

ENG 304: CRITICAL THEORY OF CINEMA - Spring 2016

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Critical theory is a way of rigorously questioning how films generate meaning in the world—and then questioning the questions. ENG 304 will survey several theoretical schools of thought—structuralism, historicism, gender/queer theory, postcolonialism, affect theory—in relation to **the spectator**. Many film histories center on the *auteur*, the director, the studio; but without spectators, the film doesn't do any work at all. And what it means to be "a spectator" isn't self-explanatory. The category of the spectator has changed radically since the birth of cinema in the late 19th century—even before then, spectators had been trained in ways of looking at visual images. The contours of class, gender, race, and sexuality that make up an audience; the consumption and marketing of films as commodities; conscious and unconscious expectations for spectator behavior and assumptions about film genre; psychological and ideological relationships to the film image—all of these continue to evolve, as new media and global markets fragment our genre categories and disperse them across new markets. These dynamics, and many others, complicate the category of The Spectator, in ways that film theory will help us explore.

COURSE MATERIALS

Braudy/Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism*, 7th ed. (ISBN 978-0195365627). Also on 2-hour library reserve. Textbook readings are required whether you buy the book or not. If you use the library copy, you must photocopy the required readings and bring them to class.

Other readings posted to D2L, as PDF files. **Print these out** and keep them in a binder/folder.

Films: Most films are viewable online (for a small fee); they will also be on library reserve.

Sergei Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin* (watch online: <http://bit.ly/potemkin-amz>)

Alfred Hitchcock, *Vertigo* (watch online: <http://bit.ly/Vertigo-amz>)

Claire Denis, *Beau Travail* (on reserve—Region 2 DVD; may need to be played on a computer).

Rémi Bezançon, *Zarafa* (watch online: <http://bit.ly/zarafa-amz>)

Dario Argento, *Deep Red* (screened in class)

Short films/clips linked to D2L

Keep laptops, tablets, and phones silent and invisible during class. If your phone appears or rings, you will be marked absent. *Readings on D2L must be printed out and brought with you to class.*

Email/Office Hours:

- (1) You are welcome to email me with questions or concerns. Please check the syllabus (or assignment sheet, etc.) before emailing with policy questions, and treat emails as professional communications (<http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>). I do not review drafts or discuss grades over email, but I am more than happy to do so in person. On that note:
- (2) Office hours will be held by appointment; you are cordially invited to speak with me about any aspect of the class. The more notice you give me, the better, but I will gladly make time to meet.

REQUIRED COURSEWORK (AND GRADE WEIGHTS):

Participation (15%): Be here on time, having done the reading, prepared with ideas, questions, and examples, *ready to talk, write, and collaborate*. Reading quizzes are fair game. Your overall class participation will be graded A/C/F/zero, based on your preparation, engagement, and attendance. If you miss 3-4 classes, your participation grade will be *at best* a C (likely lower). If you miss 5+ classes, you will lose all participation credit for the entire quarter. I do not distinguish between excused

and unexcused absences. As in the workforce, either you're here or you're not. Also, if you do not have the readings with you, or if you are noticeably late, you will be marked absent.

It is not necessary to notify me if you miss class; contact a classmate for notes, assignments, etc.

Journal (30%): For each day of class, you should write two journal entries: one before class (a.k.a. "'Before' Entries") and one after ("'After' Entries"). That means four journal entries per week. Each entry should run roughly 150-200 words. *This journal is not a personal diary; it is an academic exercise designed to synthesize the material and generate discussion ideas.*

"Before" Entries: Before each class, write 150-200 words reflecting on what you've read and beginning to generate ideas, questions, and arguments for class discussion. *Solve problems by writing through them, citing specific examples from the text/film.* Questions to consider:

- What questions does the essay ask about film? What problem(s) is it trying to solve? What psychological, technological, ideological, or other ways of looking at film are emphasized?
- How does the reading speak to, connect with, or conflict with other readings we've done? Might it redefine a term or repurpose a concept we've seen already?
- When watching a film: which of our theory readings might apply, and how?
- What questions about the reading do you have? Be specific: identify concepts, terms, or strains of the argument, and places in the essay that can help with figuring them out.

"After" Entries: *After each class, write 150-200 words synthesizing what was discussed, offering follow-up ideas, following through on the "before" entry, "what I wish I'd said in class," etc. In my experience, "after" entries often provide the best fodder for essay topics.*

Submission/Grading: You will submit the journal to me three times, via D2L Dropbox (MS Word files only, please). Each journal submission will be graded on an A/C/F basis. Again, "C" means "satisfactory." ***Late journals will not be accepted.***

"Off Days": Each student may take four days off (both "before" and "after") from journaling, no questions asked, no excuses needed. That's four days for the whole quarter—use them wisely. *A day off from journaling does not exempt you from reading and participating in class.*

Midterm Essay Exam (25%). Further details TBA.

Take-Home: Intended to help you prepare for the in-class exam. No need to thank me.

In-Class: Short essay responses applying our theoretical readings and films. You will be permitted **one single-sided, typed page of notes** (10-to-12-point Times New Roman, 1" margins on all sides, printed on paper). You will submit this page along with your exam. You may use this page for class notes; quotations from the readings; materials from the take-home exam; etc. (If you use outside information, cite where you got it.)

**** MAKE-UP EXAMS:** It is your responsibility to make all necessary work, family, and transportation arrangements to be here for the exam. **I do not give make-up exams** except in severe, documented medical emergencies. No documentation, no make-up, no exceptions.

Final Paper (30%): A researched essay of 1700-2000 words (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman, MLA format). *You are welcome to use ideas from your journal entries in developing a paper topic.* You have several options: you might use one of our course readings or theories to discuss a film from beyond our syllabus; you might compare and contrast different ways in which (postcolonial,

feminist, queer, whatever) critics have approached a film from or beyond our syllabus; you might research one of the many critical theories that our class didn't cover. Cite 4+ scholarly journal or book sources (beyond readings assigned for class) and use them to develop a focused thesis. With your final essay I will also ask for a 2-3-page self-reflection essay (details TBA).

POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Late Work: NOT ACCEPTED. Five minutes late = late = 0% grade. Rare exceptions may be made for genuine emergencies. *Missed buses, computer crashes, work schedules, etc. do not qualify as emergencies.*

Attendance: See "Participation," pp.1-2.

Civility: I do not permit personal attacks or hate speech on any basis, including race, ethnicity, national origin, sex or gender, sexual/affectional orientation, age, religion, or disability.

Disability Accommodations: If you have a disability or condition requiring accommodation, please contact the Disability Resource Center (www.drc.pdx.edu) *as soon as possible*. Accommodations must be arranged in advance of when they are needed; I cannot apply them retroactively. *Exam accommodations must be arranged at least two weeks prior to the exam date.*

Writing Center: Use it. Cramer Hall 188; www.writingcenter.pdx.edu; 503.725.3570.

Academic Misconduct: I am doggedly serious about academic misconduct, including but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, forgery, and multiple submission. *Any incident of academic misconduct, no matter how "accidental" or "minor," will result in a grade of zero and a report to the Dean of Students.* Review the Student Code of Conduct (bit.ly/PSUcode), which applies to all work for ENG 304, and contact me before submitting the assignment if you're unsure about what you're doing.

Uncertainty about the rules is not an excuse for violating them.

*** **Avoiding Plagiarism:** You must acknowledge the use of anyone else's words or ideas, *whether paraphrased or quoted*. When paraphrasing someone's ideas, cite the source; when borrowing someone's language, even a short "catchy" phrase, put it in "quotation marks" and cite the page number. For further information, ask me, and consult PSU's Writing Center (bit.ly/PSUWritingPlag). *Again, it is your responsibility to comply with the rules.*

ASSESSMENT

Grading Standards:

- A: *excellent* work that surpasses expectations for intellectual sophistication, analytical dexterity, organizational development, and expressive elegance.
- B: *good* work that meets expectations with merit in the above categories, demonstrating polished, thoughtful college-level writing and good command of the material.
- C: *satisfactory* work that meets expectations in the above categories.
- D: *passing* work that fulfills the minimum expectations for the assignment, with significant deficiencies in argument, analysis, organization, clarity, or mechanics.
- F: work that fails to satisfy expectations at a passable level.

Grades are based solely on the quality of work completed. I do not grade on effort, good intentions, personal extracurriculars, etc. I grade the work, not the person.

The Digits: Assignments are graded on a 100-point scale and weighted as indicated above. Your final average will be graded as follows (rounded to nearest number; I stick to these numbers firmly):

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| | 87-89 = B+ | 77-79 = C+ | 67-69 = D+ | ≤ 59 = F |
| 93-100 = A | 83-86 = B | 73-76 = C | 63-66 = D | |
| 90-92 = A- | 80-82 = B- | 70-72 = C- | 60-62 = D- | |

Note: if you are taking the class P/NP, you must earn at least a C- to pass.

Finally: **Incompletes will not be given** except in *extreme*, documented medical emergencies.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

FTC = *Film Theory and Criticism* (Braudy/Cohen, 7th ed.). Again, if you use the library reserve copy, you must photocopy the required readings and bring them to class with you.

Readings marked (x) are on D2L; print them out and bring them to class.

READINGS AND VIEWINGS ARE DUE BEFORE CLASS ON THE DAYS INDICATED.

Week One: Introductions

- Mon., Mar. 28 Introductions; excerpts (distributed in class).
- Wed., Mar. 30 In FTC: read editors' note (1-6); Crary, "Modernizing Vision" (206-215); André Bazin, "Evolution and the Language of Cinema" (41-53).

Week Two: The M.O. in Montage, The Id in Ideology

- Mon., Apr. 4 Watch *Battleship Potemkin*; read Eisenstein, from *Film Form* (FTC 13-40).
- Wed., Apr. 6 In FTC: editors' note (141-145); Baudry, "The Apparatus" (171-188); Bazin, "Myth of Total Cinema" (163-166).

Week Three: "Y? Because We Own You!"

- Mon., Apr. 11 Read FTC editors' note (659-664); Benjamin, "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (FTC 665-685); Adorno, "The Culture Industry" (x)
- Wed., Apr. 13 M. Hansen, "Of Mice and Ducks" (x). Viewing: Mickey Mouse cartoons (D2L).

Fri., Apr. 15 First journal submission (before/after entries through 4/13) due by 11:59 p.m. Submit to D2L dropbox as a Word doc. NO LATE WORK ACCEPTED.

Week Four: Beam me up, Scottie: Visual Pleasure in *Vertigo*

- Mon., Apr. 18 Watch *Vertigo*. Read Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (FTC 723-735).
- Wed., Apr. 20 *Vertigo*, cont. Tania Modleski, "Femininity by Design" (x)

Week Five: Astonishing Attractions

- Mon., Apr. 25 Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment" (FTC); Musser, from *The Emergence of Cinema* (x). Films (very short; linked on D2L): *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show*; *Electrocuting an Elephant*; *L'Arrivée d'un Train*. **Take-home exam posted.**
- Wed., Apr. 27 Mary Ann Doane, from *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* (on D2L).

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| <p>Fri., May 1 Take-home exam due by 11:59 p.m. LATE EXAMS WILL NOT RECEIVE CREDIT.</p> |
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Week Six: Good Work! Midterm Exam and *Beau Travail*

Mon., May 2 In class: **Midterm Exam**. Remember your page of notes.

Wed., May 4 *Beau Travail* (on library reserve).

Week Seven: Postcolonial Sexuality

Mon., May 9 Discuss *Beau Travail*; also read M. Yoshimoto, "The Difficulty of Being Radical" (FTC 865-876).

Wed., May 11 Read Ann Kaplan (x). Optional (if you feel like a challenge): Leo Bersani, "Father Knows Best" (x). Cont. discussing *Beau Travail*.

Fri., May 13 **Second journal submission (before/after entries through 5/11) due by 11:59p.m. Email as a Word doc. NO LATE SUBMISSIONS ACCEPTED.**

Week Eight: Animating Others

Mon., May 16 Before class, watch *Zarafa*; read FTC editors' note (777-784); Rosen, from *Change Mummified* (FTC 814-823).

Wed., May 18 Whissel, "Tales of Upward Mobility" (FTC 834-852)

Week Nine: Bodies that Splatter

Mon., May 23 Screen *Deep Red* in class. Before class, read Modleski, "The Terror of Pleasure" (FTC 617-626), Linda Williams, "Film Bodies" (FTC 602-616).

Wed., May 25 Discuss *Deep Red*. Read Brinkema, from *The Forms of the Affects* (x).

Week Ten: Leaving the Critical Theory Theatre

Mon., May 30 ~~Brinkema, cont. Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theatre" (x).~~ **MEMORIAL DAY (NO CLASS)**

Wed., June 1 Wrap-ups. Before/after journal entries should synthesize your final thoughts about the course.

Fri., June 3 **Third journal submission, due 11:59 p.m. NO LATE JOURNALS ACCEPTED.**

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| Final Paper due by Fri., June 10, 11:59 p.m., with self-reflection essay. NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED. |
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