

FMS 504: Film Theory and Analysis

Course and Faculty Information

Course Description: This course offers graduate students an advanced introduction to some of the central theories and analytic methodologies for studying film. We will begin with the assumption that film analysis requires careful attention to form--how filmmakers communicate through systems such as narrative structure, editing, mise-en-scene, and cinematography.

The first three units of this course will focus on analytic methodologies for film criticism that assume the link between representational form and meaning. Units four through seven will then apply such analytic tools to trace the representation of social identities in selected films.

Prerequisites: MAS American Media and Popular Culture students

Instructor: Aaron Baker

Email: Aaron.Baker@asu.edu

Office Hours: Email me and we can set up a time to talk.

Course Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze how films use formal and thematic patterns to tell stories and communicate meanings to the viewer.
2. Evaluate the attributes of high-quality, academic sources related to the critical analysis of film.
3. Formulate persuasive arguments about the analysis of a film or films through the application of a specific critical approach

Required Readings and Viewings

Readings will be assigned for each of the seven units in this course. There is one book to buy: Harry Benshoff's *Film and Television Analysis*(Routledge, 2015). ISBN: 978-0415674812

All the other assigned readings will be available in PDF format on the course website in the Modules.

Screenings: You are responsible for screening one film for each of the Modules 2-7. One assigned film, *Nuovomondo*, is not available to rent. It can be streamed from the ASU Library Reading Lists on the course Canvas site. Please view all the films carefully and take notes on how they relate to the topic of the unit in which they are shown.

Course Access

Your ASU courses can be accessed by both my.asu.edu and asu.instructure.com; bookmark both in the event that one site is down.

Computer Requirements

This is a fully online course; therefore, it requires a computer with internet access and the following technologies:

- Web browsers ([Chrome](#), [Mozilla Firefox](#), or [Safari](#))
- [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)(free)
- [Adobe Flash Player](#)(free)
- Webcam, microphone, headset/earbuds, and speaker
- Microsoft Office ([Microsoft 365 is free](#) for all currently-enrolled ASU students)
- Reliable broadband internet connection (DSL or cable) to stream videos.

Note: A smartphone, iPad, Chromebook, etc. will not be sufficient for completing your work in ASU Online courses. While you will be able to access course content with mobile devices, you must use a computer for all assignments, quizzes, and virtual labs.

Help

For technical support, use the Help icon in the black global navigation menu in your Canvas course or call the ASU Help Desk at 1+(855) 278-5080. Representatives are available to assist you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Student Success

To be successful:

- check the course daily
- read announcements
- read and respond to course email messages as needed
- complete assignments by the due dates specified
- communicate regularly with your instructor and peers
- create a study and/or assignment schedule to stay on track
- access [ASU Online Student Resources](#)

Grading

Your grade will be determined based on the following grading schema:

Grade Schema	
Grade	Percentage
A+	100% - 97%
A	<97-94%
A-	<94-90%
B+	<90-87%
B	<87-84%
B-	<84-80%
C+	<80-77%
C	<77-70%
D	<70-60%
E	<60%

Graded Work

Final grades will be computed based on the following work:

- Article Analysis (15%): Students will compose a short analysis comparing and contrasting two scholarly articles related to film. **A more detailed description of this assignment is found in Module 3.**
- Film Analysis Project (50%): Students will complete a film analysis project in two parts focusing on a topic of their choosing.
 - Part 1 (25%): Part 1 consists of a video or Powerpoint presentation with a VoiceThread audio narration (20%), and an annotated bibliography with at least four sources (5%) focusing on critical analysis of social identity in an individual film. **A more detailed description of this assignment is located in Module 5.**
 - Part 2 (25%): Part 2 is a written analysis communicating your argument about social identity in the film from your presentation. **A more detailed description of this assignment is located in Module 7.**
- Discussion Board Participation (35%): Students have the opportunity to engage with peers and the course topics on the discussion board throughout the session. In each of the seven discussions, the instructor will post a question. Start by posting a response to that question and then post a second time in dialogue with a classmate's post. Two posts are due for each of the seven discussions. Your comments should be three to four sentences in length, stated in complete sentences. You don't need any sources for your posts, but make sure your comments are clearly and persuasively stated. These posts are practice for the film analysis you'll do in your presentation and essay. **Your posts must be made by 10 a.m. on the day after the unit is assigned.**

Learning Tasks

This course is comprised of 7 Modules. Modules include:

- Lecture: Listen to the lecture for the module
- Reading: Read assigned chapters from the textbook or other articles
- Screening: Watch and study the assigned film
- Participate on the course's discussion board

Submitting Assignments

All assignments, unless otherwise announced, **MUST** be submitted to the designated area of Canvas. Do not submit an assignment via email.

Assignment due dates follow Arizona Standard time. Click the following link to access the [Time Converter](#) to ensure you account for the difference in Time Zones. Note: Arizona does not observe daylight savings time.

Grading Procedure

Grades reflect your performance on assignments and adherence to deadlines. Grades on assignments will be available within 72 hours of the due date in the Gradebook.

Late or Missed Assignments

Notify the instructor **BEFORE** an assignment is due if an urgent situation arises and you are unable to submit the assignment on time.

Follow the appropriate University policies to request an [accommodation for religious practices](#) or to accommodate a missed assignment [due to University-sanctioned activities](#).

Communicating With the Instructor

Community Forum

This course uses a discussion topic called "Community Forum" for general questions and comments about the course. Prior to posting a question or comment, check the syllabus, announcements, and existing posts to ensure it's not redundant. You are encouraged to respond to the questions of your classmates.

Email questions of a personal nature to your instructor. You can expect a response within 72 hours.

Email

ASU email is an [official means of communication](#) among students, faculty, and staff. Students are expected to read and act upon email in a timely fashion. Students bear the responsibility of missed messages and should check their ASU-assigned email regularly.

All instructor correspondence will be sent to your ASU email account.

ASU Online Course Policies

View the [ASU Online Course Policies](#).

Accessibility Statements

View the [Accessibility section](#) to review accessibility statements for common tools and resources used in ASU Online courses.

If any other tools are used in this course, links to the accessibility statements will be listed below this sentence.

Syllabus Disclaimer

The syllabus is a statement of intent and serves as an implicit agreement between the instructor and the student. Every effort will be made to avoid changing the course schedule but the possibility exists that unforeseen events will make syllabus changes necessary. Remember to check your ASU email and the course site often.

Course Units

Module 0 Welcome to FMS 504 Jan. 12

Reading and Viewing: Welcome to FMS 504 Page and Video

Assignments: Syllabus Quiz and Academic Integrity Agreement

Module/Unit 1 Film Analysis: Form and Content Jan. 17

Reading: “Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing” (Corrigan) pp. 38-86

Presentation: Film Form and Content: From Hollywood to Global Art Cinema

Class Discussion

Module/Unit 2: Film Genre Jan. 22

Reading: “Film and Television Genres” (Benshoff), pp. 83-93; “The Cinematic Seduction of Not a “Good Fella” (Haggins), pp. 442-458

Screening: *Goodfellas* (Scorsese, 1990)

Presentation: Film Genre: The Gangster Film and *Goodfellas*

Class Discussion

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Module/Unit 3: Film Authorship Jan. 27

Reading: “Authorship and the Auteur Theory” (Benshoff), pp. 63-82“

Screening: *Contagion* (Soderbergh, 2011)

Presentation: Film Authorship, The Films of Steven Soderbergh

Class Discussion

Article Analysis due Feb. 1 by 5 p.m. MST

Module/Unit 4: Gender and Film Feb. 6

Reading: “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (Mulvey), pp. 57-68.

“Feminist Approaches to Film and Television” (Benshoff), pp. 146-168

Screening: *The Piano* (Campion, 1993)

Presentation: Gender and Film

Class Discussion

Module/Unit 5: Race and Film Feb. 11

Reading: “The New Jim Crow” (Alexander), pp. 7-26; “Beyond Identity Politics” (Benshoff) pp. 244-268

Presentation: Race and Film

Screening: *13th* (DuVernay 2016)

Class Discussion

Video or PowerPoint and Audio Presentation and Annotated Bibliography due Feb. 16 by 5 p.m. MST

Module/Unit 6 Film and Immigration Feb. 21

Reading: Sections from

From Immigrants to Ethnics (Nelli), pp. 19-35

The Mirage of America (Alfano), pp 133-134, 142-150

Presentation: Screening Immigrants

Screening: *Nuovomondo* (Craiese, 2006) Available to stream from the ASU Library

Reading Lists on the course Canvas site. Use Chrome or Firefox browsers.

Class Discussion

Module/Unit 7: Film and Religion Feb. 26

Reading: *The History of Poland* (Biskupski) pp. 108-120

Interview with director of *Ida* Patel Pawlikowski

Presentation: Film and Religion

Screening: *Ida* (Pawlikowski, 2013)

Class Discussion

Essay Analysis due March 2 by 5 p.m. MST