ENGLISH 110 SYLLABUS
INTRODUCTION TO FILM

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Office Hours: TR: 11 am-12 p.m.; Wed 12-2 p.m.
Class time & Place: TR: 1:00 p.m. Takena 205
CRN 24521
Web Page http://cf.linnbenton.edu/artcom/english/milletl/web.cfm?pgID=54
Prerequisites: WR 121. It is strongly recommended that you take WR 121 before you take this or any other Literature class. If you have not, see me.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Hello, and welcome to all of you. The goal of this class is to help you enjoy, interpret, and reflect on film. It will encompass film and its the techniques of both its making and its interpretation, but the class will be partly about humanity, psychology, and philosophy. And it’s a class about history and politics—about what it means to be a woman or a man living in society and what film might attempt to show about that experience.

During the course, let’s explore statements such as this one: “A great poet writes that poetry has never killed anyone, but every day someone dies because poetry has not been read.” Can the same be said about film? Here are some other questions I’d like to look at with you: Is film helpful and relevant, or is it just a form of entertainment? How can we interpret a film so that we don’t spoil our enjoyment of it through “over-analyzing” it? How can we see the issues in our own lives reflected in the films we read, and, through an historical perspective, gain wisdom on how to live? Here’s another question I’d like to explore with you: “What matters most—the director’s intent, or our response?”

To begin, let’s start to think about issues that are relevant to you. While good films have something to say and can entertain us with their message—and with the skill with which they are assembled—an important question remains: are they just for enjoyment? Or do they address the same issues that we as men and women struggle with—that indeed humankind has always struggled with—: love, power, identity, ambition, spirituality, conformity, individual identity, fame, money, death, failure, politics, fear? What issues are important to you?

We’ll watch, discuss, and write about film, and come to understand its elements through becoming familiar its vocabulary—words such as genre, film noir, epic, lighting, and formalism.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: When you’ve successfully completed ENG 110, you should be able to:
• Recognize how film helps in understanding the human condition
• Interpret film through critical evaluation
COURSE THEMES AND CONCEPTS: To demonstrate our learning outcomes, you’ll need to understand these Themes and Concepts:

- Theme
- Director’s intent
- Audience
- The use of devices such as lighting, editing, theme, allusion, and mood in film
- The role of structure or design in crafting the film
- Genre and form

SKILLS: To reach our learning outcomes, you’ll need to master the following skills:

- “Reading” film critically
- Analyzing film using the above themes and concepts in writing responses
- Researching sources and the use of MLA standards
- Working collaboratively
- Connecting film to our own lives and sharing these connections in discussions and writing
- Understanding structure and meaning of film
- Appreciating form, process, and genre

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS: You will have the opportunity to demonstrate our learning outcomes by accomplishing the following tasks:

1. **Summary/Responses**: These 1½ page chapter overviews will be due at the first class each week on the assigned chapter for that week. The template is available on the web site. They will be collected and graded on a credit/no credit basis. Half credit for late work.

2. **Scene Writes**: (50 points, 2@25): These interactive creative exercises will illustrate the connection between the visual image and creative imagination. It will help us see that story is not in the image alone—it is in our minds. These exercises will also help us focus on the scene in film—on composition, significance and camera angles and lighting.

3. **Scene Analysis**: (50 points, 2@25) We will write two two-page Scene Analyses of films to be announced.

4. **Film Reviews**: (50 points, 2 @ 25) Review four films of your choice, using appropriate terminology and evaluative techniques as outlined in our text, and be ready to present these reviews in class, with clips when possible.

5. **Capstone Project & Presentations or a Major Essay**: (200 points) Write a short screenplay, shoot a film, compare elements in two films, show components of a genre, etc. Choose a topic you are interested in and would like to share with the rest of us. You may do this on your own or with a small group—whichever you prefer. Your presentation may include graphics, charts, music, theater, and film. It should take about 20 minutes total. Begin this early and stay involved. Or you may write a major essay on the topics listed in the appendix below. You’ll find tips in the appendix on what to look for and how to structure your essay. Essays will be due at the beginning of week 10. As with the capstone projects, begin early and stay with it.

Please read the chapters and watch the film/videos before class and examine their meaning. Watch the films closely and intelligently and have something to say about them. Do mark the pages in
your texts. **Allow at least two hours of outside work for each hour of class** and be sure to have all assignments done before class. Your grade will reflect your preparedness. Please word-process and double-space your work, and include your name, the class time, the instructor’s name, and the assignment title and type at the top left of the first page of all tests and assignments.

**ATTENDANCE:** It’s important that you attend all the classes. *Every class will entail points towards your grade*. Most of the work will be in-class writes and discussion (class participation)—and you’ll be graded on this. The revision process occurring in class is crucial to developing your skills in writing, and your team members will depend on you. Also, material is often covered in class that is not in your texts.

**CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE:** Sharing opinions is a personal act that demands honesty, focus, and openness. To help each other in this process, it’s important that an attitude of civility, a habit of positive suggestions, and a posture of support be the rule.

**Resources:**
- See pages 18-19 in the General Catalogue for a list of campus resources. The Writing Desk is an excellent place to get professional help with your essays.

**Grades:**

- A—90-100
- B—80-89
- C—70-79
- D—60-69

A = You perform consistent and excellent work on time. You come to class having read the material actively and thoughtfully. Your writing makes insightful connection between the material and the issues involved.

B = You show consistent work, but you may not have always understood the material and your writing might not express clarity all the time. Minor errors impede the writing.

C = Also means consistent work, but you have occasionally struggled with the reading and your writing shows recurring errors. You missed an occasional assignment.

D = You fall behind, miss an assignment, and attempt to turn in work late. You attend class irregularly and do not contribute to class or group work.

F = You complete less than 2/3rds of the work. Most students fail because they stop trying or don’t seek help before it’s too late.

Y = Means you complete so little work (less than 25%) that there is no basis for a grade.

**NOTE:** I urge you to submit your essays electronically. E-mail them to me at terrancemillet1@comcast.net as attached documents in Microsoft WORD format only and in Arial 12 font. Electronic submissions are due by midnight on the due dates. You will get them back sooner than written work (which is also due earlier, in class), and have the opportunity to get more feedback on them. Electronic submissions must be attached files that are named with your last name, the class days, and the assignment. For example: SmithTRwr121essay#1
Plagiarism Statement:
Using someone else’s work as your own or using information or ideas without proper citations (which is called plagiarism) can lead to your failing the assignment of the class. Bibliographies (called Works Cited) AND in-text citation are required whenever you use outside sources, including Internet sources.

Disability Statement:
Students who have emergency medical information that the instructor should know of, or who might need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, or students with documented disabilities who have special needs, should make an appointment with the instructor no later than the first week of the term. If additional assistance is required, the student should contact LBCC’s Office of Disabilities at 917-4789.

Waitlist Policy:
Students who are registered but not present for the first class, unless they have given the instructor prior notice, will be dropped from the class and their place assigned to students on the waitlist.

Late Work Policy:
Late work will not be accepted unless critical circumstances justify an exception.
Tentative Schedule
(Subject to revision, with notice)

Overview: Each chapter will entail in-class discussion of the topics as they relate to films most of us have seen. Be ready to talk about the films you’ve enjoyed and what made them worthwhile for you in terms of the chapter themes. We should inspire one another with these talks, and instill the desire to watch and appreciate these same films.

Here is the list of films you will need to check out, watch, and be ready to discuss over the course. The LBCC library has most of these, as does DVD World in Corvallis (and Philomath). Try the Public Library and OSU Library as well. (Please use DVD World as your commercial source. You will want to watch entire films, especially the foreign ones, and other commercial outlets edit some DVD’s for content. Is this ethical? It’s a good topic for consideration).

1. Shane, or High Noon, or Outland; and the Matrix
2. Red; White; Blue
3. Richard III (Ian McClellan); check the play for screenplay.
4. King Lear; Ran
5. Les Miserables (French); Les Miserables (U.S.)
6. Solaris (Russian, 1976); Solaris (U.S. 2002)
7. Smoke Signals
8. And any of your favorites covered in your film reviews.

Week 1: Chapter 1: Photography
T Introductions and course overview
R Warm-up writing exercise: writing a short scene from a picture. We’ll collaborate on this and implement filmic components such as lighting, camera shots, dialogue, plot direction, etc.

Week 2: Chapter 1 & Chapter 2: Mise en Scene
T Summary/Response due for BOTH chapters
R Quiz on terms from chapters.

Week 3: Chapters 3, 4, 5: Movement; Editing; Sound
T Summary/Response due
R Scene Analysis # 1 s due: opening scene from Serendipty

Week 4: Chapter 6: Acting
T Summary/Response due
R Scene Analysis # 2 is due: opening scene from The Seventh Seal.

Week 5: Chapter 7: Drama
T Summary/Response due
R Film Review #1 is due. We discuss your reviews from the list above.

Week 6: Chapter 8–Story; Chapter 9–Writing
T Summary/Response due
R Film Review #2 is due. We discuss more of your reviews.
Week 7: Chapter 10–Ideology; Chapter 11–Theory.
T  • Scene Write #1 due
R  NO CLASS THURSDAY

Week 8: Chapter 12: Synthesis: Citizen Kane
T  • Summary/Response due
   Scene write #2 due
R  Capstone project presentations

Week 9:
T  Capstone project presentations
   NO CLASS THURSDAY

Week 10:
T  ESSAY OPTION: Essay due
   Capstone project presentations
R  Capstone project presentations
APPENDIX

I
Essay Topics
Should you choose to write a major essay (5-7 pages) instead of a capstone film project, say something intelligent, insightful and profound about one of the following topics:

1. The difference (discrepancy?) between the treatments of the topic in the 1976 Russian version of Solaris and the American 2002 version with George Clooney. Take a look at what these differences say about technique, socio-political values, cultural values, intelligence, etc. Is the best sci-fi a vehicle for interior landscapes? Can this be said of most good film?
2. The difference between the treatments of the topic in the French version of Les Miserables and the U.S. version with Leam Neeson. Take a look at what these differences say about technique, socio-political values, cultural values, intelligence, etc.
3. An exploration of lighting, intent, mood, technique, etc. comparing the three French films Red, White, and Blue.
4. The development of the western through Shane, High Noon, Outland, and The Matrix.
5. The social/cultural insights revealed by contrasting film such as Smoke Signals and the generic “Cowboy” film of the 1940-1960’s.
6. A comparison of the films King Lear (English) and Ran (Japanese).
7. Or between a traditional Richard III and the version with Ian McClellan. What does the modern film say about politics that might be missed in the traditional performances?

II
Tips for Scene analysis: in depth comparison between two treatments (high noon and matrix shoot-out scenes for instance).

III
Tips for Film Reviews
- Try to see the film twice: once for the plot and emotional effects.
- After the first viewing, reflect on the film’s purpose and theme. Is the focus on its plot, characters, emotional mood, or does it convey an idea? In other words, what statement does the film make about the subject of the film? Consider the film’s level of ambition: does it just aim to entertain or be a serious work of filmatic art?
- During the second viewing, focus on the filmmaker’s art. What techniques are used? For what purpose? How effective are they? How effectively do the parts fit together to accomplish the purpose?

PART A.
In a paragraph,
- Put the film in the most appropriate genre or type
- Give the set up for the plot, enough to interest the reader but not spoil the viewing.
- Give an indication of your thesis (opinion) about the entire film or some aspect of it.

PART B.
Choose one of the following approaches as a basis for a review.

TECHNICAL APPROACH: Discuss the technical devices that are important to the overall impact of the film.
1. What is the technical quality of the film overall?
2. What filmmaking techniques are used, and what effects do they create? Use specific examples.
3. What are the strongest technical points, and what are the weakest?

THE DIRECTORIAL APPROACH: Discuss the creativity and style of the auteur of the film, its director.
1. How would you describe the style of this director based on this film and other films by him/her?
2. How do the various elements of the film reflect the director’s artistic philosophy or life philosophy?
3. How is this film similar and/or different from the director’s other films?
4. Does the film reflect a new direction for this director? If so, what?

**THE GENRE APPROACH:** This is the approach you will use with the genre films (combat, western, screwball comedy, and film noir).
1. In what ways does this film fit into the criteria associated with this genre? Add examples.
2. What are the variations on the standard formula in this film? Are these variations enough to make the film unique and interesting?
3. What values and beliefs are reflected in the film? Give examples of how these play out in this film. Are these beliefs still relevant?

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH:**
1. Do any of the characters possess universal qualities? If so, what qualities present themselves?
2. What aspect of human nature does the film help us understand?
3. Does the hero reflect the archetypal pattern of the hero’s quest or struggle to overcome adversity? Is the quest successful?
4. Examine the relationship between characters. What problems are explored? What insights are revealed about human relationships through the film?

**THE SOCIOLOGICAL/POLITICAL APPROACH:**
1. From what social class does the main character come? How is this class portrayed? How does this impact the film?
2. How do members of different social classes interact? Use an example? What does this say to you?
3. What seems to be important to the characters?
4. Does the film seem to support a traditional value system or does it question the traditional view?

**FOCUS ON THE ACTOR**
1. How well suited is the actor to this role? How powerful is this performance in light of other work of this actor?
2. How is it similar or different to other roles played by this actor?
3. What new aspect of the actor is revealed for the first time in this film? Or is it a repeat of the type of role that this actor has played before?

**OVERALL APPROACH:**
1. How powerful is the star’s performance?
2. How does that film reflect this particular director?
3. How does the film work as an example of this genre?
4. What is the theme of the film? How important or creatively expressed is the theme?
5. Is the film emotionally effective? In what way?