

Intro to Film Studies



Instructor: Raed El Rafei | he/they | relrafei@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: Mon 10:00am - 12:00pm (by appointment, book your 15-minute slot [here](#)) (Zoom link [here](#))

Open drop-in Zoom hour: Mon 3:00 - 4:00pm (Zoom link [here](#))

Discussion Sections on Zoom:

Section A: Wed 10:00am - 11:00am | **Section B:** Wed 11:15am - 12:15pm (link on Canvas under the zoom app)

Teaching Assistant: Erick Msumanje | he/him | emsumanj@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: Wed 8am – 9am (Zoom link [here](#) / Meeting ID: 833 958 9600 Passcode: section3)

Section C: Th 01:00pm - 02:00pm | **Section D:** Th 2:15 pm - 3:15pm (link on Canvas under the zoom app)

Teaching Assistant: Maria Mayo | she/her | mmayo1@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: Wed 12pm – 1pm (Zoom link [here](#) / Meeting ID: 942 9039 6578 Passcode: 372726)

Course Description

FILM 20A introduces you to the fundamentals of film language and aesthetics. The course provides you with the tools, vocabulary and methodology to develop a critical understanding of the film medium. You will learn to identify and engage with the building blocks of formal film analysis: mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and sound. You will think about how these elements work together to generate meaning and emotion in a variety of clips and films spanning different geographical areas and time periods. You will gain basic knowledge of narrative film genres, documentaries and experimental cinema. You will learn to consider films in their historical context and think about their relationship to social, historical, economic and cultural factors.

Course Component

Lectures and screenings are asynchronous. You will be able to view both pre-recorded video lectures and watch the films at your own convenience. But this is an intensive class, so it is VERY important that you stick with a regular schedule for lectures and screenings each week. This will help you stay on top of the material!

Discussion Sections will be held synchronously via Zoom on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Check the day/time of your assigned section. Attendance is mandatory to pass the class. Absences won't be tolerated unless you have a valid excuse AND inform your TA about it in advance.

Each Monday, a module will be posted containing a brief outline for the week, assigned readings, video lectures, screenings, discussion topics, and assignments.

Readings: All readings are contained in the LaunchPad version of the textbook: [Corrigan & White, *The Film Experience: An Introduction*, 6th edition \(2021\)](#). Once you purchase access to LaunchPad, the e-book along with a variety of activities and assignments will be accessible to you digitally via Canvas.

Lectures: Each Monday, 2 main video lectures will be posted. They cover the week's topics, relevant film clips, and a short introduction and analysis of the week's main film. The lectures will include themes and questions for you to consider while watching the film.

Screenings: Films will be available to stream online via Canvas. Be sure to complete the reading and watch the lecture before screening the film.

Discussion Sections: You will attend weekly Discussion Sections via Zoom. This is your time to deepen your understanding of the week's material, and to discuss the films in more detail in a small-group setting. Please come prepared with questions and comments. Be sure to watch all lectures for that week and screen the film before attending your section.

MISSING MORE THAN ONE SECTION WITHOUT A VALID EXCUSE WILL RESULT IN FAILING THE CLASS!

Open drop-in Zoom hour: This will be an open communal space for you to discuss class material, films and assignments. Come prepared to ask questions or propose specific discussion topics; this is not a lecture but an optional space of exchange. If you want to meet with your instructor individually, you can set up an appointment during office hours (info above).

Assignments

Weekly Quizzes (20%): a selection of assignments from LaunchPad to make you think through each week's readings (not graded, credit upon completion).

Sequence Analysis Essay (25%): 800 words. Due 08/10/2021.

Analytical Film Essay (25%): 1500 words. Due 08/24/2021.

Final Exam (20%): Will cover ALL the course material. Due 08/26/2021.

Participation & Attendance (10%): credit for attendance and ACTIVE participation in section.

Email Policy

Please be mindful of your instructor's and TAs' time and only ask questions that you cannot answer by reading the instructions on Canvas. If you need a question answered you can contact your instructor or TA by sending a private message on Canvas. Please expect a turnaround time of 24 hours. Messages sent over the weekend will be answered starting the first weekday.

Lateness Policy

Because this is a 5-week intensive course, we will not be able to accommodate extensions on any of the assignments (except in case of a DRC accommodation or an emergency). If you cannot turn in your assignment on time, you should get in touch with your TA to discuss your specific situation before the deadline.

Instructor Feedback

We will provide direct comments and feedback on your assignments. For major assignments, a grading rubric will be available to you before you start writing your essays so you know what we expect from you.

Student Feedback

At the end of the quarter you will be asked to complete a Student Experience of Teaching survey for this course. SETs provide an opportunity for you to give valuable feedback on your learning that is honest and constructive. This anonymous feedback will help me consider modifications to the course that will help future students learn more effectively.

General Information

Please read carefully the general information in the [Week 0 module](#) on Canvas for policy differences in summer, deadlines, campus resources, technology, tutoring, and learning strategies, as well as details from the Disabilities Resource Center, Title IX, and academic integrity. All needed links on the topics listed here are embedded in the module. PLEASE DO GO OVER THAT IMPORTANT MATERIAL!

Difficult Material

In this course, the films I've assigned or the clips I show during lectures could contain difficult ideas, uncomfortable language, or graphic depictions of sex or violence. You will be asked to treat these portrayals critically, to examine the potential social impact, and to evaluate the works in a given context.

I am always available to explain the pertinence of class material and provide greater context for its inclusion. Please note that I will do my best to issue specific trigger warnings before showing any of the materials. However, given the individual nature of triggers, I cannot guarantee that I will be able to cover all triggers.

Please reach out to Counseling and Psychological Services (<https://caps.ucsc.edu/> | 831-459-2628) or the Disability Resource Center (drc@ucsc.edu | 831-459-2089) should you need additional support in order to do your best work.

Furthermore, in our section discussions and other forms of conversations, we will have the opportunity to explore challenging, high-stakes issues and increase our understanding of different perspectives. These conversations may not always be easy. But we always need to show respect for others. One of the aims of this class is to help us increase our facility with difficult conversations that arise in relation to social justice, politics, economics, morality, religion, and other issues where reasonable people often hold diverse perspectives. This effort will ultimately deepen our understanding and allow us to make the most of being in a community with people of many backgrounds, experiences, and positions.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1 (Jul 25 – Jul 31)

Introduction: Stages of Filmmaking & Film History

Read:

- Encountering Film: from Preproduction to Exhibition [Chapter 1]
- History and Historiography: Hollywood and Beyond [Chapter 2]

Formal Compositions 1: Mise-en-Scène

Read:

- Mise-en-Scène: Exploring a Material World [Chapter 3]

Watch: *Amreeka* (Palestinian Territories/USA, Cherien Dabis, 2009)

WEEK 2 (Aug 1 – Aug 7)

Formal Compositions 2: Cinematography

Read:

- Cinematography: Framing What We See [Chapter 4]

Movie Genres & Writing about Film

Read:

- Movie Genres: Conventions, Formulas & Audience Expectations [Chapter 10]
- Writing a Film Essay [Chapter 11/12 (excerpts)]

Watch: *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (Turkey, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2011)

WEEK 3 (Aug 8 – Aug 14)

Narrative Films

Read:

- Narrative Films: Telling Stories [Chapter 7]

Formal Compositions 3: Cuts

Read:

- Editing: Relating Images (The continuity system & narrative films) [Chapters 5]
- Editing: Relating Images (Montage, temporality & disjunctions) [Chapter 5]

Watch: *Imitation of Life* (USA, Douglas Sirk, 1959)
Mulholland Drive (USA, David Lynch, 2001)

**Due: Sequence Analysis Essay

WEEK 4 (Aug 15 – Aug 21)

Formal Compositions 4: Sound

Read:

- 4.1 Film Sound: Listening to the Cinema [Chapter 6]

Animation and Experimental Cinema

Read:

- 4.2 Animation & Experimental Media: Challenging Form [Chapter 9]

Watch: *Tampopo* (Japan, Jûzô Itami, 1985)
Carne (Brazil, Kamila Kater, 2020)

WEEK 5 (Aug 22 – Aug 26)

Documentary

Read:

- 5.1 Documentary Films: Representing the Real [Chapter 8]

Watch: *The Gleaners and I* (France, Agnes Varda, 2000)

** Due: Analytical film essay + Final Exam