

## Syllabus – ENGL/HUMA 252



### ABOUT THE COURSE:

This course is designed to introduce the basic methods and concepts of cinema studies. It also requires us to deploy a range of analytical skills that may form the basis of further film study or encounters with various modes of visual media. By the end of this brief semester, you will:

- 1) be fluent in the basic vocabulary of film form,
- 2) recognize variations of mode and style within the dominant modes of cinematic production (narrative, documentary, and experimental), and
- 3) comprehend the relationship between formal analysis and questions of interpretation.

Lectures and viewings will provide a detailed introduction to the basic terms of film scholarship, and to some critical issues associated with particular modes of film production and criticism. The in-class screening of clips and films will supplement the introduction of these terms and ideas, while also allowing us to discuss as a class specific examples of major formal and theoretical gestures vital to a greater understanding of cinema as an art form.



### GRADING:

Attendance – 10%

## Quizzes - 90% (45% Each)

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### SYLLABUS / VIEWINGS AND LINKS:

#### Week One: Introduction & Mise-en-scene I

#### Week Two: Mise-en-sceneII

**Watch:** Basic Camera Shots / Close Ups / Angles #1 / Angles #2 / Blocking / Lighting #1 / Lighting #2 / Deep Focus #1 / Deep Focus #2

#### Terms:

**Aerial Shot** - A shot from above, usually made from a plane, helicopter, or crane.

**Aspect Ratio** - This term refers to the proportions of the frame (examples include 1.33:1, 4:3, 16:9, 1.85:1, 2.35:1).

**Back Lighting** - When the primary light emerges from behind the characters or objects in the frame.

**Below Lighting** - When the primary light emerges from below.

**Blocking** - The movement of characters, objects, and cameras through a set (or within the frame).

**Close up** - A certain feature, such as someone's head, takes up the whole frame.

**Crane Shot** - A shot using a crane. This kind of shot allows for the camera to be raised and lowered, as well as moved throughout the environment like a dolly.

**Compositional Stress** - When a character in a shot is on one side of the screen and looking toward the opposite side of the screen (across "negative space"). The character's eye-line evokes anticipation on the part of the viewer.

**Deep Focus (depth photography)** - Keeping images close by and far away in sharp focus simultaneously.

**Depth of Field** - The area within which objects are in focus; a large depth of field allows a great range of objects to be in focus simultaneously, while a shallow depth of field offers a very limited area in focus. Depth of field normally depends on how far "open" a lens is (a lens works much like an eye, with the pupil opening or contracting to control light). An "open" lens (for

example, f 1.4) creates a shallow depth of field while a "stopped down" (contracted) lens (for example f 16) creates a large depth of field.

**Deep Space Cinematography** - When more than one plane of the image is in focus.

**Director** - The person responsible for overseeing all aspects of the making of a film.

**Establishing Shot** - Generally an extreme long shot from a high or an extreme high angle, this kind of shot allows viewers to get a sense of the overall environment in which a scene or series of shots is to transpire. In other words, it provides a spatial relationship for a given scene.

**Extreme Close Up** - This kind of shot is so tight on the subject that only a detail of the subject, such as someone's eye (or eyes) is seen.

**Extreme Long Shot** - A framing in which the scale of the object shown is very small; a panoramic view of an exterior location photographed from a considerable distance, often as far as a quarter-mile away.

**Focus Pulling** - This technique manipulates the audience's attention within a shot through focus shifts among foreground, middle ground, and/or background planes.

**Frame** - A single image on the strip of film; the size and shape of the image on the screen when projected; the compositional unit of film design.

**Frontal Lighting** - When the lighting comes from in front of the character(s) or object(s) in the shot.

**Full Shot** - A shot of a subject that includes the entire body and a small portion of the environment.

**High-Angle Shot** - A shot taken from above a subject, creating a sense of "looking down" upon whatever is photographed.

**High Key Lighting** - This kind of lighting is bright. It is often used for Hollywood comedies or musicals.

**Implied Proximity** - The implied distance between the subject and the camera.

**Key Light** - The major source of illumination in a shot.

**Long Take** - An uninterrupted shot that lasts much longer than the conventional editing pace either of the film itself or films in general, usually lasting several minutes.

**Low-Angle Shot** - A shot taken from below a subject, creating a sense of "looking up to" whatever is photographed.

**Low Key Lighting** - This kind of lighting creates pronounced shadows and dramatic contrasts; it is frequently used in horror films and in film noir.

**Medium Shot** - A framing in which the scale of the object is of moderate size; a human figure seen from the waist up would fill most of the screen.

**Mise-En-Scene** - A French term originating in the theatre, it means, literally, "placement in the scene." For film, it has a broader meaning, and it refers to almost everything that goes into the composition of a shot, including the composition itself; framing, movement of the camera or characters/objects, lighting, set design, etc.

**Persistence of Vision** - The optical illusion that what you are seeing when watching a film is actual motion when, in reality, it is a series of still shots flickering past at 24 frames per second.

**Three Point Lighting** - This kind of lighting set-up consists of a key light, a fill light, and backlighting.

**Tilt Shot** - A shot taken by angling a stationary camera up (tilt-up) or down (tilt-down).

**Rule of Thirds** - One of the main "rules" of art and photographic composition, this "rule" stems from the theory that the human eye naturally gravitates to intersection points that occur when an image is split into thirds vertically and/or horizontally.

**Set** - This term refers to the actual construction/environment in which the actors are filmed. These are generally temporary environments built for the purpose of filming a scene or sequence.

**Side Lighting** - When the primary light source comes from the side.

**Top Lighting** - When the primary light source comes from above.

**Two Shot** - A shot of two people, usually from the waist up.

### **Week Three: Cinematography**

**Watch:** Shallow Focus / Rack Focus #1 / Rack Focus #2 / Dolly & Zoom #1 / Dolly & Zoom #2 / Top 20 Amazing Cinematic Techniques #1 / Top 20 Amazing Cinematic Techniques #2 / / / Dolly & Zoom #3 / Dolly & Zoom #4 / Canted Angles

#### **Terms:**

**Dolly Shot** - A moving shot taken from a dolly. A Dolly-In moves the camera toward the subject, while a Dolly-Out moves the camera away from the subject. A dolly shot creates a sense of movement through space by capturing changes in perspective.

**Dutch Angle/Canted Angle** - A shot where the camera is tilted off to one side so that the shot is composed with vertical lines at an angle to the side of the frame.

**Fast Motion** - (accelerated motion) Movements on the screen appearing more rapid than they would in actual life. For example, a man riding a bicycle will display legs pumping furiously while he flashes through city streets at the speed of a racing car. A filmmaker achieves fast motion by running film through his camera at a speed slower than the standard 24 frames per second; subsequent projection of 24 frames per second speeds up the action.

**Handheld Cinematography** - When the camera is physically held by the operator's ... er ... um ... hands.

**Pan** - A shot in which a stationary camera turns horizontally, revealing new areas.

**Rack Focus** - The act of changing focus on the lens during the shot.

**Shallow Focus** - In this kind of shot, the figure or figures in the foreground are in sharp focus, while the objects in the middle and back ground are not in focus.

**Slow Motion** - Movements on the screen appearing slower than they would in actual life. For example, a diver will seem to float to the water gently rather than fall at the speed dictated by gravity. A filmmaker achieves slow motion by running film through his camera at a speed faster than the standard 24 frames per second; subsequent projection at 24 frames per second slows down the action.

**Static Shot** - in tis kind of shot, the camera is absolutely still.

**Steadicam** - A mechanism for steadying a hand-held camera, consisting of a shock-absorbing arm to which the camera is attached and a harness worn by the camera operator.

**Subjective Camera/POV shot** - Shots simulating what a character actually sees; audience, character, and camera all "see" the same thing. Much subjective camera involves distortion, indicating abnormal mental states. Shots suggesting how a viewer should respond are also called "subjective" (for example, a high-angle shot used to make a boy look small and helpless).

**Swish Pan** - A quick pan from one position to another caused by spinning the camera on its horizontal axis and resulting in a blurring of details between the two points. Sometimes a swish pan is used as a transition by creating a blur and then ending the blur at an action in an entirely different place or time.

**Take** - A section of a motion picture that is filmed without stopping.

**Time-Lapse Cinematography** - A method of filming where frames are shot at a very slow rate, allowing action to take place between frames and giving the appearance of the action taking place much faster in the finished product; often done for nature filming (the blooming of a flower, the movement of clouds, etc.), it allows the viewer to witness the event compressed from real time into a few seconds (e.g. one frame shot every 30 seconds over 24 hours of real time would equal two minutes of film time).

**Tracking Shot/Dolly Shot (traveling shot, trucking shot)** - Any shot using a mobile camera that follows (or moves toward or away from) the subject by moving on tracks or by being mounted on a vehicle.

**Zoom** - a single shot taken with a lens that has a variable focal length, thereby permitting the cinematographer to change the distance between the camera and the object being filmed, and rapidly move from a wide-angle shot to a telephoto shot in one continuous movement; this camera technique makes an object in the frame appear larger; movement towards a subject to magnify it is known as **zoom in** or **forward zoom**, or reversed to reduce its size is known as **zoom out/back** or **backward zoom**

## **Week Four: Cinematography (cont.)**

## **Week Five: Editing I**

**Watch:** Montage #1 / Montage #2 / The Kuleshov Effect / 180 Degree Rule / 180 Degree Rule #2 / Montage #1 / Montage #2 / The Kuleshov Effect /

### **Terms:**

**180 Degree Rule/System** - A basic guideline regarding the on-screen spatial relationship between a character and another character or object within a scene. An imaginary line called the axis of action connects the characters, and by keeping the camera on one side of the axis for every shot in the scene, the first character will always be frame right of the second character, who is then always frame left of the first.

**Continuity** - The narrative growth of a film created through a combination of visuals and sound (resembling the "story" in print literature).

**Continuity Editing** - A system of cutting used to maintain continuous and clear narrative action.

**Cross-Cutting (parallel editing)** - A method of editing in which the point of view (p.o.v.) switches alternately from events at one location to those of another related action. The action is usually simultaneous and used to create a dynamic tension as in the chase scene in D.W. Griffith's *A Girl and Her Trust*. (See Intercutting for the distinction between cuts.)

**Cut** - An individual strip of film consisting of a single shot; the separation of two pieces of action as a "transition" (used when one says "cut from the shot of the boy to the shot of the girl"); a verb meaning to join shots together in the editing process; or an order to end a take ("cut!").

**Director** - The person responsible for overseeing all aspects of the making of a film.

**Editing (continuity editing, narrative montage)** - The process of splicing individual shots together into a complete film. Editing (as opposed to Montage) puts shots together to create a smoothly flowing narrative in an order making obvious sense in terms of time and place.

**Editor (cutter)** - The person responsible for assembling the various visual and auidial components of a film into a coherent and effective whole.

**Elliptical Editing** - With this style of editing, events are seemingly omitted or elided. These events may be important or unimportant.

**Eye-line Match** - A cut between two shots that creates the illusion of the character in the first shot looking at an object or character in the second shot.

**The Kuleshov Effect** - Concerning emotional resonance, the Kuleshov Effect rests on the theory of montage and the effect that film editing has on evoking emotions from a viewer. It is not simply the content of a scene or the expression on the character's face, but the way in which images are combined together that can induce a feeling in the audience.

**Match Cut** - A cut intended to blend two shots together unobtrusively (opposed to a Jump Cut).

**Match on Action** - An editing technique for continuity editing in which images before and after cuts are linked by a kinetic gesture within the frame; it portrays a continuous sense of the same action rather than matching two separate things.

## **Week Six: Editing II**

**Watch:** / 180 Degree Rule / 180 Degree Rule #2 / Eisenstein's Five "Methods" of Montage / Hitchcock on Editing / Jump Cuts / Shot - Reverse Shot / Parallel Editing / Elliptical Editing

**Fade** - A transitional device in which either an image gradually dims until the viewer sees only a black screen (Fade-Out) or an image slowly emerges from a black screen to a clear and bright picture (Fade-In). A fade provides a strong break in continuity, usually setting off sequences.

**Graphic Match** - This is achieved when two successive shots reveal a strong similarity in compositional elements like color and shape.

**Intertitles/Title cards** - a piece of filmed, printed text edited into the midst of (i.e. inter-) the photographed action, at various points, generally to convey character dialogue, or descriptive narrative material related to, but not necessarily covered by, the material photographed. Intertitles were a mainstay of silent films once they became of sufficient length and detail to necessitate dialogue and/or narration to make sense of the enacted or documented events.

**Iris** - A technique used to show an image in only one small round area of the screen. An Iris-Out begins as a pinpoint and then moves outward to reveal the full scene, while an Iris-In moves inward from all sides to leave only a small image on the screen. An iris can be either a transitional device (using the image held as a point of transition) or a way of focusing attention on a specific part of a scene without reducing the scene in size.

**Jump Cut** - An elliptical cut that appears to be an interruption of a single shot. It occurs within a scene rather than between scenes, to condense a shot.

**Mask** - A device placed in front of a lens to reduce the horizontal or vertical size of the frame or to create a particular shape (for example, periscope eyepiece, binoculars, or gun-sight).

**Dissolve (lap dissolve)** - A method of making a transition from one shot to another by briefly superimposing one image upon another and then allowing the first image to disappear. A dissolve is a stronger form of transition than a cut and indicates a distinct separation in action. Dolly A platform on wheels serving as a camera mount capable-of movement in any direction.

**Wipe** - A transition in which one image seemingly pushes another image off of the screen

**Producer** - The person who is responsible for all of the business aspects of making and releasing a film.

### **Week Seven: Midterm & Sound**

**Watch: Sound Design #1 / Sound Design #2 / Diegetic vs. Nondiegetic Sound / Early Experiment with Sound / Narration / Sound Bridge / Breaking the Fourth Wall / Film Form**

### **Week Eight: Sound (cont.)**

### **Week Nine: Film Form**

### **Week Ten: Genre**

- Genre #1
- Genre #2
- Genre #3
- Genre #4

### **Week Eleven: Analysis**

### **Week Twelve: Analysis (cont.) and Review for Final**

### **Week Thirteen: Final Exam (Cumulative)**

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**TERMS - QUIZ 2 (all of the terms above, plus these):**

**Dialogue** - Conversations between characters in a film.

**Diegetic Sound** - Sounds emerging from within the world of the film.

**Direct Address** - When a character or characters in a motion picture gaze directly into the camera and, in essence, speak directly to the viewer.

**Distribution** - The process of marketing a film and supplying copies to exhibition venues.

**Dubbing** - The process of matching voice with lip movements of an actor on the screen; dubbing also refers to any aspect of adding or combining sounds to create a film's final soundtrack.

**Exhibition** - The process of screening a film.

**Explicit Meaning** - The apparent surface meaning or point of the plot.

**Fidelity** - Faithfulness to a source.

**Flashback** - A segment of film that breaks normal chronological order by shifting directly to time past. Flashback may be subjective (showing the thoughts and memory of a character) or objective (returning to earlier events to show their relationship to the present).

**Flash Forward** - A segment of film that breaks normal chronological order by shifting directly to a future time. Flash forward, like flashback, may be subjective (showing precognition or fears of what might happen) or objective (suggesting what will eventually happen and thus setting up relationships for an audience to perceive).

**Form** - The overall system of relationships among parts of a film.

**Foley Artist** - This is the job title for the person who creates sound effects for a film. These effects are created and recorded during sessions with a sound engineer.

**Frame** - A single image on the strip of film; the size and shape of the image on the screen when projected; the compositional unit of film design.

**Genre** - A loose way of categorizing a work of art.

**Genre Conventions** - The specific settings, roles, events, and values that define individual genres and their sub-genres.

**Ideology** - A relatively coherent system of values, beliefs, or ideas shared by some social group and often taken for granted as natural or inherently true.

**Implicit Meaning** - Moving beyond the immediately obvious meaning of a narrative, event, or

character, this kind of meaning is uncovered through interpretation.

**Loudness** - Volume

**Motif** - An element in a film that is repeated in a significant way.

**Motivation** - The justification given in the film for the presence of an object, image, or action. This may be an appeal to the viewer's knowledge of the real world, to genre conventions, to narrative causality, or to a stylistic pattern within the film.

**Musical Theme** - Part of the film's overall score, these aural arrangements within a film most frequently accompany certain characters or locations.

**Narrative** - The story.

**Narrative Digression** - This term refers to a passage or section of a film's narrative that departs from the central theme or plot.

**Narrative Form** - A type of filmic organization in which the parts relate to one another through a series of causally related events taking place in time and space.

**Narration** - The act or process of telling a story or describing what happens.

**Non-diegetic Sound** - Sound whose source is neither visible on screen nor has been implied to be present based upon the narrative's action. Examples include third person voice-over narration, score music, and overtly artificial sound effects added for dramatic or comic effect. Non-diegetic sound is sourced outside of the story space.

**Non-synchronous Sound** - Sound which is variably indigenous to the action but not precisely synchronized with the action. Also known as asynchronous sound.

**Overlapping Dialogue** - When two or more conversations are presented simultaneously, with the characters speaking over one another and, thus, competing for the spectator's attention.

**Pitch** - A sound's perceived "highness" or "lowness."

**Plot** - In narrative cinema, this term refers to the film's actual presentation of the story.

**Production** - The process of actually shooting a film.

**Score** - The musical component of a movie's soundtrack, usually composed specifically for the film by a composer.

**Soundtrack** - Every sound that we hear in a film.

**Sound Bridge** - When the scene begins with the carry-over sound from the previous scene.

**Sound Effect** - This term refers to sound recorded and presented to make a specific storytelling or creative point *without* the use of dialogue or music; they provide an overall sense of the environment depicted within the frame.

**Sound Mixing/Sound Mixer** - The process, during a film's post-production stage, in which the collection of recorded sounds are combined into one or more channels to form a portion of the film's sound track.

**Story** - In narrative cinema, all of the events that we see and hear, plus all of those that we infer or assume to have occurred, arranged in chronological order and according to a logic based upon causality.

**Storyboard** - A series of sketches (resembling a cartoon strip) showing potential ways various shots might be filmed.

**Style** - The repeated use of film techniques characteristic of a single director, group of directors, film, or group of films.

**Synchronous Sound** - Sound coordinated with and derived from a film's visuals; when the sound in a film exactly matches the film's action, as when dialogue corresponds to lip movements.

**Systemic Meaning** - This kind of meaning locates the film within a larger cultural, political, or aesthetic trend within a culture.

**Timbre** - A sound's harmonic resonance.

**Theme** - A broad concept addressed implicitly within a film's narrative.

**Voice-Over** - Any spoken language not seeming to come from images on the screen.