

General Education Narrative: Communication 240: Introduction to Film

This is an introduction to and overview of many aspects of film and the film industry. We look at matters of its history, production and editing techniques, actors, directors, producers, film reviews and studies, film as art, what makes for a good film, etc. We also discuss the various building blocks of the cinema. We will study recent developments from all aspects of cinema, contemporary films, film personalities, photography, movement, editing, sound, acting, drama, use of color, story writing, and theory.

Demonstrate aesthetic responsiveness and interpretive ability. The purpose of this class is to study film as an artistic medium. We briefly examine the evolution of film as a communicative and creative medium, study its wide array of expressive techniques, and then follow the development of the medium through the work of various key directors who have worked in the cinema. Our objective is to make students **more aware of the aesthetic processes involved in filmmaking**, and broaden their **critical skills for viewing and analyzing films**.

Along with learning basic terminology for discussing a film in critical terms, the student will use their **analytical skills** to evaluate films. These evaluations should grow in depth as the student learns about the camera, scene construction, editing, sound, lighting, elements of meaning, narrative technique, the business of the motion picture industry and various **societal effects**.

The two primary objectives of the course are to elevate the **student's aesthetic and social appreciation for motion pictures**, and to further enhance the student's **expressive, communicative and critical skills through writing about and discussing films**.

Connect writings of art to their literary, cultural, and historical contexts. One of the objectives of the course is to allow students to begin developing a historical appreciation of film based on a survey of cinematic traditions contained within narrative, documentary, and experimental formats. In addition to screening individual films, class discussion is designed to allow students to explore the creative and cultural roots of movies generally. The films themselves address an array of **cultures** and experiences, and in some semesters at least one-third of the films shown are foreign films screened in their native languages, supplemented with subtitles. Since the international cinema often is quite different from its Hollywood counterpart, this provides an additional means to study the medium as it addresses cultural and societal issues differently than seen in those movies typically encountered by most ISU undergraduates. Thus, Communication 240 provides the opportunity for an exposure to works of **cinematic art** across a variety of **languages** and **cultures**.

Employ knowledge of the arts to analyze issues and answer questions relating to human experience, systems, and the physical environment. As noted above, the two principal goals of the class are to elevate the student's aesthetic and social appreciation for motion pictures, and further enhance the student's expressive, communicative, and critical skills through writing about and discussing films. Filmic stories, after all, are simply a reflection of life and the human experience. Films therefore provide a wonderful opportunity for reflecting on and studying the many life experiences that occur such as love, friendship, anger, jealousy, kindness, guilt, loyalty, revenge, family relations, goal-setting, **human decision-making**, aging, and death.

Reflect on themselves as products of and participants in traditions of fine and performing arts. Our objective is to assist students as they develop a "formal" appreciation of film based on analytic judgments appropriate to movies. We find that while students watch many movies, their overall cinematic experiences often are limited. We therefore begin the course by discussing the movies commonly shown at the local Cinemaplex, and identifying some characteristics that tend to make some movies better than others. Once we cover this, we introduce movies that represent the broader range of films available today. Sometimes they are older films most students may have missed, other times they are contemporary independent films or films from other countries with limited local distribution and

availability in Indiana. While movies frequently provide good entertainment, this is not the only characteristic we emphasize.

To further analyze the films we ask how the film mirrors society. Are there educative qualities? Is there a worthwhile plot, even if it is not traditional or linear in presentation? Are the characters well defined? Are they memorable and do the actors portray characters in a believable manner? How well written is the movie? Does it mostly involve action sequences or is there some serious character development taking place? What about the photography? Are scenes displayed beautifully, uniquely and/or effectively? Then we ask about other attributes such as camera movement, choice of lenses used, method of focus or framing, and how the action has been staged. Other aspects such as editing, the use of sound and music, and even industry matters are discussed. We even discuss the role of other artistic media and how they relate to film, particularly when the filmic property first appeared in another medium such as a book, short story or song. Finally we talk about the director her or himself and ask if there is anything unique about this person making the film or perhaps across the director's larger body of work. Collectively we draw conclusions that enable us to ultimately compare one film or another.

By taking this approach, we provide students with a deeper understanding of film, and an appreciation of the many styles used in filmmaking. In due course we look at the larger field of film and ask questions about why certain movies are highly respected by critics and fellow filmmakers while others are not. Overall, we are working to **elevate the student's aesthetic and social appreciation for motion pictures**. Furthermore, we are **developing a "formal" appreciation of film based on analytic judgments appropriate to movies**. Finally, we are guiding students as they **acquire a critical, technical, and aesthetic vocabulary relating to particular cinematic practices and structures**.

Other goals. A class goal is to further enhance the student's expressive, communicative, and critical skills through writing about and discussing films. Such skills are at the very heart of **critical thinking** and critical problem solving. Many feature films additionally offer the opportunity to explore the concept of **citizenship** since they extend our experiences beyond that which we know through direct world experience, or they raise questions as to how movies choose to frame the world. In fact, the role movies play in society is one of the key issues we may explore when exploring the theme of **citizenship**. Another issue that often arises in films involves the **ethical choices** made by various characters. Discussing right and wrong is one way to explore and perhaps refine our own set of **ethical standards**. Moreover, the study of moral issues provides an effective **opportunity to understand how society benefits from making healthy choices**. By offering an in-depth exploration of cinema, this course provides a valuable investigation of **information literacy** generally, and **visual literacy** specifically. By showing a variety of films, out of necessity we also cover both **U.S. and Global history & politics**. For example, a screening of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* requires a discussion of Abraham Lincoln, slavery, the U.S. Civil War, and racism in the United States in 1915; showing a Fellini film requires a discussion of Italian culture and politics, the role of religion in one's life, existentialism, and possibly a reference to Fascism; and a screening Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* necessitates a discussion of U.S. history and urban politics as well as racial stereotyping of both African Americans and Italians.

Developing effective **writing** is one specific emphasis of this class. The three film reviews we require are designed to help students sharpen their persuasive **critical writing skills**. We discuss the **various stages of writing** including planning, drafting, revising, editing and preparation of the final paper. We also elaborate on **thesis, structure, organization, content, various technical criteria, and the use of reliable support sources**. The project is **developmental** since each essay is graded and returned before the next assignment is made. This allows students to benefit from feedback and improve their writing on subsequent reviews. Writing skills are enhanced even further since the essay exam is the primary mode used in course exams.

**COMM 240
INTRODUCTION TO FILM
Spring, 2010**

Indiana State University

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SYLLABUS

OBJECTIVES OF COURSE

This is an introduction and overview of many aspects of film and the film industry. We look at matters of its history, production and editing techniques, actors, directors, producers, film reviews and studies, what makes for a good film, etc. We also will discuss the various building blocks of the cinema.

We will study recent developments from all aspects of cinema, contemporary films, film personalities, photography, movement, editing, sound, acting, drama, use of color, story writing, and theory.

Along with learning basic terminology for discussing a film in critical terms, the student will use their analytical skills to evaluate films. These evaluations should grow in depth as the student learns about the camera, scene construction, editing, sound, lighting, elements of meaning, narrative technique, and the business of the motion picture industry and its societal effects. **The two primary objectives of the course are to elevate the student's aesthetic and social appreciation for motion pictures, and to further enhance the student's expressive, communicative, and critical skills through writing about and discussing films.**

This class additionally meets a university Foundational Studies requirement. Foundational Studies are deemed important for they provide the building blocks necessary to create a sound intellectual foundation for a student's overall program of study. Regardless of the major ultimately followed, these skills and experiences are geared to enhance overall abilities necessary to successfully engaged in advanced academic work. The scholarly pursuit and application of knowledge is a principal objective of the class.

Students are required to attend class screenings and lectures, keep up with the readings, contribute to class discussion, and to complete one essay exam (final), three critical film reviews, and be prepared to take several unannounced quizzes over the course of the semester.

Learning Objectives

This course fulfills a Foundational Studies requirement for a course in **Fine and Performing Arts**. It is designed to meet the following goals and objectives which are included here to help you better understand course expectations:

Program Goals: The Foundational Studies program is designed so that ISU graduates can analyze problems, think critically and creatively, integrate a variety of approaches to gain knowledge, recognize the

ethical, social, and cultural implications of issues, and communicate professionally, persuasively and effectively. The course also provides the opportunity for students to cultivate their writing skills and learn how to write critical and analytical essays.

Program Objectives—Students will:

- Locate, critically read, and evaluate information to solve problems;
- Critically evaluate the ideas of others;
- Apply knowledge and skills within and across the fundamental ways of knowing (natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, arts and humanities, mathematics and history);
- Demonstrate an appreciation of human expression through literature and fine and performing arts;
- Demonstrate the skills for effective citizenship and stewardship;
- Demonstrate an understanding of diverse cultures within and across societies;
- Demonstrate the skills to place their current and local experience in a global, cultural, and historical context;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical implications of decisions and actions
- Apply principles of physical and emotional health to wellness;
- Express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing.

Fine and Performing Arts Goals—Students will:

- Demonstrate aesthetic responsiveness and interpretive ability.
- Connect writings of art to their literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
- Employ knowledge of the arts to analyze issues and answer questions relating to human experience, systems, and the physical environment.
- Reflect on themselves as products of and participants in traditions of fine and performing arts.

Course Goals

- To elevate the student's aesthetic and social appreciation for motion pictures.
- To further enhance the student's expressive, communicative, and critical skills through writing about and discussing films.
- To develop a "formal" appreciation of film based on analytic judgments appropriate to movies.
- To acquire a critical, technical, and aesthetic vocabulary relating to particular cinematic practices and structures.
- To begin developing a historical appreciation of film based on a survey of cinematic traditions contained within narrative, documentary, and experimental forms for each student.
- To examine some of the major methodological issues in film production.
- To sharpen students reading and writing skills.

Specific Course Goals vis-à-vis the Liberal Studies - Fine and Performing Arts Guidelines

- To develop critical thinking skills;
- To develop information literacy skills;
- To develop stronger persuasive and analytical writing skills.
- To demonstrate aesthetic responsiveness and interpretive ability;
- To connect works of art to their literary, cultural, and historical contexts;
- To employ knowledge of the arts to analyze issues and answer questions relating to human experience, systems, and the physical environment; and
- To reflect on themselves as products of and participants in traditions of the fine and performing arts.



Texts

MAIN TEXT: Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*, 11th Edition. Prentice-Hall. 2007.

SECONDARY TEXT: PREFERRED EDITION: Peter Bondanella, *The Films of Federico Fellini*, New York Cambridge University Press, 2002. (Note: Bondanella is an Italian professor at IU-Bloomington.)

Text readings are announced and all are required.

NOTE: Not all readings will be discussed in class. The objective often will be to provide classroom information that is parallel to readings so we might augment and enhance the classroom experience. Students are responsible for assigned readings whether they are directly covered in class or not.

Assignments

Participation is encouraged and stimulated by using discussion groups and smaller problem-solving groups. Each week we will have screenings followed by small group discussions and then a general classroom discussion. There will be occasional unannounced quizzes throughout the semester.

Film Reviews

Stylistic samples will be given and discussed in class. Details will be given for each assignment. Two assignment guidelines sheets attached to this course proposal are meant to serve as examples of instructions given to students in the third or fourth week of the semester. Note that we use APA Stylesheet (American Psychological Association) for all writing assignments.

Access to Films: Feature films in the collections of the ISU Library can be found by searching for the title of the film. A vast amount of information on almost any Hollywood produced feature can be found at the web site for the [Internet Movie Database](#). Thousands of films are available for purchase from [Movies Unlimited](#). See their web site as well. Lastly, you will find many of these films, particularly better known American titles, at Blockbuster or other rental houses.

Grading

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Final Exam | 30 percent total (in class on scheduled final exam day only) |
| Film reviews | 60 percent total (minimum of 3 essays) |
| Unannounced quizzes | 10 percent possible |
| Extraordinary class participation | extra 0-10 points (added to final grade) |
| Total | 100 percent possible |

No make-up quizzes will be given. Make up exams are at instructor's discretion, and require prior arrangement. Written work must be turned in on the announced date. Papers are penalized by one letter grade for each week or fraction of a week work is late.

Course Late Policy: This class has a very rigid late policy with harsh penalties and not much flexibility. An assignment is considered late if it is not collected at the start of the class in which it is listed as due. You may turn in assignments early without a penalty (although I must receive a hard copy, not an electronic version). If I do not collect your assignment when we make the general call for them at the start of class then your assignment is considered late (Even if we're talking about 5 minutes – no exceptions!). Late assignments and papers are marked down one letter grade for each week or portion of a week it is late.

Extraordinary class participation: An additional 0-10 points will be added to the final grade based on instructor's assessment of above average substantive class participation. This credit will be assigned to no more than 10 percent of the class population.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are defined in another section of this document. An assignment judged to be plagiarized or involving academic dishonesty by your professor will receive a punitive "F" grade for that assignment. Repeat offenders will receive a punitive "F" for the course and will be reported to university academic authorities for potential expulsion.

Class Policies

You are expected to attend class, prepare by keeping up with reading assignments, participate in class discussions, and hand in assignments on time.

Students should complete assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them on the date indicated on the syllabus. Plan to take notes during screenings for use during class discussions.

Do not sleep, read newspapers, magazines, or materials for other courses.

Format of Class Sessions

Most class sessions will involve film screenings and an informal lecture with many opportunities for questions and dialogue/discussion. These discussions should help you prepare for the other assignments plus master the subject matter.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken. If you miss more than 2 classes, your final grade will be dropped by a letter for each additional absence. If you know you will have to be absent, if possible, let me know in advance and bring verification (doctor's slip, letter from coach or professor) that I may keep for class records.

We will be covering a great amount of material this semester. Some of what we will be viewing is not readily available, and consequently cannot be made up easily outside of class. And films will not be re-screened outside of class. You may rent tapes/DVDs on your own, but it is **YOUR responsibility** to have seen them, one way or another. While some titles may be available for rental, many others may not. Therefore, you should plan accordingly (i.e., be sure to watch these particular films in class).

Telecommunication Devices

Please turn off or put on silent mode all pagers, cell phones and alarms before every lecture and tutorial and use your

laptop only as directed by the instructor. This is a courtesy to others. The use of such devices is an interruption to the overall learning experience. Offenders will be given a verbal warning first. Repeat offenders and recalcitrant offenders may be asked to leave the classroom and/or will be penalized by being given a punitive "F" for no less than 10% of the final grade, to be determined by the instructor.

Other University Policies

The University has policies regarding academic freedom, students with disabilities and other matters. These apply to this class and may be found on the Gen Ed web page.

General Education Goals

Universal Goals

The University General Education Program through its Basic Studies and Liberal Studies requirements prepares students to become active professionals and productive citizens. The Basic Studies requirements promote refinement of communication, quantitative literacy, and information technology skills, encourage the study of a foreign language, and advocate physical fitness for life.

The Liberal Studies requirements encourage students to understand the value of a traditional university education in the arts, humanities, and sciences and to explore the relation of a liberal education to any major course of study. All approved Liberal Studies courses promote the following goals of the General Education program:

- Locate, critically read, and evaluate information to solve problems;
- Critically evaluate the ideas of others;
- Apply knowledge and skills within and across the fundamental ways of knowing (natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, arts and humanities, mathematics, and history);
- Demonstrate an appreciation of human expression through literature and fine and performing arts;
- Demonstrate the skills for effective citizenship and stewardship;
- Demonstrate an understanding of diverse cultures within and across societies;
- Demonstrate the skills to place their current and local experience in a global, cultural, and historical context;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical implications of decisions and actions;
- Apply principles of physical and emotional health to wellness;
- Express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing.

Fine and Performing Arts

Liberal studies courses listed under the Fine and Performing Arts are specifically meant to:

- Develop critical thinking skills;
- Develop information literacy skills;
- Demonstrate aesthetic responsiveness and interpretive ability;
- Connect works of art to their literary, cultural, and historical contexts;
- Employ knowledge of the arts to analyze issues and answer questions relating to human experience, systems, and the physical environment; and
- Reflect on themselves as products of and participants in traditions of the fine and performing arts.

Gen Ed credit for Comm Majors

Under revised General Education requirements (FS 2010), this class now is eligible for the Fine and Performing Arts credit for ISU Communication majors. We urge you to check with your advisor as to whether this applies in

How our Film Review assignments meet Liberal Studies and Fine and Performing Arts objectives and learning requirements.

Developing effective **writing** is one specific emphasis of this class. The three film reviews we require are designed to help students sharpen their persuasive **critical writing skills**. We discuss the **various stages of writing** including planning, drafting, revising, editing and preparation of the final paper. We also elaborate on **thesis, structure, organization, content, various technical criteria, and the use of reliable support sources**. The project is **developmental** since each essay is graded and returned before the next assignment is made. This allows students to benefit from feedback and improve their writing on subsequent reviews.

The objective of this class is to make students **more aware of the aesthetic processes involved in filmmaking**, and broaden their **critical skills for viewing and analyzing films**. The individual film review writing assignments thus play a major role in our meeting this goal. Throughout the class we work to elevate the **student's aesthetic and social appreciation for motion pictures**, as well as mediated and aesthetic expression generally. The film reviews then provide practical experiences for students to further cultivate **expressive, communicative and critical skills through writing about and discussing films**. Depending on the film to be reviewed that week, students analyze and interpret the motion picture, critique its various aesthetic components to evaluate the film's overall aesthetic worth, link it to various contemporary or historical and cultural contexts, and explore how the medium and each particular title raises questions about human existence and the human experience. In each review, the student is further expected to reflect on the motion picture as it relates to broader traditions of human expression and the arts.

Submission of Work:

Submitted work must be handed in by hard copy only. Electronic submissions (as email attachments are not accepted.) Sorry, no exceptions.

Plagiarism and Honesty

You are expected to do your own work. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Copying from Internet sites without appropriate attribution is the same as copying from hard print sources. Depending of the nature of the assignment and the seriousness of the offense, penalties range from no credit given for the assignment, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or expulsion as determined by Student Judicial Programs. Consult your copy of The Code of Student Conduct for more information about the University's policy on academic integrity.

ISU Policy on Academic Integrity

(Approved by the Indiana State University Board of Trustees on April 27, 2007 for implementation at the beginning of the 2007 Fall Semester on August 22, 2007)

Because academic integrity is a cornerstone of the University's commitment to the principles of free inquiry, students are responsible for learning and upholding professional standards in research, writing, assessment, and ethics. In the academic community the high value of honesty mandates a corresponding intolerance of dishonesty. Written or other work which students submit must be the product of their own efforts and must be consistent with appropriate standards of professional ethics. Academic dishonesty, which includes cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of dishonest or unethical behavior, is prohibited. A summary of behaviors that constitute academic dishonesty appears below. The definitions and clarifications provide additional information and examples of prohibited behaviors. They are not all-inclusive. Questions regarding this policy or requests for additional clarification should be directed to the Office of the

Provost, Student Affairs, or to Student Judicial Programs. The types of academic dishonesty described include:

- Cheating on examinations
- Plagiarism
- Falsification, forgery, and obstruction
- Multiple submission
- Facilitating academic dishonesty
- Misconduct in research and creative endeavors
- Misuse of academic resources
- Misuse of intellectual property
- Violation of ethical and professional standards

Submission of Work:

Due to the large amount of internet “spam” , corrupted downloads and server junk mail filters, we do not believe that email delivery of papers is a reliable method for assignment submission. Hence, all submitted work must be handed in by hard copy only. Electronic submissions (as email attachments are not accepted.) Sorry, no exceptions.

Class Schedule

Each week we will be watching a single film or collection of films. The screenings either will be preceded or followed by a lecture/discussion period. Watching the films is an essential part of the class, required for completing some of the critical essay assignments as well as the exam.

Comm 240

Course Outline

| Week No. | Class Mtg Date | <u>Class Topic and Assignments</u> | How the class meets specific ISU General Education Learning Objectives |
|----------|----------------|--|--|
| 1 | date | Syllabus. Lecture: The Business of Film; Chapter 1 – Photography and Cinematography. The plastic arts and reality. | History, Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics, Critical Thinking |
| | | Lecture: Chapter 1 - Photography; Chapter 2 - <i>Mise en Scene</i> . Music videos | |
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| 2 | date | Lecture: Chapter 2 - <i>Mise en Scene</i> . | History, Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics Global/cultural, ethics, global history & politics, U.S. history & politics, Critical Thinking, social analysis |
| | | Lecture: Early history of film. The camera, film editing. Screenings: Méliès, <i>A Trip to the Moon</i> (France, 1902). Porter, <i>The Great Train Robbery</i> (USA, 1905). <i>Screenings: D. W. Griffith, <i>The Birth of a Nation</i> (USA, 1915); S. Eisenstein, <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> (Russia, 1925).</i> | |
| | | | |
| 3 | date | Lecture: Introduction to Film analysis. Film follow-up. | History, Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics, Global/cultural, Critical Thinking, Developmental Writing, research methods, Ethical decision-making, social responsibility, social analysis |
| | | Screening: Terry Gilliam, <i>Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas</i> (USA, 1998) | |
| | | | |
| 4 | date | Lecture: Chapter 3 – Movement on camera and stage. | |
| | | Screening: Orson Welles, <i>Citizen Kane</i> (USA, 1941) | History, Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics, Global/cultural, Critical Thinking, Developmental Writing, Ethical decision-making, social analysis |
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| 5 | date | Lecture: Chapter 3 – Movement (continued); Chapter 4 – Film Editing. | History, Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics, ethics, Critical Thinking, Developmental Writing, social analysis |
| | | Screening: Stanley Kubrick, <i>The Shining</i> (USA, 1980) Analysis 1 due on <i>Citizen Kane</i>. (USA) | |
| | | | |
| 6 | date | Lecture: Chapter 4 – Film Editing (cont.) | History, Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics, ethics, social responsibility, Critical Thinking, Developmental Writing, social analysis |

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| | | Screening: Quentin Tarantino, <i>Reservoir Dogs</i> (USA, 1992) | |
| 11 | date | Screening: Spike Lee, <i>Do the Right Thing</i> (USA, 1989) | Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics, cultural, Critical Thinking, Ethical decision-making, social analysis, urban history & culture, racial stereotyping, , U.S. history, politics and culture |
| 12 | date | Lecture: Chapter 5 – Film Sound: another dimension | Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics, Critical Thinking, Ethical decision-making, social analysis, U.S. history & politics |
| | | Screening: Mike Nichols, <i>The Graduate</i> (USA, 1967) | |
| 13 | date | Lecture: Chapter 5- Film Sound (cont.) | Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics, cultural, Critical Thinking, Ethical decision-making, social analysis, , U.S. history, politics and culture, stereotyping of elderly |
| | | Screening: Joel and Ethan Coen, <i>No Country for Old Men</i> (USA, 2008) | |
| 14 | date | Lecture: Chapter 6 – Film Acting: it’s not Theatre. | History, Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics, Global/cultural, Critical Thinking, Developmental Writing, Ethical decision-making, social analysis, foreign language and culture |
| | | Lecture: Chapter 6 - Acting; Chapter 7 – Film Drama. | |
| | | Screening: Laurent Cantet, <i>The Class (Entre les Murs)</i> (France, 2008) | |
| 15 | date | Lecture: Chapter 7 – Drama (cont.); International Filmmakers; Bondanella on Fellini. Screening: Federico Fellini, <i>8 ½ (Otto e Mezzo)</i> (Italy, 1963) Analysis 3 due on <i>The Class</i> (France) | Fine Arts, Film technique & aesthetics, Global/cultural, Critical Thinking, Developmental Writing, Ethical decision-making. social analysis, global history & politics, foreign language and culture |

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| Final Exam: | | | As announced | 2 hours |

Comm 240
Film Review #1
Dr. Vincent

Film Review #1

Let's pretend that the student government at ISU has started a weekly film series on campus and they wanted to kick things off with one of the ground breaking American films that really gave credibility to the independent film movement in the mid-1990s. Being a well-know student journalist and theatre critic on campus, you were invited, along with representatives of the local press, to preview the film so you may write and publish a review before the film series premiers.

Our kick-off film is called *Pulp Fiction* and was released in 1994. The review is due two weeks from today and must be typed and proofread/spell-checked. The paper must be turned in before or at the start of class. Late papers are penalized one letter grade for every week it is late.

A review is often between 500-1,000 words long and between 2 to maybe 3 ½ pages maximum double spaced.

While I have said that the review can take many forms and cover a wide variety of concepts, the structure is remarkable the same from one to the next. Hence, when writing your review, consider the following structure:

- 1) Need to do an **Introduction** where you introduce your film review and likely spell out the basic credits such as title, year, genre, the director, screenwriter, reference music or soundtrack and mention main actors. Then a **brief summary of the plot** is normally given in a second paragraph and within this you often address the place and time, background info on the story and maybe a reference to the genre if not done above.
- 2) Next you typically look at **3-5 dimensions or criteria** upon which you are evaluating the film. Often, you devote a paragraph to each.
- 3) Your analysis may involve one, but **normally 3-5** of the following, or possibly (an)other variable(s) not listed here:
 - are **characters** believable? developed appropriately/effectively?
 - are **actors** cast appropriately? do they perform effectively
 - what is the **theme** of the film?
 - is the **setting/locale, time period** appropriate and effective? is set, décor, landscape/geography effective?
 - is the **cinematography** effective? does the film make use of **color, texture, lighting, movement etc.** to **enhance theme, mood, setting, etc.**?
 - is **editing** effective?
 - is the **sound track** effective?
 - is **music** appropriate/functional? or is it inappropriate/obtrusive?
 - are **camera angles** used effectively? That is, do they appear to be used for a particular effect?
 - Are there **special effects** and if so, are they essential to plot? Are they necessary, do they sacrifice plot, are they skillfully handled?
 - does film use **symbols or symbolism**? If so, what purposes are serve? Used effectively? How does this contribute to film overall?
 - is there a **moral or message**?
 - Is the film historically or culturally accurate?
 - are there attributes that can be attributed to contributions by the **director**? How does film compare to director's other work?
 - who is the **audience** and did the film achieve its objectives/ appeal to intended audience?
- 4) Study the **PROS versus CONS** overall, reflect on and discuss these.
- 5) Then, **draw conclusions**. What is **your opinion** of the film? Review the arguments/evidence and then draw conclusion.

Finally, note that the Communication discipline uses the APA (American Psychological Association) style sheet for most of its referencing. In this vein, we use APA as a standard references format for these assignments. Please check the library or bookstore for an APA style sheet. Internet guidelines also may be available, but choose a credible source such as a university Web page, etc.

Good luck! Ask if you have any questions.

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“Film reviews are assessments of the aesthetic, entertainment, social and cultural merits and significance of a current film or video. Reviews tend to be short to medium length articles, often written by a single staff writer for a particular publication. Although reviews are usually fairly "quick takes" on a movie, they can, in some instances, be lengthy, substantive, and very insightful.” [SOURCE: adapted from: “Film Reviews and Film Criticism: An Introduction,” <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/filmstudies/filmreviewsintro.html>]

Guidelines for writing a Film Review

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|--|---|
| Research and preparation | Actively watch the film and take profuse notes. Do research and get all relevant names, facts, figures, details, etc. you think you will require. Use online and print resources. Double check for accuracy. Develop a critical perspective — consider both the film’s merits and weaknesses. Then do an outline of your intended review. |
| Title or headline | The title of the review and the “deck” (a sentence in special print above the review) suggest the reviewer’s opinion — whether he or she thinks the movie is worth seeing or not. Rate the film. MPAA rating may also go here. |
| Dateline and Byline | Date of review and name of author/reviewer. Sometimes city in which written is cited. |
| Where | At the top of the review, is the name the movie and the places where it can be seen. May address hours film shown, admission prices, phone number of theater, film length, opening date, MPAA rating, crowdedness, etc. |
| Introduction | Why you think the movie is good or not? There is also often a brief summary of what the movie is about, the story line and what type of film it is — action-adventure, comedy, documentary, drama, horror, romance, etc. Name of director, producer or principal actors may go here. Give dates when important. |
| Actors' Roles/Performance | This part gives a short description of the main characters and names the actors who play the parts. Reviews refer to roles the actors have played in other movies. Are the characters in the movie easy to understand? |
| Story line/Plot/Location | More about the story line and also where and when the movie takes place and what the setting or mood is (but don’t spoil it for the viewer). How about themes or ideas raised? There may be more information about the roles vis-à-vis the story line — may include particular geographic locations/scenes, opening, closing, an action or romance scene, etc. Is the movie based on a book or a stage play? Does the movie tie into anything currently in the news, or is there something else that makes the movie relevant? Is story particularly complex? How was pace of the story telling? Is there a certain tension in the story? Was it funny? Was it sad? |
| Other cinematic characteristics | Here you address other qualities of the film, particularly those that are inherently special to the cinematic medium, such as camerawork, color, directing, editing, film texture, level of sex or violence, music, scenery, sound (digital), soundtrack, special effects, visual effects, etc. |
| Other | Compare to other films/movies. Does the movie portray historical events accurately? Are there a few interesting quotes or facts? Name sources when appropriate — if quoting another person, cite source and give credit to original author. |
| Conclusion | May conclude with an interesting or thought-provoking question or statement to tempt you to see the movie for yourself. Sometimes a review makes a link with a local situation or certain social attitudes. |
| References | While film reviews typically do not use references per se, we highly recommend that you do some research on this film and use this review as a vehicle to demonstrate other knowledge you have of the cinematic medium generally. We ask that you appropriately cite outside works in your particular reviews. This is important when you have relied (“borrowed”) on the ideas of others when writing your review. We also ask that you go beyond the internet for information (textbook, other books, academic journals, etc.), showing you can incorporate that which you have read/learned into you analysis. |

