

Film and Culture

COMM-3356

Fall 2020 Section 01 3 Credits 08/12/2020 to 12/05/2020 Modified 09/01/2020

Description

A study of the evolution and significance of the motion picture as a specialized form of artistic experience and as a form of Mass Communication.

Requisites

Prerequisites:

COMM 1154 Minimum Grade: C and ENGL 1102 Minimum Grade: C

Corequisites:

Contact Information

Instructor: Christopher Renaud

Email: crenaud@westga.edu

Office: Virtual and HUM 143

Email is preferred.

Please make an email appointment for a virtual visit.

GoogleVoice for emergencies only: 470-729-1990.

Office Hours

ONLINE: By request, between 10 AM - 6 PM, with 24 hours notice

Please email to set-up an online office hours appointment (call or video chat), and suggest a time that works best for you (ideally, between 10 AM and 6 PM, with at least 24 hours advance notice).

Audio call or video chat are both available; I can GoogleMeet, GoogleVoice, Zoom, FaceTime or Skype. Please indicate your preference in your email.

Also, please outline or give a head-up of what you'd like to discuss. The more information I have before hand, the more effective our meeting will be.

Meeting Times

Our scheduled face-to-face time is **Mon/Wed at 11 AM in Humanities 312.**

PLEASE NOTE: We will be meeting ONLINE for the first few weeks of the semester, predictably through the week after Labor Day. I will provide at least one-week's (two if possible) notice when face-to-face meetings will begin.

ASSIGNED MEETING DAYS: To maintain USG and UWG's COVID-19 safety guidelines students will meet exclusively on either **Monday or Wednesday** as assigned by the instructor. Masks and social distancing will be required in accordance with USG/UWG's current guidance.

Students will be notified by email and classlists posted on CourseDen in advance of our first face-to-face session. You will have the opportunity to request re-assignment of days if needed. I will accommodate these requests to the degree that I can strictly maintain no more than 10 students per meeting, per USG COVID safety guidelines.

Students may not and should not attend the opposing day's session for any reason. Once made, these day assignments will be definitive and permanent for the semester.

You are responsible for your own attendance, participation, engagement and for keeping up with our material. I will note online/face-to-face attendance solely for the purpose of required administrative reporting.

If you need help determining what you may have missed, please refer to CourseDen or contact a classmate - then check with me.

Materials

American Cinema/American Culture (4th)

Author: Belton, John

Publisher: McGraw Hill, 2013

Edition: 4th

ISBN: 978-0073535098

Availability: <https://www.amazon.com/American-Cinema-Culture-4th/dp/0073535095>

Price: Rent: ~\$15 / Buy Used: ~\$30

This one textbook will be the foundation for this class. Additional readings will be supplied digitally (as .pdfs) by the instructor as needed.

Computer/Smart TV access for watching films and blogging

Instructor will supply internet-based links to our films. These will be at no cost to the student.

We will watch one film per week.

Because films are designed to have your **full attention**, in a specially designed space, generally speaking, your viewing and absorption will be improved by:

- 1) **Focused viewing** - eliminating or reducing distractions in your environment, including your phone or laptop. Single-task for success.
- 2) Using the **largest screen** you have access to
- 3) In the **quietest** or **least busy** space you can find
- 4) Using **headphones** or good speaker(s) for audio reproduction.

Headphones

Recommended for **close listening** to the film's dialogue and sound design - and to help create the **immersion** expected in a theatrical viewing experience or classroom.

It's assumed that most people have some kind of headphones available (ie., the ones that came with your phone). This should be sufficient for most users. Most general purpose retailers carry some form of budget headphones.

Optional

Price: Probably own already, \$0 - \$20

Blogspace

Free, Provided by Google

Your written work (short essays and blog posts) will mainly be in a blog credentialed to your **my.westga.edu** account. I will guide you on how to set this up as an assignment early in the semester

Students will:

1. Examine and contextualize films as **historical, cultural, artistic and commercial** artifacts.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the **history** and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications industries (ACEJMC SLO2). In this case, Film.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of **gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation** and, as appropriate, other forms of **diversity** in domestic society in relation to mass communications. (ACEJMC SLO 3)
4. Demonstrate the ability to **write correctly and clearly** in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve. (ACEJMC SLO 9)

The goal of this course is to give students a foundation in the **history, terminology, technology, and theory** of filmmaking as well as the **cultural, artistic and economic implications** of this medium.

Through close reading, analysis and discussion of films, students will develop their cinematic literacy; be able to read films more clearly; connect films to broader discussions within the culture; and understand film as not just a single language, but as a medium with a diverse depth and range – capable of forging thought, reflecting, challenging and influencing cultural values, as well as for making personal art. We intend to illuminate these potentials for both aspiring film- and media-makers, and for active viewers.

✓ Evaluation

Criteria

We work on a **simple 100 point system**. 100 points = 100 percent. You build your grade from **0 points**.

Most assignments are worth **5 or 10 points** - a half or full letter grade for the semester.

Missing assignments will immediately **limit your final grade**.

In evaluating your work, especially your **writing**, I'm looking for clear evidence of **engagement** with the material, which I discern from the honest attempt to understand, identify and re-communicate concepts from the material, but also the ability to **self-monitor** your own lived experience, relating our concepts to your own **viewing and life experience** and your own **observations** about culture(s).

This course - and by extension, your participation - intends to **respect, honor and reflect the diversity of persons and viewpoints**, while studying and acknowledging those times when the artifacts of our history and cultures have not.

Respectful and honest dialogue is expected. You have a collaborative hand in creating the safe space for that dialogue.

You are not graded on attendance, but **participation** is expected and evaluated - both in the quality of your responses and the completion of assigned exercises, viewings, quizzes, etc.

In my experience, there is a direct correspondence between the amount of time and energy (participation) given to the course, and your final grade. Please calibrate your expectations accordingly.

I look kindly upon improvement over the course of the semester, as well as perseverance and communication.

Breakdown

Grade	Range	Notes
A	90 - 100	.5 point grace given
B	80 - 90	.5 point grace given
C	70 - 80	.5 point grace given.

Grade	Range	Notes
D	60 - 70	.5 point grace given.
F	59.5 and below	.5 point grace given.

☰ Assignments

- While we are online, my intention is to signal to you what's coming before any actual assignment is made by blocking it in under **CourseDen Announcements** first.
- Assignment **handouts** and specific **instructions**, once made, will appear as **hyperlinks**.
- If there is **no hyperlink**, I have not posted that part of the assignment/handout yet. You'll see (forthcoming) to mark the place where the hyperlink will appear.
- Rest assured that these will be coming. You don't need to email me to ask if you've missed something because there is no hyperlink.
- If an assignment was signalled or promised but not hyperlinked in these Announcements, I came up with a better plan! - or had my own circumstances to deal with - and the assignment was dropped or shifted forward to the next week.
- No hyperlink, no assignment.
- You can use the **weekly groupings** of assignments under CONTENT as a quick checklist of your progress.
- You will **always have sufficient time** to complete the assignment.

Our assignments are categorized below.

Blog Entries (40 points/percent)

Our blogging assignments ask you to **reflect** upon your viewing experiences in **written form**, in a way that's more aligned with how we communicate than your typical college essay. The goal is to get more directly at what you actually think. However, these are not tweets or Facebook posts, where a couple short sentences would be all that was expected.

Blogging is a **crafted response** that still obliges you to **honor the act of writing**, organize your thoughts and hopefully **draw connections** and **challenge** or **compare ideas**. It also allows for **multimedia** to support and be part of (but not replace) your **testimony, observations, arguments** or **reasoning**.

You can expect 3-4 of these over the course of the semester ~ **10 points each**

Reading Quizzes (40 points/percent)

These will cover our assigned chapter readings.

Delivered electronically on CourseDen, these are **open book/open note**, and are designed to check your understanding of the material. You generally will have **two attempts** for each quiz.

They are a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions. Occasionally you will be asked for a longer (but short-) essay-type response - if so, you will be provided that question before you take the quiz.

I expect these to be divided into **eight individual quizzes**, approximately one every other week, covering two chapters of material at a time. (**5 points/percent each**)

Viewing Questions

These are a set of questions, attached to the a particular film viewing, designed to guide you towards important concepts and ideas to consider. They will be provided as a "blank" Word document with the questions inside. Use Word's text and color formatting controls to make your answers visually distinct from the questions. The more on-point and expansive your answer, the more credit will be given.

There will be two of these over the course of the semester at **10 points each**.

Extra Credit, if it is given this semester, will come in the form of an additional viewing questions assignment for 10 points.

Schedule

Our schedule is still in progress, but you can expect and should plan for **one-chapter per week** reading from our textbook, and **one associated film viewing**. These can be found in our **Home/Announcements page** on CourseDen.

I will ask you to **blog** about some topic related to our film viewing 3-4 times over the course of the semester.

We will have a **reading quiz** approximately every other week - on CourseDen, **open book/open note**.

- Please check **CourseDen Announcements** for our weekly assignments.
- There will be **one announcement** per week, edited with updates as needed.
- I will reset the announcement notification if major updates are made.
- Assignments will also be **organized by week** under CONTENT.
- You will always have **plenty of time** to complete your assignments (5-7 days).
- You are expected to **keep up with due dates and deadlines**. To allow for a broad range of contingencies, know that our assignment dropboxes will **remain open** until near the end of the semester. Our assignments are designed to expand your understanding and skills. It's better to complete a late assignment than not do it all.

Course Policies and Resources

CONDUCT: Our classroom, whether in person or online, will be a safe space for a diversity of persons, identities and thoughts. Students are expected to respect differences, find common ground and be accepting of each other. Comments of intolerance, including prejudice or bullying, will not be tolerated, nor will any other form of harassment. See the student code of conduct for more information.

PLAGIARISM: It is assumed that all work offered by you will be created by you, and only you. Proper credit should be given to both ideas that come from other people, as well as direct quotations of their words. An informal reference to a speaker/author is better than no citation at all. Work that has been plagiarized in any way will be given a zero and reported to the university for further action. In extreme cases an immediate failing grade for the class will be given.

MATURE CONTENT: As a college-level course in an environment designed to ask you to examine and articulate your own views, some of this material may be personally challenging. Film examples used in this course are meant to represent the breadth and diversity of cinematic expression and adult human experience. I am sensitive to these concerns, while maintaining that examination of sometimes challenging material is important to our study of culture. If you anticipate having an issue with this at any point in this semester, please speak with me privately and we will discuss alternative arrangements.

MY ROLE: I will endeavor as much as possible to help guide your study of the course material, to summarize basic concepts, to provide interesting examples and context, and to facilitate lively discussions. I will also endeavor to return your writing in a timely fashion, within one week.

I look forward to engaging with you, and our topic, this semester.

College/School Policies

Mass Communications Degree Program Learning Outcomes

ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies: The Bachelor of Science degree program in Mass Communications is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), and the Department is committed to preparing students with the requisite knowledge and skills to be successful in the media and communications industries after graduation. The Department has adopted as its Mass Communications degree program learning outcomes ACEJMC's 12 professional values and competencies, known as 6 X 6 MASS COMM SUCCESS, that all graduates of an ACEJMC accredited program should be aware of and able to demonstrate as scholars and professionals in the discipline. For the detailed list of the ACEJMC professional values and competencies, see the [UWG Undergraduate Catalog](https://catalog.westga.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=11&pooid=1991) (https://catalog.westga.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=11&pooid=1991) or [ACEJMC - Standard 2. Curriculum and Instruction](http://www.acejmc.org/policies-process/nine-standards/) (<http://www.acejmc.org/policies-process/nine-standards/>).

6 X 6 MASS COMM SUCCESS

[6 X 6 MASS COMM SUCCESS
\(https://www.westga.edu/academics/coss/mass-communications/assets/pics/6x6_MC_Success_Graphic.JPG\)](https://www.westga.edu/academics/coss/mass-communications/assets/pics/6x6_MC_Success_Graphic.JPG)

(click to view image)

1. Freedom of Speech & Press
2. History
3. Diversity
4. Global Impact
5. Theory
6. Ethics
7. Think Critically & Creatively
8. Research & Evaluate
9. Write Effectively
10. Self-Evaluate
11. Apply Numbers & Statistics
12. Apply Technology

Film & Video Production Degree Program Learning Outcomes

Overview: The Bachelor of Science degree program in Film & Video Production is designed to train graduates in the field who are agile, adaptable, and able to employ their skills in an array of roles from entrepreneurial content producers to on-set film work, both above and below the line. It will provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the machinery at work behind media production and distribution, along with a set of tangible, marketable, and transferable skills for an array of positions within the infrastructure of film and content production. The FVP degree program learning outcomes include:

1. Demonstrate critical thinking, aesthetic awareness and technical proficiency in the production and assessment of audio-visual film work.
2. Understand all phases and roles of film production in order to help formulate career goals.
3. Understand the various potentials of film as both a commodity for a targeted audience, and an act of authorship and creative expression.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of cinema in a global society.

Institutional Policies

Academic Support

Accessibility Services: Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Accessibility Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If a student needs course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if he/she needs to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, the student should notify his/her instructor in writing and provide a copy of his/her Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Accessibility Services. Faculty cannot offer accommodations without timely receipt of the SAR; further, no retroactive accommodations will be given. For more information, please contact [Accessibility Services \(https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php\)](https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php).

Center for Academic Success: The [Center for Academic Success \(http://www.westga.edu/cas/\)](http://www.westga.edu/cas/) provides services, programs, and opportunities to help all undergraduate students succeed academically. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6280 or cas@westga.edu.

University Writing Center: The [University Writing Center \(https://www.westga.edu/writing/\)](https://www.westga.edu/writing/) assists students with all areas of the writing process. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6513 or writing@westga.edu.

Online Courses

UWG takes students' privacy concerns seriously: technology-enhanced and partially and fully online courses use sites and entities beyond UWG and students have the right to know the privacy policies of these entities. For more information on privacy and accessibility for the most commonly used sites, as well as technology requirements visit the [UWG Online \(https://uwgonline.westga.edu/\)](https://uwgonline.westga.edu/) site.

Students enrolled in online courses can find answers to many of their questions in the [Online/Off-Campus Student Guide \(http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php\)](http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php).

If a student is experiencing distress and needs help, please see the resources available at the [UWG Cares \(http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/\)](http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/) site. [Online counseling \(https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/index.php\)](https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/index.php) is also available for online students.

Honor Code

At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing.

The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing. Each incidence of academic dishonesty is subject to review and consideration by the instructor, and is subject to a range of academic penalties including, but not limited to, failing the assignment and/or failing the course. Student conduct sanctions range from verbal warning to suspension or expulsion depending on the magnitude of the offense and/or number of offenses. The incident becomes part of the student's conduct record at UWG.

Additionally, the student is responsible for safeguarding his/her computer account. The student's account and network connection are for his/her individual use. A computer account is to be used only by the person to whom it has been issued. The student is responsible for all actions originating through his/her account or network connection. Students must not impersonate others or misrepresent or conceal their identities in electronic messages and actions. For more information on the University of West Georgia Honor Code, please see the [Student Handbook \(https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpsa/handbook-code-of-conduct.php\)](https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpsa/handbook-code-of-conduct.php).

UWG Email Policy

University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her email.

Credit Hour Policy

The University of West Georgia grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For each course, the course syllabus will document the amount of in-class (or other direct faculty instruction) and out-of-class work required to earn the credit hour(s) assigned to the course. Out-of-class work will include all forms of credit-bearing activity, including but not limited to assignments, readings, observations, and musical practice. Where available, the university grants academic credit for students who verify via competency-based testing, that they have accomplished the learning outcomes associated with a course that would normally meet the requirements outlined above (e.g. AP credit, CLEP, and departmental exams).

HB 280 (Campus Carry)

UWG follows University System of Georgia (USG) guidance: http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional_information# (http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional_information)

You may also visit our website for help with USG Guidance: <https://www.westga.edu/police/campus-carry.php>
(<https://www.westga.edu/police/campus-carry.php>)

Mental Health Support

If you or another student find that you are experiencing a mental health issue, free confidential services are available on campus in the [Counseling Center](#). Students who have experienced sexual or domestic violence may receive confidential medical and advocacy services with the Patient Advocates in [Health Services](#). To report a concern anonymously, please go to [UWGcares](#).

ELL Resources

If you are a student having difficulty with English language skills, and / or U.S. culture is not your home culture, specialized resources are available to help you succeed. Please visit the [E.L.L. resource page](#) for more information.

COVID-19

Proctored Exams/Online Instruction: Students should be aware and plan ahead for the possibility of having to complete all courses and/or exams online or in a proctored environment. This means talking with your instructors about what minimum technical requirements (software and hardware) will be required should your class move online or a student's personal needs dictate. This also includes making plans for internet access at whatever location participation may occur.

Virtual or in-person proctored exams, if your instructor should require them, may result in an additional cost to the student. Please discuss these details with your instructor or see the information provided here.

Face Coverings: Effective July 15, 2020, University System of Georgia institutions, including the University of West Georgia, will require all faculty, staff, students, and visitors to wear an appropriate face covering while inside campus facilities/buildings where six feet social distancing may not always be possible. Face covering use will be in addition to and is not a substitute for social distancing.

Face coverings are not required in campus outdoor settings where social distancing requirements are met. Anyone not using a face covering when required will be asked to wear one or must leave the area.

Reasonable accommodations may be made for those who are unable to wear a face covering for documented health reasons.

Student FAQs: For more information about UWG COVID-19 guidance for students visit the [Student FAQ webpage](#) (<https://www.westga.edu/student-services/health/coronavirus-info/return-to-campus/students-faq-return-to-campus.php>).

Additional Items

ABOUT MOVIE WATCHING:

That we're examining **cultural products** originally designed for entertainment should make this an interesting and fun course for you. But we do have a serious purpose. Our job is to examine, *consciously*, the hundreds of creative decisions on display (and in our ears) meant to be absorbed and turned into ideas and meaning through *sub-conscious* immersion and entertainment. But to study films requires **active viewing**.

It's often said that movies are a **lie to tell the truth**. It's actually a matter of *hundreds of lies per minute* – actors pretending to be characters; each of those performances a “greatest hits” of the most emotionally useful moments, drawn from many separate takes, across days and months; a camera that seems to always be in the right place at the right time thanks to editing but was actually the same camera, interrupted and moved – for days and months; sound recorded later that glues all the lies about time and space together and is probably not even the sound of the thing we're seeing; all of this a part of a process that is mostly scripted, but part of a collaborative work process that belongs to more than one author... Those are the basics, before we even get to digital manipulation.

Every single edit in a movie is *fundamentally, inescapably* a lie – in a package of hundreds of them meant to convince us of some kind of **truthfulness** about people and the world.

There's a lot to consider, as movies are made by hundreds of people over the course of many months, but designed to seem to just "be" – with all the days and months of slow-moving shooting made **deliberately invisible** to us through seamless editing. And collectively, in Ouija-board fashion, the individual work and decision-making coalesces around a set of ideas about how the world works and why people do what they do. In the process of being entertained, we absorb some of these ideas, or develop resistance to others. Our job is to try to peek behind the curtain.

We're here to consider what truths are claimed by an individual film, what other truths emerge from the **patterns of films produced**, and from the **cultural contexts** in which the films were made.

To do that actively, we have to resist more **modern habits**, including our FOMO. As you and I both know, there are a flood of other viewing options just one click away, taunting our "fear of missing out," constantly pushing us to find something "better" to watch. In contrast, consider that one reason why vinyl records are resurgent is that they resist our newfound urge to press skip, or click away to something else. Surprisingly, it's actually a pleasure to be relieved of so many options and **be with one thing** for a bit.

Film is a pre-digital art-form, from an analog world. It's habitual now to multi-task while watching a movie – phones and laptops in front of us. But movies historically were, and still are, intended to be seen in **single-tasking mode** with our **full attention** in a specially-designed environment meant to **foster immersion**. Historically, because you bought your ticket (with real money) and plonked down in a theater, you couldn't just click away, and there was no phone or email or refrigerator to check. Walking out of a movie was rare and exceptional if you did, even if you didn't like it – because you'd already bought in.

So we have to recreate that experience as best we can – especially in an online class. Watching these films requires your "buy in" - with your time and patience. And making a special "space" for them, distraction free, on the largest screen you can, with the best sound you can manage. But ultimately it comes down to your attention.

It's my goal (and honest pleasure) to share the **most interesting clips and films**, especially if you're not likely to encounter them in more casual viewing – or to see films you think you know in a new way. But you'll also have to meet them half-way. Giving our films your full attention takes practice and deliberate choices. But I'm confident of the rewards. I hope you enjoy the semester!