

Film and the Quest for Truth
M/W/F 12:00-12:50
Tuesday Screenings—6:00-9:00 p.m. (media room)

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Course Description:

This course will focus on analyzing how “truth” is produced from the images we encounter every day. Our focus will be on film as it represents a powerful and influential aspect of contemporary visual culture. Students will examine many theories to study both image production and consumption. Although our focus will be primarily cinema, we will also look at television and popular culture and discuss the relationship between modernism and postmodernism, both as philosophical concepts and styles of imaging. The objectives of this course are to enhance critical thinking, reading and writing skills, and to introduce students to film terms, cinematic techniques, and textual analysis.

Text:

Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture, 2nd edition; Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, available at the University bookstore.

Requirements:

You are expected to attend and participate in class, which will include film screening and discussion each week.

Attendance, Participation and Late Work: Class attendance is required (including screenings). You must be present for the entire class to be counted present. Every class is important. If you are consistently absent, you jeopardize your success in the course. If you miss more than three (3) classes (including screenings), *for any reason*, your final grade will drop by one grade point (A to A-; A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.). Being on time to class is expected and consistent lateness is considered disruptive to the class. Late work will be docked one grade (A to A-; A- to B+ etc.) for each day it is late.

Electronic Devices: The classroom is a learning environment and should be free from phone, email, and texting interruption.

Evaluation:

Your grades will be calculated as follows:

Exams: on the reading and films screened in class (matching, multiple choice, true-false, and short answer)	(25 pts. each)
Group Presentation:	(50 pts.)
Take Home Midterm Essay:	(100 pts.)
Take-Home Final Essay:	(100 pts.)
TOTAL	350 pts

GROUP PRESENTATION: (3-4 people) Through the close analysis of ONE film, the goal of your project is to examine the ways in which film contributes to a better understanding of the “truths” of our culture and ourselves. You may choose an approach, which analyzes the image itself, or textual meaning; or you may look at the way in which spectators or audiences interpret images; or you may consider how visual images change meaning when they move between cultures. Your presentation will give you the opportunity to present your own ideas to the class. The presentation **MUST** include a handout that includes an abstract of your project, a bibliography, and any other relevant information. Presentations should not last longer than 15 minutes.

TAKE-HOME ESSAYS: (5-6 pages) From a list of questions that I will hand out, you will choose ONE for your essay topic. Your essay should have a thesis that you prove with specific supporting evidence. Your essay should be concise, clear, and organized. One of the goals of the essay portion of the project is to demonstrate your ability to integrate your own ideas (and voice) with the ideas and theories discussed in the text and in class.

Both the essays and the presentation will be graded on their adherence to the assignment and on thoroughness, accuracy, clarity, and usefulness to viewers. The more fully you apply the concepts from the course, the more effective your project will be (and the higher your grade).

Course Schedule (subject to change):

Week 1

Mon., Aug. 24

Introduction

Tues., Aug. 25

6:00 p.m. Screening—NO SCREENING

Wed., Aug. 26

In-class Screening: *Frontline: The Merchants of Cool*, 2001, D: Barak Goodman, 54 m.

Fri., Aug. 28

Discussion: *Merchants of Cool*

Week 2

Mon. Aug. 31

Reading: Chapter 1: Practices of Looking: Images, Power, and Politics

Tues., Sept. 1

6:00 p.m. Screening — *Madonna: Truth or Dare, 1991, D: Alex Keshishian, 114 m*

Wed., Sept. 2

Discussion: *Madonna: Truth or Dare*

Fri., Sept. 4

Discussion: *Madonna: Truth or Dare*

Week 3

Mon., Sept. 7

LABOR DAY—NO CLASS

Tues., Sept. 8

6:00 Screening — *Titanic*, 1997, D: James Cameron, 194m.

Wed., Sept. 9

Reading: Chapter 2: Viewers Make Meaning

Fri., Sept. 11

Discussion: *Titanic*

Week 4

Mon., Sept. 14

Reading: Chapter 3: Modernity: Spectatorship, Power, and Knowledge, pgs. 93-111

Tues., Sept. 15

6:00 Screening — *Minority Report*, 1997, D: James Cameron, 194m.

Wed., Sept. 16
Discussion: *Minority Report*

Fri., Sept. 18
Discussion: *Minority Report*

Week 5

Mon., Sept. 21

Reading: Chapter 3, cont., pages. 111-136

Tues., Sept. 22
6:00 p.m. Screening — *Rear Window*, 1954, D: Alfred Hitchcock, 112m.

Wed., Sept. 23
Discussion: *Rear Window*

Fri., Sept. 25
Discussion: *Rear Window*

Week 6

Mon., Sept. 28

Quiz #1 (Chapters 1-3)

Reading: Chapter 4: Realism and Perspective

Tues., Sept. 29
6:00 p.m. Screening — *The Matrix*, 199, D: Andy and Larry Wachowski, 136m.

Wed., Sept. 30
Discussion: *The Matrix*

Fri., Oct. 2
Discussion: *The Matrix*

Week 7

Mon., Oct. 5

Reading: Chapter 5: Visual Technologies, Images Reproduction, and the Copy

Tues., Oct. 6
6:00 p.m. Screening — *The People vs. Larry Flynt*, 1996, D: Milos Forman, 129 m.

Wed., Oct. 7
Discussion: *The People vs. Larry Flynt*

Fri., Oct. 9
Discussion: *The People vs. Larry Flynt*

Week 8

Mon., Oct. 12

Reading: Chapter 6: Media in Everyday Life

Tues., Oct. 13

6:00 p.m. Screening — *Standard Operating Procedures*, 2008, D: Errol Morris, 116m.

Wed., Oct. 14

Screening: *Standard Operating Procedures*

Fri., Oct. 16

Discussion: *Standard Operating Procedures*

Quiz #2 (Chapters 4-6)

MIDTERM ESSAY QUESTIONS HANDED OUT

Week 9

Mon., Oct. 19

Reading: Chapter 7: Advertising, Consumer Cultures, and Desire, pages 265-279

Tues., Oct. 20

6:00 p.m. Screening — *Fight Club*, David Fincher, 1999, 139m.

Wed., Oct. 21

Screening: *Fight Club*

Fri., Oct. 23

Discussion: *Fight Club*

MIDTERM ESSAY DUE

Week 10

Mon., Oct. 26

Reading: Chapter 7: Advertising, Consumer Cultures, and Desire, pages 279-305

Tues., Oct. 27

6:00 p.m. Screening — *American Psycho*, 2000, D: Mary Harron, 101 m

Wed., Oct. 28

Discussion: *American Psycho*

Fri., Oct. 30

Discussion: *American Psycho*

Week 11

Mon., Nov. 2

Reading: Chapter 8: Postmodernism, Indie Media, and Popular Culture

Tues., Nov. 3

6:00 p.m. Screening — *Scream*, 1996, D: Wes Craven, 111m.

Wed., Nov. 4

Discussion: *Scream*

Fri., Nov. 6

Discussion: *Scream*

Week 12

Mon., Nov. 9

Quiz #3 (Chapters 7-8)

Reading: Chapter 9: Scientific Looking, Looking at Science

Tues., Nov. 10

6:00 p.m. Screening —*Nip/Tuck*, Television Series, Creator: Ryan Murphy

Wed., Nov. 11

Discussion: *Nip/Tuck*

Fri., Nov. 13

Discussion: *Nip/Tuck*

Week 13

Mon., Nov. 16

Reading: Chapter 10: The Global Flow of Visual Culture, pages 389-407

Tues., Nov. 17

6:00 p.m. Screening —*Babel*, 2006, Alejandro González Iñárritu, 143m.

Wed., Nov. 18

Discussion: *Babel*

Fri., Nov. 20

Discussion: *Babel*

Week 14

FALL BREAK and THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY—No Class

Mon., Nov. 23—Fri, Nov. 27

Week 15

Mon., Nov. 30

Reading: Chapter 10: The Global Flow of Visual Culture, pages 407-428

Tues., Dec. 1

6:00 p.m. Screening: *Slumdog Millionaire*, 2008, D: Danny Boyle, 120 m.

Wed., Dec. 2

Discussion: *Slumdog Millionaire*

Fri., Dec. 4

Discussion: *Slumdog Millionaire*

Week 16

Mon., Dec. 7

Quiz #4 (Chapters 9-10)

FINAL ESSAY QUESTIONS HANDED OUT

Group Presentations

Tues., Dec. 8

No Screening

Wed. Dec. 9
Group Presentations

Fri., Dec. 11
Group Presentations

Wed, Dec. 16

FINAL ESSAY DUE

4:30 p.m. in the classroom

No late work will be accepted after the scheduled final exam period.