
CMST 2012: Introduction to Film¹

Hal Lambert, jlamb37@lsu.edu - 326 Coates, Tuesday and Thursday from 12:30 – 1:30
Tuesday and Thursday from 1:30 to 3:00 – Allen 134
Screenings Tuesday night from 6:00 – 9:00 – Allen 134

Required Course Materials

Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*. 14th ed., Pearson: 2018.

Bang, Molly. *Picture This: How Pictures Work*, Hachette: updated edition, 2016.

Additional materials will be posted on Moodle as the semester progresses. You will likely need some kind of blank video recording media and a thumb drive for this class.

Course Description

"Nature and function of film as a mode of communication; film theory and criticism; historical and technological development of the film industry; selected films screened and studied." (LSU *General Catalog*).

Basically, how do films communicate meaning? How have the technical advancements in film production contributed to the varied ways in which we culturally understand films.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how films communicate, you will also practice the concepts by making short video projects.

Goals

By the end of this course you should have:

1. A deeper understanding of how moving images communicate meaning.
2. An understanding of the various languages of film and the vocabulary of terms used in filmmaking and film studies.
3. Developed an appreciative and critical capacity for watching films and

¹ Parts of this syllabus adapted from syllabi provided by Dr. Patricia Suchy and Greg Langner

analyzing how they communicate.

4. Gained confidence and experience working with digital video technology.
 5. Developed your ability to communicate with moving images and sound through course projects.
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Film and Media Arts & Communication-Intensive Status

This course is on the permanent electives list for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences' Film and Media Arts program. You may major in FMA (BA in Liberal Arts with the FMA concentration). You may minor in FMA; many students successfully combine a CMST major and an FMA minor.

This is a certified Communication-Intensive (C-I) course which meets all of the requirements set forth by LSU's Communication across the Curriculum program, including

- instruction and assignments emphasizing informal and formal visual and technological communication;
 - teaching of discipline-specific communication techniques;
 - use of feedback loops process for learning;
 - practice of ethical and professional work standards;
 - 40% of the course grade rooted in communication-based work; and
 - practice of ethical and professional work standards. Students interested in pursuing the LSU Distinguished Communicators certification may use this C-I course for credit. For more information about this student recognition program, visit www.cxc.lsu.edu.
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Course Policies

Participation and attendance

This is a 4-hour course that includes a weekly lab to screen films and discuss them; your enthusiastic attendance at all scheduled meetings including screenings is expected. You will not receive an attendance grade just for

showing up, but there are assignments and material that cannot be made up outside of class, so missing class will have a dramatic negative impact on your grade. This is a small class that relies on participation; your absence (physical and mental) will be noted. If you'd prefer a class in which you can disappear in a crowd, mess around on social media, and/or attend only sporadically, please drop this class and give the slot to someone who wants to be here. You will be working in groups on several of the graded projects for this course. You should anticipate a considerable amount of outside time and labor developing, planning, shooting, and editing these projects as part of the workload for this course. Managing how to work in your group is part of each group assignment.

Citizenship

As a member of this class you are expected to attend regularly and be prepared and engaged. Don't be late; it slows us all down. The ringer on your phone must be turned off during class-- not vibrate, *off*-- and you should not be texting or using social media during class. Be forewarned that controversial topics, images, and language are often a part of films and will be a part of this classroom experience. If you are concerned that some of the scheduled films might somehow interfere with your ability to learn, please contact your instructors to discuss *before* screenings.

The Americans with Disabilities Act and The Rehabilitation Act of 1973

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Affairs so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me during the first two weeks of class to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a violation of the fundamental principles of intellectual property. If you fail to give proper citation for the direct quote or paraphrase of another's idea, or represent someone else's ideas, sentences, essays, or speeches as your own you are engaging in plagiarism. Consult the Code of Student Conduct for information about the serious sanctions that will result from plagiarism or any other academic misconduct.

Assignments

Projects

You'll work in teams to create four short video projects. Detailed descriptions and parameters for each assignment will be distributed and discussed in class. Each project has a number of steps such as the creation of storyboards and shot logs; these materials and steps are graded along with the video itself.

Reading and tests

You will need to keep up with the assigned readings to be prepared for our discussions and projects. Assigned readings are expected to be complete prior to class; you should come prepared to discuss them or ask specific questions. Rather than long exams, there are approximately 6 short tests designed to assess your attention to this requirement. We may drop the lowest grade. Tests do not appear on the schedule but may be announced in class.

Screening responses

Following most of our screenings we ask that you write a short response to the film in question; usually we will steer you toward a particular aspect of the film to write about, applying concepts from the course readings. You must be present at the screenings to receive these assignments. They are due at the beginning of the next class session.

Grading

This class is graded using a 1000-point scale.

967-1000 = A+; 933-966 = A; 900-932 = A- 867-899 = B+; 833-866 = B; 800-832 = B- 767-799 = C+; 733-766 = C; 700-732 = C- 667-699 = D+; 633-666 = D; 600-632 = D- 0-599 = F

Weight

Film Projects – 40%

Exams – 20%

Screening Responses – 20%

Participation – 20%

These are quality points you may *earn* for completing assignments, assessed by the following qualities: “A” work indicates achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet the requirements of the assignment. It reflects near-perfect technical execution and creativity that exceeds expectations. “B” work indicates achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet the requirements of assignment. “C” work meets, but does not exceed, the requirements of the assignment in every way. “D” work is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet the requirements of the assignment. “F” work fails to meet the basic parameters of the assignment. Plus and minus grades within each of the above generally pertain to more nuanced particulars of each assignment.

Late work, missed tests and assignments

Late work does not meet any given assignment’s requirements by virtue of missing its deadline. Any work turned in late will therefore merit a lesser grade than if it were handed in on time. The fall-off rate is steep and swift. In accordance with university policy, make-up tests will only be granted with an excused absence that could not have been foreseen, and must be scheduled as soon as possible. If you have a university-excused absence that you know about in advance, you must arrange with the instructors do the work in advance rather than make it up.

Technology

For this class, you will have access to the technologies needed to create your digital video projects (cameras, audio recorders, computers with editing software) through Studio 151 (151 Coates), where we also hold our screenings. When you enter Studio 151 you must swipe in using your Student ID. Students must adhere to Studio 151 policies in order to use the equipment. For those of you who are new to any of the technologies or desire a brush-up, you may consult with the instructors and make use of the tutorials on Lynda.com available to you free with your MyLSU accounts. You may come to Studio 151 any time during open lab hours for help and practice, and/or you may schedule an appointment with your instructors for help. You are welcome to use your own equipment. Always take care to check issues of compatibility with your team members. Plan a work flow before you begin.

Tentative Course & Screening Schedule

T 8/21 – Introductions ; Screen & discuss “Eating Out.”

Screening: *Rear Window*

TH 8/23 – Continue *Rear Window* discussion

T 8/28 – Reading due: *Picture This*

Screening: TBA

TH 8/30 – Cut-out storyboard assignment

T 9/04 Giannetti Chapter 1, Photography

Screening: *Visions of Light*

TH 9/06 Cut-out assignment due; Project 1 Assignment

T 9/11 Giannetti Chapter 2, Mise en scene

Screening: *Amelie*

TH 9/13 Cinematography Workshop

T 9/18 Giannetti Chapter 3, Movement

Screening: *Heavenly Creatures*

TH 9/20 Continue Chapter 3

T 9/25 Project 1 due, Project 2 assignment

Screening: *Run Lola Run*

TH 9/27 Giannetti Chapter 4, Editing

T 10/2 Giannetti Chapter 5, Sound; Chion readings

Screening: *Blue Velvet*

TH 10/4 – No Class, Fall Holiday

T 10/9 Giannetti Chapter 6, Acting

Screening: *The Passion of Joan of Arc*

TH 10/11 Giannetti Chapter 7, Dramatization

T 10/16 Project 2 due, Project 3 Assigned

Screening: *Amarcord*

TH 10/18 TBA

T 10/22 Giannetti Chapter 8, Story

Screening: *Wall-E*

TH 10/25 Project 3 Work

T 10/30 Giannetti Chapter 9, Writing

Screening: *Stranger Than Fiction*

TH 11/01 Project 3 due; Project 4 assigned

T 11/06 Giannetti Chapter 10, Ideology

Screening: *The Big Lebowski*

TH 11/08 No Class, NCA

T 11/13 Giannetti Chapter 11, Critique; Project 4 scenarios due

Screening: *Citizen Kane*

TH 11/15 Project 4 storyboards & shot lists due

T 11/20 Giannetti Chapter 12, Synthesis

No Screening. Work on project 4, check-in meetings with during lab time

TH 11/22 No Class, Thanksgiving holiday

More to Come

