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MAR 300.01: Visions of Film

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MAR 300/VISIONS OF FILM

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Office Hours by appointment

Phone: 406.249.6294 (feel free to text me)

The Roxy Theater: Wednesday 4-7

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an intermediate-level Media Arts theory and practice class, during which you will develop a deeper understanding of visual language in movies and the ideas that have developed over the last century in regard to this medium. Many theory classes are developed for those who want to think and write about films. This class is developed to assist those who also wish to make films. How does visual style relate to form and content? A shot composition, an edit, a camera movement, a play of light and dark, a visual motif, a special effect — what can these tell us about the filmmaker's intentions and influences, as well as help explain the film's context (of production, exhibition, reception by audience, influence on other filmmakers)? How do film theorists (sometimes the filmmaker, sometimes not) view the nature of film and how can their theories be upheld or disproved by your analysis of the films we view? What relationship does theory have to practice?

IN CLASS

Each week we will watch films (sometimes in their entirety, sometimes clips) and discuss them together. We will also have group critiques for your video assignments.

MOODLE

We have a Moodle site for our class, and this is where you will turn in assignments, find links to course materials, our schedule, ways to connect with your classmates, and up-to-date information on any changes in the syllabus. There are also **optional weekly forums** for the discussion of films and readings. Do you have a question? Do you want to know what your classmates think about the film, and don't want to wait til class next week? Post and/or peruse here! Engagement here counts toward your classroom participation points (see below).

THE WORK – 100 POINTS TOTAL

1) Vocabulary quiz. A vocabulary quiz must be completed by the third week of the course. You must receive a grade of 100%, but you may take it as many times as you want before the deadline. (**5 pts**)

- 2) Weekly reading assignments. For group discussion, bring in two questions on the readings weekly. There will be quizzes on readings throughout the semester (**20 pts**).
- 3) Video proposals. You and your partner will submit a short proposal for each of your two videos. (2 pts each - total **5 pts**)
- 4) Two short videos. You will work in pairs to make these projects over the course of the semester. (Video 1 is 10 pts; Video 2 is 15 pts - total **25 pts**)
- 5) Weekly 500 word written reflections. Some weeks, you will have a specific prompt, but for others, the topic will be open. These need not be formal essays, however they are NOT stream-of-consciousness ramblings. *I want to know not only what you think, but why, and how it relates to the films and readings.* Turn these in via Blogs that are upload to my Blog. (Blog **20 pts**)
- 6) Artist statement. Rough draft will be due at midterm; final draft during finals week. (Draft is 5 pts; Final 10 pts - total **15 pts**)
- 7) Class participation. Are you showing up, asking questions, reading the material each week and willing/able to discuss it? This is NOT the same as being an expert on the material! Participation on (optional) Moodle forums also counts toward this. (**10 pts**)

READINGS

There is no textbook for this course, but every week you will have assigned readings. The readings will be available to you via download or link via our Moodle shell. Supplementary resources are also posted if you would like to do further research.

VIDEO ASSIGNMENT CRITERIA - with a partner.

Proposals will be due in class. See schedule.

Video 1. Choose a style or genre from those discussed in Weeks 2 through 6, and create a video in the same vein. **1-2 mins.**

Video 2: Similarly to Video 1, you must engage a genre or style addressed in class to date, but this time from at least two different sources (e.g., film noir lighting and realist locations; screwball dialogue and new wave editing, etc.). The subject and story are up to you. **2-3 mins.**

For both assignments, you will be evaluated on the following three points:

(1) **Quality of your technique.** For example, if the camera is shaking, is it intentional, or did you just forget to use a tripod? Is it over- or underexposed so that it's hard to see what you shot? Does the video have credits? At the ending, does it randomly freeze on the last frame, or do you conscientiously transition to black?

(2) **Quality of your concept.** Basically, do you have a clear, solid idea? Is it related to the assignment? Are you challenging yourself?

(3) **Quality of the execution.** How effectively does your concept come through in your video? How well do the visual/audio choices you made communicate your idea?

FILMS

Films are screened each week and also reserved at the library for additional viewings. YOU MUST ATTEND THE SCREENINGS. They count as class time and credit hours. Library checkout is for further study only, NOT initial viewing.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory. TWO ABSENCES, "excused" or otherwise, are permitted. On the THIRD ABSENCE, your grade will drop ten points (one full letter grade). On the FOURTH ABSENCE your grade will drop ANOTHER ten points, etc. If you are late three times, it will count as one absence.

LATE WORK:

Late work will be accepted only one week after original due date and will only be worth up to 50% of original grade.

PLAGIARISM The University's definition of plagiarism:

"Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own." Any student who plagiarizes will receive a failing grade, as well as disciplinary sanction by the University. All students must practice academic honesty. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code:

http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO CHANGE ANYTHING IN THE SYLLABUS. CHANGES, IF THEY ARE MADE, WILL BE ANNOUNCED VIA E-MAIL/MOODLE AND IN CLASS. NEW COPIES OF UPDATED SYLLABI WILL BE POSTED ON THE CLASS MOODLE PAGE.