

Mercer County Community College

Arts and Communication Division

CMN 107

CINEMA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Artistic achievement in classic and contemporary feature films. Acting, directing, writing, musical scoring, cinematography, genre, and film criticism are discussed.

Text(s): Reference Division Booklist

Prerequisites:

Co-requisites:

Credits: 3

Lecture Hours: 3

Food and drink are strictly prohibited in classrooms as per health and safety laws. Students may not bring in chemicals of any kind without the appropriate MSD sheets

Course Coordinator: Donna Munde

Latest Review: Spring 2005

I. REQUIRED TEXT

Film: An Introduction

II. RATIONALE

Motion pictures emerged as a new art form in the Twentieth Century. The early short films at the turn of the century were largely attempts to “record” scenes from stage plays, vaudeville acts and natural events like the eruption of Old Faithful where the entire action was filmed in a single static long shot; long shots; medium shots; close-ups; and reaction shots. A new cinematic language was evolving with flashbacks within scenes and dissolves between scenes. Film was no longer tied to real time or clock time. The director, through the editing process, was able to piece together a variety of different shots to create a new kind of time “film time” where action may be condensed or expanded to suite one’s purpose. The feature film was born and with it a new art form and major industry.

This course is designed for the filmgoer and will examine the narrative film with an emphasis upon the contributions made by countries, studios, writers and individual directors in the development of an international cinematic language. Feature films are studied from the point of view of the director and how he or she expresses ideas through film. Although the narrative film is featured, there will be a special unit in the course on the development of the documentary to the cinema verite’ filmmakers of today and a unit on the animated feature film.

III. SOME WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

1. Movies are an art form.
2. Movies reveal the inner workings of a society.
3. Movies have a psych-social dimension.
4. Movies can document what’s ‘going on’.
5. Movies are good and bad.

IV. INSTRUCTIONAL MODE

Film viewing will occupy most of the class. Brief presentations will introduce the films with an informal period following each film.

V. GENERAL COURSE GOALS

- A. The student will develop critical views of theatrical cinema as well as the ability to express those views orally and in writing.
- B. Place specific films, filmmakers, and styles of historical perspective using the concept of genre and the auteur theory.
- C. Use and understand the vocabulary of film.

VI. SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. Demonstrate knowledge of the terms of movie making via quizzes.
- B. Successfully pass an objective quiz which is a comprehensive test relating to all genres, directors, and films studied during the semester.
- C. Write seven essays.

VII. REQUIRED WRITING

All papers will be typed, double-spaced on 8 ½ x 11 sheets of paper. No binders or folders. No title pages, please. Please place your name in the upper right hand corner of your paper. (Due dates for all writing assignments TBA.)

Paper 1

Film Review – Review a current “popular” film.

Paper 2

The Star – View three films that star the same person. In a well developed essay (a minimum of three pages); discuss the “star syndrome” in the American cinema.

Paper 3

The Director – View three films by the same director. In a well developed essay (a minimum of three pages); discuss the “power of the director” in American cinema.

Paper 4

The Theme – View three films that have the same/similar themes, e.g., It’s Ok (normal) Not to be Ok (normal) in the American cinema – (1) Natural Born Killers, (2) Apocalypse Now, (3) 187, (4) Bulworth, (5) Sixth Sense, (6) American History X. Discuss the importance of theme. Explain how the films viewed reveal insight into human nature.

Paper 5

The Genre – View three films of the same genre, e.g., three science fiction, three musicals, or three film noirs. Discuss the characteristics of the genre and then apply them to the three films viewed.

Paper 6

Overview – Discuss how the American cinema reveals the psych-social development of the American consciousness during the Twentieth Century.

Paper 7

Surprise!

PROJECT

Write a movie review of a current motion picture at local theaters for local TV or newspaper (3-7 minutes).

Also: Journal/Quiz

Examination of 50 cinematic terms.

VIII. ATTENDANCE AND EVALUATION

Attendance

Students may not miss more than two classes. If students must miss a class meeting, he or she should notify the instructor at the first opportunity. The student is completely responsible for knowing the material covered in the interim before attending the next class session. Any film missed in class must be seen by the student on his/her own time. A copy of some films seen in class will be available on reserve in the library for your convenience.

Grading

Journal/Quiz	200	A	900-1000
Examination of 50 cinematic terms	200	B	800 - 900
Papers (7)	300	C	650 - 800
Project	200	D	550 - 650
Attendance	<u>100</u>	F	Less Than 550 Points
Total Possible Points	1000		