ACM 255 Cinema and Digital Media
Spring, 2006

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Office Hours: By appointment (contact me by email, please)
Classroom: POST 126
Meeting Times: Tuesday/Thursday: 9:00-10:15

Course Description
ACM 255 will be an in-depth study of the process and art of filmmaking. In this class, we will watch, discuss, analyze, and write about films with a critical eye to understanding visual storytelling. We will be particularly concerned with the intentions and designs of a film’s key players: the writer, director, cinematographer, editor, sound designer, composer, to name but a few positions.

You will learn how to “read” and break down a film in the interests of becoming a skilled filmmaker, film viewer, and film critic.

In essence, this course is about three things: story, story, and story!

Please note: For those students interested in becoming majors in the ACM program, ACM 255 serves as the prerequisite to advanced courses. In order to qualify for the major, you must complete ACM 255 with a grade of “B” or higher.

Required Texts:
Understanding Movies, Gianetti, 10th edition
Handouts

Course Work:
- Readings in Understanding Movies should be completed by the dates indicated
- Screenings & Film Journals: In addition to the films we view in class, you will be required to watch eight additional films outside class which averages to one film every other week. The Wong Audiovisual Center of Sinclair Library has an extensive collection of outstanding films. You may check out videos/DVD’s from there or you may watch videos/DVD’s at the library. In either case, I want you to keep a journal – handwritten is fine – evaluating the films you watch, noting what you like or dislike, using film vocabulary and applying critical standards to discuss the films. We’ll discuss in class how to do these journals which should include also a film’s title, director, and year of production. Twice during the semester, I will collect and review your journals.
- Short quizzes: There will be 2-3 short quizzes throughout the term focusing on film vocabulary. I will give you advance notice about the dates of these quizzes.
- Midterm
• Group projects and in-class presentations – Guidelines will be handed out to you
• Final

**Attendance and Participation:** **PLEASE READ!**
Regular attendance and participation (completing work on time, coming to class prepared to contribute to discussion and learning) are critical to doing well in this course. Only two unexcused absences will be allowed. With a third unexcused absence and/or a pattern of late arrivals, your grade will be affected. “Below average” performance in attendance and on-time arrivals will result in a “below average” grade.

**Grading:**
- Quizzes 20
- Journal 15
- Mid-term 15
- Group projects 20
- Final 20
- Attendance/Participation 10

**Course Calendar:** (Subject to change)

**Jan. 10**
- Introduction to Course
- Elements of Visual Storytelling: Framing, composition, camera angles
- Begin Screening: *High Noon*, Fred Zinnemann (USA, 1952, 85 minutes)

**Jan. 12**
- Finish Screening *High Noon*
- Elements of Visual Storytelling: Shots, scenes, lighting

**Jan. 17**
- Mise-en-Scene
- Aspect ratio, classical composition, focus
- Begin screening: *Bicycle Thief*, Vittorio De Sica (Italy, 1948, 93 minutes)
- Outside reading: Giannetti, Chapter 1

**Jan. 19**
- Finish screening *Bicycle Thief*
- Traditions in Mise-en-scene
- Film journal writing

**Jan. 24**
- Cinematography
- Movement, shots, point of view
- Begin screening: *The Lady Vanishes*, Alfred Hitchcock (UK, 1938, 97 m)
- Outside reading: Giannetti, Chapters 2 & 3

**Jan. 26**
- Finish screening *The Lady Vanishes*
- Spaces, distances of the film image
Jan. 31  Editing
      The cut, shot transitions, changing pace
      Screen selections from: *Birth of a Nation*, D.W. Griffith (USA, 1915);
      *The Seven Samurai*, Akira Kurosawa (Japan, 1954, 206 min)
      Outside reading: Giannetti, Chapter 4

Feb. 2   Editing
      Montage, space and time in editing
      Screen selections from: *The Battleship Potemkin*, Sergei Eisenstein
      (Soviet Union, 1925, 66 min); *North by Northwest*, Alfred Hitchcock (USA, 1959, 136);
      *Goodfellas*, Martin Scorsese (USA, 1990, 145 minutes)

Feb. 7   QUIZ #1
      Sound
      Screen selections from: *Nashville*, Robert Altman (USA, 1975, 159 min);
      *Yidd in the Middle*, Marlene Booth (USA, 1999, 57 minutes)
      Synchronous, asynchronous, silent films, subtext, voice-over
      Outside reading: Giannetti, Chapter 5

Feb. 9   Music, Voice, Sound Effects
      Screen selections from: *The Conversation*, Francis Ford Coppola (USA, 1974, 113 minutes)
      Begin Screening: *Singin’ in the Rain*, Stanley Donen & Gene Kelly
      (USA, 1952, 103 minutes)

Feb. 14  JOURNAL #1
      Acting/Characters
      Screen selections from: *Tokyo Story*, Yasujiro Ozu (Japan, 1953, 136);
      *Casablanca*, Michael Curtiz (USA, 1942, 102 minutes)
      Outside reading: Giannetti, Chapters 6 & 7

Feb. 17  Directing
      The storyboard
      In class exercise in storyboarding

Feb. 21  Story/Writing
      Narratives, plots, stories
      Screen: *Rashomon*, Akira Kurosawa (Japan, 1950, 88 minutes)
      Outside reading: Giannetti, Chapters 8 & 9

Feb. 23  Points of View
      Analyzing Rashomon

Feb. 28  MID-TERM
Mar 2  Documentary/Historical  
    Screen: *4 Little Girls*, Spike Lee (USA, 1997)

Mar. 7  Documentary/Quest  
    Screen: *Sound and Fury*, Josh Aronson (USA, 2000, 80 minutes)

Mar. 9  Finish documentaries/Begin Animation

Mar. 14  JOURNAL #2  
    Animation & Gaming

Mar. 16  Genres
    Film Noir  
    Screen: *Fargo*, Coen Brothers (USA, 1996, 98 minutes)  
    Outside reading: Giannetti, Chapter 10

Mar. 21  Genre
    Action
    Screen: *Run, Lola, Run*, Tom Tykwer (Germany, 1998, 80 min)

Mar. 23  Discuss: *Run, Lola, Run*  
    Experimental Cinema  
    Giannetti, Chapter 11

March 27-April 2  Spring Break!

April 4  QUIZ #2  
    Film History  
    Clips from early films  
    Lumiere Brothers, Melies, *The Great Train Robbery*

April 6  Film History II  
    Silent Film: Chaplain, Buster Keaton

April 11  The Hollywood Studio System  
    Auteur Theory: Hitchcock, Capra, John Ford, Orson Welles  
    Screen selections that show auteur signature

April 13  Auteur Theory  
    American Independent Cinema  
    Screen selections from: Scorsese, Altman, John Sayles

April 18  Ideology & Propaganda  
    Screen: *Do the Right Thing*, Spike Lee (USA, 1989)
April 20  Finish screening: *Do the Right Thing*
Screen selections from: *Olympiad*, Leni Riefenstahl (Germany, 1936)

April 25  Story board group assignments
In-class work

April 27  In-class storyboard presentations

May 2    In-class storyboard presentations

May 11   FINAL EXAM