**Film & Literature**

**ENGL 1355 (CRN: 28161)**

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# Office: Irby 430 Time: TTH 10:50-12:05

# Office Hours: TTH 12:15-2:30, or by appointment Place: Irby 304



“In the end, storytelling is storytelling. Every time you tell a story, you have to struggle with form and the question of how to tell it.” –Salman Rushdie

**Course Description:**

If I gave you a poem or a play or a short story or a novel and asked you to read it and discuss its specific arguments, devices, and the ways it constructs meaning, you would know how to do it. Why? Well, in part, you have learned this as an academic skill. That is, beginning in about 2nd grade, teachers have given you these types of texts and asked you to do academic things with them. They’ve also given you a vocabulary for systematically understanding, breaking down and discussing such texts and then required you to do it repeatedly in English class.

But what about movies? I think we can all agree that movies function very similarly to literary texts—in short, they tell stories. Further, the average American will consume 10 times more movies than books. But where do you learn to watch movies? That’s a tough question to answer. Most likely, you’ve learned to watch movies by … watching movies. And, in general, Hollywood teaches us to be passive consumers—to escape into the world of the movie and let it manipulate and consume us. Really, there’s nothing wrong with that—hopefully, we all love to escape into a good movie. But here’s the thing: one of the central assumptions of this class is that movies *matter*—they matter not just as entertainment but as cultural products—they matter as much as poems, plays, short stories, and novels. This class will give you a vocabulary and critical tool box for systematically understanding, breaking down, and discussing movies—for taking movies apart and seeing how they work, both as texts and on us.

**Course Objectives:** In this course, we will read, view, study, and discuss literary and film texts. As we do this, we will pursue the following goals:

1. Develop a critical vocabulary and tool box for systematically viewing and processing films beyond plot and dialogue.

2. Read literary works and view films actively, closely, and carefully in order to recognize, understand, and process the different levels of meaning and cultural arguments and positions that may be present in the text.

3. Learn to form interpretive readings of cultural works and support those interpretations with evidence and illustrations drawn from the works; this skill includes learning to express those interpretations in clear and organized writing. **Writing will be an important part of this class, and the ability to write well in** **Standard Academic English is vital to success in the course**

**My Policies:**

**Participation:** There are too many of you to expect you all to speak during each class, but I do expect to hear from each of you throughout the semester. You cannot escape from this class without letting me hear your voice on a regular basis. Trust me when I tell you that you each have an important contribution to make in this class, and I demand that you make it. We are discussing literary and film texts in class, and these texts have no single fixed meaning. Basically, it will be impossible for all of you to agree on everything. I **highly** encourage you to feel free to disagree with one another (and me) and offer counterpoints and alternate readings. All I ask (actually, I don’t ask, I demand) is that you disagree with one another (and me) in a constructive manner. Show respect for one another’s views, opinions and ideas. There is absolutely no place in this classroom for scoffing or bullying. Convince with the power and eloquence of your ideas, not through absurd facial expressions, grunts and intimidation.

Also, in order to participate productively in class, you need to have done the assigned reading/viewing. If I suspect that you haven’t been doing the readings, I’ll be forced to administer annoying quizzes at the beginning of each class. Don’t make me administer annoying quizzes—do the readings.

**Attendance:** If you intend to make a premium grade (A or B), you should attend class as frequently as possible, preferably every class day. **Your final grade for this course will drop two points for every absence after three**, except in rare situations. Infrequent absences caused by illness or accident, family death, official university functions, or inclement weather are acceptable, but you need to bring documentation of the reason to receive this consideration. If you should miss 5 or more classes, I will strongly recommend that you drop the class, and I reserve the right to drop a student from the course, assigning a grade of WP or WF, after 6 absences.

Make note of all drop dates for this semester, as listed on the online Academic Calendar.

**Late arrivals/Early departures:** Beyond missing valuable information, late arrival and early departure disrupts the class. Avoid it at all costs and, if it’s unavoidable, be as considerate as possible to your classmates.

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*!!!!!!Cell Phones!!!!!!\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

 

Hear this now: Cell phone interruptions drive me nuts—seriously, they give me facial tics. So please turn off and stow all cell phones before class. Seriously, I don’t even want to see your cell phone. Really. Prove to yourself that you’re not addicted to the little monster: spend our 75 minutes out of its presence (#giveyourthumbsarest).

**Late Work:** I do not accept late work. All assignments are due on the day indicated on the syllabus, at the start of class.

**Assignments and Grading:**

Essay 1 (2/19) 25% Group Project (3/19) 15% Final Essay (5/1) 35% SWAs 10% Participation 15%

**Grading Policy:** Ahh, grading! Here’s the rub. One of the major sticking points between teacher and student comes down to a potential disparity in goals. My goal here is that you engage with the texts we read and develop your ability to critically analyze them and make associations and connections. Often (I didn’t say always), your goal in this class is to obtain a grade that will make you happy. See the potential conflict? Honestly, if I thought that handing you an A were the best way to develop the skills offered in this course, I’d do it. Unfortunately, everything about your academic training to this point has worked in the opposite direction; in our system, I tie a carrot (grade) to a stick and dangle it in front of you as you work. Sorry. I didn’t invent this system, but it’s where we work. On the bright side (perhaps), in my experience, it’s relatively rare for the grade not to reflect the effort of the student.

Extra credit opportunities **may** be offered throughout the semester, but they exist in order to enhance your engagement with the university and our material, not to explicitly improve a student’s grade (though, of course, they will improve your grade). What I’m saying here is, don’t ask me to devise extra extra credit opportunities to make up for missed or poor work.

**University Policies:**

**On Academic Integrity:** The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

**The Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services, 450-3613.

Students should familiarize themselves with all policies included in the Student Handbook, particularly the **Sexual Harassment Policy** and **Academic Policies**. You are responsible for acting in accordance with these university policies. If you have any questions about these policies and how they pertain to you, do not hesitate to ask me for clarification.

**Title IX disclosure**: If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to “student-on-student” or “employee-on-student”), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved.  Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation.  Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on those specific set of circumstances.  The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator.  For further information, please visit:  <https://uca.edu/titleix>.  *\*Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.*

**Emergency Procedures:** Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

**Course Texts:** *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925), *The Things They Carried* (O’Brien, 1990), *Suburbia* (Bogosian, 1994), Course Packet (handout).

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1:** **Welcome!**

Th 1/8: Logistics: I M U R … this is.

**Week 2:** **Film 101. Defining a genre and stocking our analytical toolbox**

\*M 1/12: Screening: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (Coens, 2002)

T 1/13: Mise-en-scene. *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* **Read:** Handout **\*Due:** SWA 1

Th 1/15: Cinematography. *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* **Read:** Handout

\*F 1/16: Screening: *Raging Bull* (1980, Scorsese)

**Week 3:** **Film 101. Toolbox-stocking, con’t**

T 1/20: Editing. *Raging Bull* **Read:** Handout

Th 1/22: Sound. *Raging Bull* **Read:** Handout \***Due:** SWA 2

**Week 4:** **Race (… and justice … and violence)**

T 1/27: **Read:** Poetry packet

Th 1/29: **Read:** Poetry packet \***Due:** SWA 3

**Week 5:** **Race (… and justice … and violence)**

\*M 2/2: Screening: *Do the Right Thing* (Lee, 1989)

T 2/3: **Read:** *Do the Right Thing*

Th 2/5: **Read:** *Do the Right Thing* **\*Due:** SWA 4

**Week 6:** **Race (… and justice … and violence)**

**\***M 2/9: Screening: *Django Unchained* (Tarantino, 2012)

T 2/10: *Django Unchained*

Th 2/12: *Django Unchained*

**Week 7: The American Dream (… and gender … and ethics)**

T 2/17: **Read:** *The Great Gatsby* \***Due:** SWA 5

Th 2/19: **Read:** *The Great Gatsby* \***Essay 1 due**

**Week 8: The American Dream (… and gender … and ethics)**

\*M 2/23: Screening: *The Wolf of Wall St.* (Scorsese, 2013)

T 2/24: *The Wolf of Wall St.*

Th 2/26: *The Wolf of Wall St.* **\*Due:** SWA 6

**Week 9: The American Dream (… and gender … and ethics)**

\*M 3/2: Screening: *Spring Breakers* (Korine, 2012)

T 3/3: *Spring Breakers*

Th 3/5: *Spring Breakers*

**Week 10:** **War**

T 3/10: **Read:** *The Things They Carried*

Th 3/12: **Read:** *The Things They Carried* **\*Due:** SWA 7

**Week 11:** **War**

\*M 3/16: Screening: *Glory* (Zwick, 1989)

T 3/17: **Read:** *Glory*

\*Th 3/19: **Read:** *Glory* \***Due:** Group project due (your film adaptation script)

**Week 12:** **Spring Break!**

**Week 13: War**

\*M 3/30: Screening: *The Hurt Locker* (Bigelow, 2008)

T 3/31: *The Hurt Locker*

Th 4/2: **No Class!** \***Due:** SWA 8

**Week 14: Youth (… and alienation)**

T 4/7: **Read:** *Suburbia*

Th 4/9: **Read:** *Suburbia* \***Due:** SWA 9

**Week 15. Youth (… and alienation)**

\*M 4/13: Screening: *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray, 1957)

T 4/14: *Rebel Without a Cause*

Th 4/16: *Rebel Without a Cause* **\*Due:** SWA 10

**Week 16. Youth (… and alienation)**

\*M 4/20: Screening: *Boyz n the Hood* (Singleton, 1991)

T 4/21: *Boyz n the Hood*

Th 4/23: *Boyz n the Hood*

**\*\*\*\*\*Final: Final Essay: Friday 5/1\*\*\*\*\***