INTRODUCTION TO FILM STUDIES
FILM 20A / SUMMER 2017

Instructor: Alex Johnston  Email: alwjohns@ucsc.edu
Office Hours: Sci. & Eng. Library courtyard, Th. 11:30-12:30, and by appt.
Class: T/TH 1:00-5:30pm, N. Sci Annex 102
TA: Ryan Page  Email: rypage@ucsc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES: Film can be considered a language through which we can explore both the mechanics and the concepts that inform the construction of cinematic space. In this class you will learn the terminology that defines this space and become aware of your own position as an analytical spectator. Each week we will examine a different aspect of film studies in order to develop a working vocabulary that will assist you in three main objectives:

• To strengthen your critical thinking skills
• To develop cogent arguments in your scholarly writing
• To understand the fundamentals of film scholarship

Through weekly lectures and screenings we will interrogate the way in which films are constructed through their formal elements, in order to understand their ideological implications. Lectures will shift between addressing key terminology and theoretical constructs, illuminated by numerous clips. In this way you will come to understand a range of images and ideas that will help you to identify both filmic conventions and experimentations. A strong emphasis will be placed on the examination of aesthetic choices and how these decisions can produce a variety of interpretations contingent upon the viewer’s perceptual capacity and experiential knowledge. You are encouraged to contribute your own original thoughts to the debates integral to film studies and to assimilate the key terms, themes and analytic frameworks in both your writing and in discussion.
REQUIRED TEXT AND READINGS:

*The Film Experience: An Introduction* 4th edition  Authors: Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White Publisher: Bedford/St. Martin’s

Aside from the course textbook, which is available at the Literary Guillotine, (located in downtown Santa Cruz) any other readings assigned in this course will be available on the Canvas course website under “FILES.”

EXAMS, ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES:

*Please note* that *paper copies* of all assignments are due in class on the dates listed. Late assignments will be marked down half a grade per day (a B+ becomes a B, or a check plus becomes a check) and can be turned in no later than 3 days after the assignment was due at the discretion of the TA. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from turning in an assignment or taking an exam (for example, a medical emergency) please contact myself and Ryan immediately via e-mail so that we can assess the situation and provide you with an extended due date or alternate exam appointment if justified.

**Weekly Response Papers (15% total, 5% each)**

**DUE DATES: AUGUST 8th, 15th, and 22nd**

In these writing assignments, you will pick one of the two films we watched in their entirety during the prior week, and write a brief (250-300 words) response paper, in which you consider the film’s use of the formal element we focused on during that week. You can look at a particular sequence, or reflect more broadly on the use of mise-en-scène, cinematography, and editing, throughout the film. While proper punctuation and grammar are required, these assignments should be observational, casual, and responsive, and do not need a developed thesis. They will be graded using a simple check plus (5%), check (4%), and check minus (2%) rubric.

**“Cumulative” Shot Log (15%)**

**DUE DATE: AUGUST 24th**

At the end of week one, you will be provided with a choice of four brief clips from the following films: *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* (1974), *Killer of Sheep* (1978), *Michael Clayton* (2007) and *The Babadook* (2014). You will also be provided with
a shot log template. Each week, you will re-watch your chosen clip. You will then fill out the section of the shot log which corresponds with that week’s area of focus, making notes about the most salient aspects of the mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and sound, apparent in each individual shot. A hard copy of your completed shot log will be due in class at the end of week 4.

**Final Paper (25%)**

**DUE DATE: AUGUST 29th**

Using your shot log as a jumping off point, your paper (1500 word minimum) will examine the way that cinematic techniques create meaning, by developing an original thesis that explores one or more aspect of your selected film’s construction. The goal is to relate an element to the whole and show how a particular theme or idea is made aesthetically and conceptually visible through a particular technique.

**Final Exam (25%)**

**IN CLASS ON: AUGUST 31st**

The final exam will be cumulative and cover material from the readings as well as lectures.

**Attendance & Participation (20%)**

It is expected that you will attend all lectures. Your grade will be penalized for any absence that is not accounted for with legitimate documentation. Because Summer Session courses are condensed, it is imperative that you attend every session because each one will cover an extensive amount of material. If you miss a lecture, make sure to ask a classmate for notes, and to watch the day’s film on your own. *Missing 2 classes unexcused will result in an attendance grade of zero. Missing 3 or more classes unexcused will result in a failing grade for the entire course.*
COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 - MISE-EN-SCÈNE
Tuesday, August 1st - introduction, course expectations, etc.
Screening: *Do the Right Thing*, dir. Spike Lee, 1989

Thursday, August 3rd - elements of mise-en-scène, exploring the boundary between naturalism and theatricality
Reading due: *The Film Experience* Chapter 2: Mise-en-Scene p.63-93

WEEK 2 - CINEMATOGRAPHY
Tuesday, August 8th - framing and the mechanics of cinematography, realism vs. formalism, pov
***Weekly Response Paper #1 (Mise-en-scène) Due in class***
Reading due: *The Film Experience* Chapter 3: Cinematography p.95-122
Screening: *Entrevista Bradford Young*
Screening: *Selma*, dir. Ava DuVernay, 2015

Thursday, August 10th - presentation/representation
Reading due: *The Film Experience* Chapter 3: Cinematography p.122-131
Screening: *Children of Men*, dir. Alfonso Cuarón, 2006

WEEK 3 - EDITING
Tuesday, August 15th - a short history, continuity editing
***Weekly Response Paper #2 (Cinematography) Due in class***
Reading due: *The Film Experience* Chapter 4: Editing p.133-154
Screening: *The Cutting Edge*, dir. Wendy Apple, 2005
Screening: *The Order of Myths*, dir. Margaret Brown, 2008

Thursday, August 17th - disjunctive editing, duration, pace, rhythm, montage
Reading due: *The Film Experience* Chapter 4: Editing p.155-173
Screening: *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World*, dir. Edgar Wright, 2010
WEEK 4 - SOUND

Tuesday, August 22nd - sound concepts and techniques
***Weekly Response Paper #3 (Editing) Due in class***

GUEST LECTURE: Ryan Page
Reading due: *The Film Experience* Chapter 5: Film Sound p.175-209

Thursday, August 24th - sound concepts and techniques contd.
****“Cumulative” Shot Log Due in class****
Screening: *Suspiria*, dir. Dario Argento, 1977

WEEK 5 - DISTILLATION

Tuesday, August 29th - reflection and review
***Final Paper Due in class***
Screening: TBD

Thursday, August 31st
*FINAL EXAM* (Bring Bluebook(s) to Class)

POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS:

Lateness/Attendance

Punctuality in respect to lectures and screenings is appreciated. While being late on rare occasion is excusable, consistently being late will adversely effect your grade for the course. Attendance in lecture is mandatory. Missing 3 or more sessions unexcused will result in a failing grade for the course. If you have an emergency, please provide me with documentation via e-mail at your earliest convenience so that I can make sure to mark your absence as “excused”.

Laptops/Cell phones

Cell phones must be set to mute or turned off upon entering class. It is strictly prohibited to access your phone during a class lecture or screening. Laptop computers are not to be used in lectures or screenings. Exceptions will be granted for use of a computer to those with a documented need.
Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offences.

_The consequence of committing an academic offence is an F in the course and a report filed with the College Provost who may enact further disciplinary measures._

The following measures are considered an offence and are excerpted from the UCSC Student Policies and Regulations Handbook:

- Committing fraud, deceit, or dishonesty in respect to an academic assignment.

- Using or attempting to use materials, or assisting others in using materials, which are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question.

- Providing answers to or receiving answers from others for any academic assignment.

- Using notes, information or other electronic devices during exams or for assignments from which they have been expressly or implicitly prohibited.

- Improperly obtaining or using improperly obtained information about an exam or assignment in advance of its availability to other students, or assisting others in doing so.

- Putting one's name on another person's exam or assignment

- Altering previously graded work for purposes of seeking a grade appeal.

- Plagiarism is defined as the use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source.

- Copying from the writings or works of others into one's academic assignment without attribution, or submitting such works as if it were one's own.
• Using the views, opinions, or insights of another without acknowledgment.

• Paraphrasing the characteristic or original phraseology, metaphor, or other literary device of another without proper attribution.

A personal reminder: Copying and pasting any information derived from an online source and inserting it into your own text without properly citing and acknowledging the author is considered plagiarism. This includes deriving your ideas for thesis statements, utilizing definitions or concepts, paraphrasing, swapping out words via a thesaurus in order to reorganize another author’s work and using content featured in videos or text that are not explicitly cited according to regulation. Also, purchasing papers online is strictly prohibited.

Resources
If you would benefit from extended time during an exam or a particular accommodation in the classroom due to a disability or learning difference please inform me within the first few class sessions and we can work together to formulate circumstances that are the most conducive to your learning. Please make sure to also provide me with an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC). For details on requirements and the process of obtaining authorization please visit their website at http://drc.ucsc.edu or visit their office on campus at 125 Hahn Student Services.

Email communication
Please feel free to contact me via e-mail concerning any questions about, or difficulties with the materials that may arise for you throughout the course. I kindly request that if you have questions about your grade(s) specifically that you contact myself and your TA in person (and not via e-mail) during office hours. Please bring the assignment or exam in question to these appointments. I will respond to your e-mail(s) as promptly as possible, but please understand that it may take up to 48 hours to receive a response. It is not necessary to contact myself, or your TA if you are going to be absent due to a cold, the flu or family obligations. It is only necessary to inform us of your absence(s) via e-mail if an emergency arises that will cause you to miss
more than 2 class sessions.

**Standard Formatting and Bibliographic Requirements**

- *Handwritten work will not be accepted*
- Essays should be double spaced
- Use 11 or 12 point in a legible type font for all assignments
- Use 1” margins all around
- Numerically paginate all essays
- Essays should be stapled in the upper left hand corner (no exceptions)
- All essays should include your name, the class number, the instructor’s name and the date.
- If you use resources other than your own original work in your essays you must include either footnotes or endnotes according to Chicago Manual of Style formatting
- Please refer to the “resources” section of the class website on e-commons for further materials concerning writing, studying, thesis and bibliographic tips

**Classroom Civility**

Speaking to your peers, your instructor, your TA and administrative staff with respect is essential for creating a positive learning environment. Issues surrounding gender, race and class are integral to film analysis and appreciating that each of us maintains a different subject position in relation to these social elements is important. Respectfully engaging diverse ideas will create a sense of inclusion for all of us participating in the course.

**Graphic/Explicit Materials**

The material presented in this course may oftentimes pose challenging ideas, language or imagery. Overt and graphic depictions of violence and sexual content may be part of the screenings or clips shown in class. These materials are to serve as a point of inquiry and are meant to facilitate a critical understanding of the meanings inherent in their presentation. Challenging material asks us to interrogate its social relevance through a theoretical, historical or formal analysis and as such is included within the parameters of rigorous intellectual inquiry. I am always available to explain and clarify the pertinence of class materials in relation to your coursework and to provide greater context for its inclusion. *I will not be issuing specific trigger warnings before screenings.*