ENGL 1355

Film, Literature, and Adaptation

An introduction to the profound act of adaptation.

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“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:**

We’ve all heard it before—most likely, we’ve even been the one to say it. Let me set the stage: the lights have just come up and you’re walking out of a screening of *The Hunger Games* … *Harry Potter* … *The Lord of the Rings* … *Pride and Prejudice* … *Divergent*, and the person next to you says, MEH. THE BOOK WAS BETTER. In a way, anybody who’s ever read a book and then seen a film version of that book is an instant expert on adaptation. Really, there’s nothing wrong with saying/thinking that the book was better. But there’s also nothing interesting about it. It’s about the same as saying broccoli rabe is better than kale or green is better than blue (which it is, by the way). This course will look closely at the act of textual adaptation to see what’s interesting/productive about it. Adaptation is a complex act, one that often gets oversimplified by the 4 words: THE BOOK WAS BETTER. As such, those words are forbidden in this class! Essentially, we will spend the semester inspecting, exploring, and analyzing what happens when a story gets retold. Salman Rushdie is right; storytelling is storytelling. But once you get into questions about form and how the story is told— into questions of what’s left in and what’s left out and why—things can get really interesting.

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

2. Learn to form interpretive readings of cultural works and support those interpretations with evidence and illustrations drawn from the text of 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.**

3. Begin to account for and interpret what happens to texts as they migrate from one medium (or cultural moment) to another, and beyond that, we will begin to analyze how the inevitable changes that occur during such adaptive migrations actually construct meaning. That is, by the end of the class (at least!), you will no longer merely mimic the masses and perpetually mouth THE BOOK WAS BETTER every time you see an adaptation. You will be able to develop more nuanced and interesting and constructive arguments and analyses of literature and film. And this new type of analysis will stem from an enhanced understanding of the ways that specific narratives are constructed and received (produced & consumed) by a culture.

**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. 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:** Call it a pet peeve, but cell phone interruptions drive me nuts—seriously, they give me facial tics. So please turn all cell phones off before class.

**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 (3/8) 25%

\*\*Final Essay (5/1) 40%

Group Project (4/10) 10%

SWAs 15%

Participation 10%

**\*\*You cannot pass the class without completing both essays**

**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.

**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.

**Class Schedule**

**Texts:** *True Grit*; *Frankenstein*; selected readings

**Week 1. Introductions: to one another, to Film, and to Adaptation.**

F 1/11. IMUR? THIS IS.

**Week 2. Film 101: O Brother, What Are the Elements of Movies?**

M 1/14. Read: Mise en scene (packet)

 Watch: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (Coens, 2000)

**\*\*Due:** SWA 1

W 1/16. Read: Editing

F 1/18. Read: Cinematography & Sound.

**Week 3. Stories in words: “Orchid Fever”**

M 1/21. MLK Day. No class.

W 1/23. Read: “Orchid Fever”

 **\*\*Due:** SWA 2.

F 1/25. “Orchid Fever” (Orleans)

**Week 4. Reading Adaptations. Analyzing stories in image/sound:**

M 1/28. Read: Leitch, “12 Fallacies” (handout)

Watch: *Adaptation.* (Jonze, 2004)

 **\*\*Due:** SWA 3

W 1/30. Discuss *Adaptation.* as an adaptation.

F 2/1. Discuss *Adaptation.* as an adaptation

**Week 5. Reading Charles Portis’s *True Grit.***

M 2/4.Read: *True Grit* (Portis) (11-111)

 **\*\*Due:** SWA 4

W 2/6.Read/Discuss: *True Grit* (Portis) (113-75)

F 2/8. Read/Discuss: *True Grit* (Portis) (177-224)

**Week 6. Adaptation/Remakes/Genre-play. Exhibiting *True Grit*.**

M 2/11. Watch: *True Grit* (Hathaway/Wayne, 1969)

 **\*\*Due:** SWA 5

W 2/13. *True Grit* (Hathaway/Wayne, 1969)

F 2/15. *True Grit* (Hathaway/Wayne, 1969)

**Week 7. Adaptation/Remakes/Genre-play. Coens**

M 2/18. Watch: *True Grit* (Coen Brothers, 2010)

 **\*\*Due:** SWA 6

W 2/20. *True Grit* (Coen Brothers, 2010)

F 2/22. Grit-for-all!!! So much *Grit*, so little time

**Week 8**. **Making a Monster**

M 2/25. Read: *Frankenstein* (Shelley, 1818)

W 2/27. Read: *Frankenstein*

F 3/1. Read: *Frankenstein*

**\*\*Due:** SWA 7

**Week 9.** **Stage Adaptation: It Lives!**

M 3/4. Read: *Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein* (Peake, 1823)

W 3/6. Read: *Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein*

F 3/8. Read: *Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein*

 **\*\*Due: Essay 1**

**Week 10. Film Adaptation: Re-animating the Creature**

M 3/11. Watch: *Edison Frankenstein* (1910) and *Frankenstein* (Whale, 1931)

W 3/13. *Frankenstein* (Whale, 1931)

F 3/15. *Frankenstein* (Whale, 1931)

 **\*\*Due:** SWA 8

**Week 11.** **Spring Break**

**Week 12. Adaptation as Expansion: Re-Creating the Creature**

 M 3/25. Watch: *The Bride of Frankenstein* (Whale, 1935)

 **\*\*Due:** SWA 9

 W 3/27. *The Bride of Frankenstein*

 F 3/29. *The Bride of Frankenstein*

**Week 13. Parodic Adaptation: The Creature as Punchline**

 M 4/1. Watch: *Young Frankenstein* (Brooks, 1974)

 \*\***Due:** SWA 10

W 4/3. *Young Frankenstein*

 F 4/5. *Young Frankenstein*

**Week 14. Faithful Adaptation?: Creature Romance**

 M 4/8. Watch: *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (Branagh, 1994)

 W 4/10. *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein*

 **\*\*Due: Group Project**

F 4/12. *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein*

**Week 15. Springboard Adaptation: Creature Variations**

M 4/15. Watch: *Ex Machina* (Garland, 2013)

 **\*\*Due:** SWA 11

W 4/17. *Ex Machina*

 F 4/19. *Ex Machina*

**Week 16. Your adaptations?**

 M 4/22. Play day (built in for wiggle room).

 W 4/24. Play day (built in for wiggle room).

**\*\*\*Final Essay Due: Wednesday 5/1**