

Fall 2015

ENGL 2311

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American Film as Literary Art
English 2311.001 Fall 2015 “The Science Fiction Film”
LA 236

Tuesday 2:00 - 3:15 (With a film screening approx. 3:30 – 5:15 pm in LA 250), Thursday 2:00 - 3:15

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TH 12:30 – 2:00 / F 11:30 – 1:00 / Or by
appointment

“As good a way as any towards understanding what a film is trying to say to us is to know how it is saying it.”

Andre Bazin

“Science fiction is any idea that occurs in the head and doesn't exist yet, but soon will, and will change everything for everybody, and nothing will ever be the same again. As soon as you have an idea that changes some small part of the world, you are writing science fiction. It is always the art of the possible, never the impossible.”

Ray Bradbury

Required Texts and Materials

Corrigan, Timothy J. *Film: A Short Guide to Writing about Film (Eighth Edition)*

Philip K. Dick. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Any recent collegiate grammar handbook

Light pen, penlight or small flashlight for taking notes during film screenings

Occasional DVDs or videos to be viewed outside of class

Student Learning Outcomes

This class is designed to provide students in all majors with an introduction to American fictional film as a form of narrative that uses the image rather than the printed word as its primary medium of communication. In order to consider the narrative possibilities of film as opposed to other forms of literature, such as the short story or the novel, we will examine the language and techniques of the film form that shape our understanding of the film's content. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- analyze film texts critically, as Bazin says above, with an understanding not only of what a film says but how it says it
- recognize and use film language, including terms that refer to camera movement and distance, editing techniques, lighting, sound, and narrative
- use the language of film to communicate that understanding in writing, in class discussions, and in group presentations
- evaluate film form and function
- work effectively in a collaborative group.

This semester we will also connect the films we will be studying to the recurring motif or theme of “The Science Fiction Film” The films assigned this semester will also comment and reflect upon this narrative theme, and the various cinematic and narrative manifestations of this theme will inform our study and discussions. I will elaborate further in class.

Course Requirements

Students will be required to attend each week's screening and discussions; read the required readings and handouts; write two essays; take two exams; complete quizzes and screening reports as directed; and contribute to a group project. Participation and attendance are critical to the success of this class

and will be used to determine the final grade. Be aware that our study of the films on the syllabus and in group projects will be at a level that requires you to take notes.

Grades

“The Movie I’ll Always Remember” Assignment	10%
Quizzes	10%
Screening Reports	10%
Essay 1 (Scene analysis)	10%
Essay 2 (Group project paper)	10%
Group Project	15%
Mid-term Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%
Participation	5%

Exams

The mid-term exam will cover the films we have studied to that point in the semester. It will be primarily short answers, and include a longer essay component that may ask you to draw on cumulative knowledge of the films we’ve studied thus far.

The final exam will cover the final assigned films, the group films, and a final film to be announced. I will choose a scene from that film for you to analyze during the exam. You will be graded on your analytical skills, appropriate use of film vocabulary (i.e. language of film), and writing ability.

Assignments

Papers

All assignments submitted should be typed and double-spaced in a 12-point Times Roman font with 1-inch margins. The format for papers should be MLA style. A sample paper in MLA style can be found in most college handbooks and online. Failure to follow correct format will result in a loss of points for the assignment. **Late papers will drop your grade by ten points for each class period missed. Any paper that is not turned in by two weeks after due date will be given a grade of 0. Any paper that is plagiarized (see attached plagiarism policy) will receive a grade of 0, and I may pursue further disciplinary action. See attached handouts for details of the two papers.**

Short written assignment

You will write a short assignment this semester: “The Movie I’ll Always Remember.” I will have handouts for you at the appropriate time.

Group Project

You will contribute to a group project in which you will choose a film for the class to view and study with your guidance, and present that film in a one-hour presentation. Each student will be expected to contribute equally to this project. I will have a handout for details of this assignment.

Quizzes

After we see a film on a Tuesday, we will always have a quiz on the following class period. We will also generally have a quiz on the assigned readings for that class day. Additionally, you will have a quiz on the Group Project films right before each group presentation (The group itself is exempt from that quiz). I will return your quizzes to you after grading them, and you are responsible for keeping them. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz grade, and average the remaining quizzes to arrive at your final quiz score.

Screening Reports

After viewing a film, you will write a screening report on that film and turn it in that next class day. You will also write screening reports of all of the group films and turn those in on the day of the group presentation. Screening reports will be an informal record of your reactions of the film. In your screening reports, you will share questions you may have about the overall film; the narrative techniques or specific shots and sequences of the film. You should also share what you really liked about the film, including discussions of specific shots and what they might contribute to an understanding of the film; connections that you have made between shots or sequences; observations about the way that specific shots relay themes, etc.

Your screening reports are not required to be typed, and will not be graded for content (unless you are off-topic and do not discuss the film). You will receive full credit if you turn in screening reports that are on time and a minimum of one full page. Late screening reports and those that are less than one full page will receive partial credit. We will use your screening reports to help guide some of our discussions of the films.

Participation and Classroom Conduct

You are expected to come to class well prepared with all assignments complete, and to participate in whole-class discussions.

If you are attentive and regularly make helpful, insightful comments in class, and complete all assigned work on time, you will earn an “A” for your participation grade. If you rarely offer useful insight or comments, if you are disruptive, if you sleep or are otherwise occupied, or if you fail to contribute to the positive functioning of this class, you will earn an F for participation. If you rarely participate in class discussions but turn in screening reports on time, do well on the quizzes and in collaboration with your group, you will most likely earn a C for participation. Repeated tardiness will also affect your participation grade. **Because it is only fair to apply the same requirements to all students, please do not ask for an exemption from the requirements listed above.**

Classroom Conduct

You are expected to treat faculty and fellow students with respect. Civility in the classroom and respect for the opinions of others is very important in an academic environment. It is likely that you may not agree with everything that is said or discussed in the classroom. Courteous behavior and responses are expected and lack of this will affect your grade.

A word about cell phones.

When you are in class, you should not take cell phone calls. They should be turned off when you enter the classroom. If you leave class to take a call, it will affect your participation grade. If you are in an emergency situation and need to be accessible by cell phone, set it to vibrate, and inform me privately at the beginning of class. **Also: no txt msg n cls!! Rlly!!!**

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the UNO Judicial Code for further information. The Code is available online at www.studentaffairs.uno.edu/Policy%20Manual/judicial_code_pt1.htm .

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students who qualify for services will receive the academic modifications for which they are legally entitled. It is the responsibility of the student to register with the Office of Disability Services each

semester and follow their procedures for obtaining assistance. Please let me know by the end of the second week of class if you anticipate needing disability accommodation.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend every class and are responsible for all class work. This includes film screenings! We are watching films as a group with a critical and analytical eye, and you must be a part of our group during our film screenings to be a part of experiencing these films as texts.

Attached is the official English Department attendance policy; it is, therefore, the policy we will follow in this class. Please read it carefully. As it states, you will be penalized for excessive absences. **For each absence after three, your final grade will be lowered two points.** I may also notify your dean who may put you on attendance probation. You will be marked absent if you are not present when the roll is taken. If you come to class late, it is your responsibility to see me **at the end of class** to have the absence changed. Additionally, if you leave early, you may be marked absent for half or all of the class period. You are also expected to let me know at the beginning of class if you need to leave early. You should save absences for times that are truly unavoidable).

You are responsible for finding out from a class member whatever occurs in class on a day you are absent. Work due on a day you are absent is still due on the due date. If you expect to miss an upcoming class, you should call or e-mail for homework. **Because it is only fair to apply the same requirements to all students, please do not ask for an exemption from the requirements listed above.** If you observe religious holy days that are not noted in the UNO academic calendar, please see me by the end of the second week of class.

Films

See the attached daily syllabus for the schedule of the films we will see this semester. Typically, the first class of each week will be spent viewing and discussing the film. For the following class, you will write a short "Screening Report" as detailed in the Corrigan text. On that second class day of that week, we will discuss the film with your input, and review key scenes. At the beginning of the following week's class, we will discuss and explore selected comments and questions from your screening reports. You are expected to attend each screening and discuss it thoughtfully. You may need to rent the films we view in class for additional study on your own. You will also be expected to attend a screening in class and / or rent the films that will be used for group projects and watch them at home.

Notice: Some of the films screened for this course may contain material some might find offensive, so please be aware that films shown in this class may be rated R for violence and/or sexual content. Your enrollment and attendance in this course indicates your awareness of this and your willingness to approach these films in an adult, critical manner.