p>Reading: Miller, “Introduction” from <i>Global Hollywood 2</i></p> <p>In class: <i>The Power of the Dog</i> (Campion, 2021)</p> <p>Homework: Finish video essay</p>
Final 12/13/23	<p>FINAL – Video Essay</p> <p>DUE: by 5pm</p>