SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Winter 2016

FILM 329D
SLLC 368D

Special Topics in National/International Cinemas:
Action, Adventure, and Spectacle Film in World Cinema

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Office Hours: by appointment
Office Location: 4221 Art-Sociology

Course Description:

As an online curriculum, there are no required synchronous times. In other words, however, there are deadlines by which you should have done the readings, watching the films, and submitting assignments.

In this online course, we will screen and study critically some of the most important examples of action, adventure, and spectacle films from the international and transnational perspectives. Films to be screened may include Seven Samurai, The Wild Bunch, Ringo and His Golden Pistol, Once Upon a Time in China, Star Wars, Point Break, Saving Private Ryan, Deep Impact, Spy Kids, Jurassic Park, Breakdown, Enter the Dragon, Hard-Boiled, Run Lola Run, La Femme Nikita, Last Action Hero, Salt, Lara Croft: Tomb Raider, The Peacemaker, The Matrix, District 13, and Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.

The course will pay attention to female film makers as well as action films featuring female leads. Through these screenings in conjunction with critical writings by established and young scholars in film studies and cultural studies, we hope to explore the historical, esthetic, generic, institutional, and political significance of these films. We also hope to touch upon questions of national identity, gender, class, heroism, and ethnicity as well as ways of the spectators engagement with the action body and the action narrative.
It is highly recommended that you download and print out (if needed) all required readings on ELMS as soon as the semester begins so that you have a complete view of the required readings.

Because of differences in your general educational background and experience in film studies as an academic discipline, the time spent on this course is different for every student. The material you see online (film screenings and readings) is the same for each student, but in addition to that, you need to spend some time to reflect on the material and complete the required writing assignments.

For a very useful guide to film studies in general, particularly if you have questions about doing research, visit:

http://lib.guides.umd.edu/film

Your instructor is always ready to help.

Course Format:
The course will feature film screenings and online and web-based discussions and dialogues. Meetings with the instructors are optional and could be scheduled by appointment.

Students are required to engage in critical reading of scholarly writings from a wide spectrum of theoretical perspectives and in writing about the films and the issues mentioned above in the Course Description.

Learning Outcome:

Learning Outcome for this course may include the following:

1. Students demonstrate knowledge of a large set of artistic monuments, objects, and performances and their creators in cinema as a form of visual culture and in specific periods and/or cultures and place the set of artistic monuments, objects, and performances in cultural, historical, political, and/or social contexts.
2. Students communicate effectively about cinema as a form of visual culture in writing, applying complex forms of analysis in essay-length papers using clear and concise prose.

3. Students employ the appropriate technologies for conducting research in cinema as a form of visual culture, including print sources and/or electronic information.

**Required Material:**

*NO BOOK is required*

**BUT**

1. You are required to see all screenings on ELMS. Make sure you have appropriate technology to download and play the films. Contact ELMS immediately if you have any questions. **THE SCREENINGS REQUIRE YOUR ATTENTION, but you can access the screening anytime and anywhere after 9 AM on the date listed on the schedule**

2. You are also required to study all readings will be made available as PDF files on ELMS or listed below in the schedule.

**Grading Policy:**

Three film response papers are required. Each paper will count toward 30% (for a total of 90%) of your final grade. Each paper is expected to be 3-5 pages (with 12-point font) in length. You will make a decision on which film to write about.

The instructor is available for advice if you have any questions.

**Due dates are noted in the class schedule below.** Well-written and thoughtful responses integrating the viewings and the readings that are turned in on time will contribute to 10% of your final grade.
Schedule:

NOTE:

The schedule and contents of this course as described in this syllabus are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. Any necessary changes to the following schedule and course plan will be announced.

WEEK ONE

Jan. 4


Jan. 5

Seven Samurai


Jan. 6

The Wild Bunch/
Ringo and His Golden Pistol


Jan. 7

Raiders of the Lost Ark
Tasker, The Hollywood Action and Adventure Film, pp. 123-129

June 8

Saving Private Ryan
WEEK TWO

Jan. 11
*Strange Days*

DUE, by 9 PM, via e-mail, FIRST response paper on your choice of one or more of the films screened Jan. 4 to Jan. 8

Jan. 12
*Once Upon a Time in China*


Jan. 13
*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.*


Jan. 14
*Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*


Jan. 15
*District 13*


Jan. 18 (NO CLASS)

Jan. 19
*Unleashed*


DUE, by 9 PM, via e-mail, SECOND response paper on your choice of one or more of the films screened Jan. 11 to Jan. 15
GUIDELINES FOR WRITING FILM RESPONSE PAPERS:

(1) Do not retell the story. That is not what you should try to do in these response papers. You don’t even need to write a synopsis—in fact, it is better if you don’t. What you should try to do is to write an essay about the major theme or themes in the movie.

If you merely retell the story, it would be impossible for a reader to tell what the movie is about, even though they might be able to figure out what “happened.” The point of any good movie is not the action. It is the message.

Your first paragraph should be an introduction to your topic—that is, the issue or issues on which you are going to focus. It should be a brief paragraph—maybe four or five sentences. Be sure to say that you intend to discuss your issue as it is revealed in a particular film.

The main body of your essay should be your exploration of your theme or themes, using characters, scenes, symbols, and situations in the movie to show how the movie addresses basic points. Be thorough! Use all of the relevant elements of the film, and describe characters and scenes briefly but adequately.

You should weave the relevant articles into your text. You can use the articles to substantiate your argument, or you can use them as counterpoint—that is, you can argue your point against them.
(2) You need to use one of the commonly used formats (such as APA, MLA, or Chicago) in citing your sources. The bibliographic reference is all you need. If you get your references from the web, be sure to note that and provide a URL.

(3) You should cite references in the body of your essay, also using a standard format.

(4) Use paragraphs. If you don’t, your paper will be very disorganized, even though you follow the story line, because you will simply run your ideas together in a jumble. Use headings if they would be useful to demarcate separate sections of your essay or emphasize your basic points.

(5) Pay close attention to basics like grammar and punctuation. Proofread your essays.

(6) Although you may want to emphasize and discuss issues that are only secondary in the movie, be sure, at least, to note the movie’s central theme or themes.

(7) Do not try to be a film critic. Do not worry about the actors’ performances (except insofar as they might be relevant in evaluating the film’s success in making its point) or the subtleties of direction and editing. The issues are what count.

(Adapted from academic.regis.edu/.../WRITING%20FILM%20RESPONSE%20PAPERS)

You may also use the following questions to construct your response papers on films:

1. What is the conflict in this film? Who are the contending characters? How is the conflict resolved?

2. What was the theme of this film? What were the film makers trying to tell us? Were they successful? Justify your answer.

3. Did you learn anything from this movie? What was it?

4. Was there something you didn’t understand about the movie? What was it?

5. What did you like best about the movie? Why?

6. What did you like least about the movie? Why?

7. Select an action performed by one of the characters in the film and explain why the character took that action. What motivated him or her? What did this motivation have to do with the theme of the film?

8. Who was your favorite character in the movie? Why?
9. Who was your least favorite character in the movie? Why?

10. Describe the use of color in the film? Did it advance the emotions the film makers were trying to evoke? How would you have used color in the movie?

11. Analyze the use of music in the movie. Did it enhance the story that the film makers were trying to tell? How would you have used music in this movie?

12. Did all of the events portrayed in the film ring true? Describe the scenes that you found especially accurate. Which sequences didn't seem to match reality? Why?

13. What was the structure of the story told by the movie?

14. How did the editing of the film advance the story that the film makers were trying to tell? Explain how.

(Sources: www.teachingwithmovies.com)

Recommended Websites:

Film Basics:

http://www.imdb.com (a good source for basic information on each film)

http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/resources/filmbasics.htm


Bibliography:

http://www.dvdbeaver.com/

http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/cjkfilmbib.html (an excellent source for scholarly material)

http://www.foreignfilms.com

http://www.mrqe.com

http://www.library.yale.edu/humanities/film/findmaterials.html
Other Policies:

Academic Integrity:
The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity visit the Student Honor Council web site: http://www.she.umd.edu. For further information on what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, see the very useful plagiarism web site of the University of Toronto: www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize.

Remember to sign the Honor Pledge on all examinations and assignments: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment)."

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:
If a student has a documented disability and wishes to discuss academic accommodations, she or he should contact the professor in the first two weeks of the semester. The rules for eligibility and the types of accommodations a student may request can be reviewed on the Disability Support Services web site: www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/avail_services.html. DSS requires that students request an accommodation form each semester to present to each professor.

Religious Observances:
The University System of Maryland policy states that students should not be penalized in any way for participation in religious observances. Students shall be allowed, whenever practicable, to make up academic assignments that are missed due to such absences. It is the student's responsibility to contact the professor in writing in the first two weeks of the semester, and to make arrangements for make-up work or examinations. The notification must identify the religious holiday(s) and date(s). For additional information, please visit the University of Maryland Policies and Procedures at http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/iii510a.html.

University Closure:
If the University is forced to close for an extended period of time, the material missed will be made up either at rescheduled classes or by extra assignments relevant to that material. If an exam cannot be rescheduled in a normal fashion, other means of assessment will be employed.

Emergency Protocol:
You will be notified via your e-mail address you have provided to the university administration.

_The instructor of this course is committed to creating an open and accepting environment in which diversity, unique perspectives, and others’ worldviews are respected._

_Students with special circumstances or conflicts should feel free to meet with the instructor during office hours (or by appointment) to discuss accommodations._