



THA-135: INTRODUCTION TO FILM

Effective Term

Fall 2026

BOT Approval Date

05/15/2025

Discipline

THA - Theater Arts

Course Number

135

Course Title

Introduction to Film

Short Title

Introduction to Film

Credit Status (CB 04)

D - Credit - Degree applicable

Units**Lecture Units**

3.00

Total Units

3.00

Hours**Lecture Contact Hours**

48-54

Out of Class Hours Lecture

96-108

Total Contact Hours

48 - 54

Total Out of Class Hours

96 - 108

Total Student Learning Hours

144 - 162

Distance Education

No

Catalog Description

This course introduces film aesthetics and theory which focuses on the art, technology, and business of filmmaking. Elements of film production such as narrative structures, mise-en-scene, cinematography, performance, editing, and sound are explored for the purpose of demonstrating how artistic and technical choices create meaning. Analysis of both narrative and non-narrative filmic texts are explored to develop the students' perception, appreciation and analytic skills in film studies. Hollywood models of marketing and distribution, as well as independent film making approaches are studied.

Codes

TOP Code (CB 03)

0612.00 - Film Studies (including combined film/video)

CIP Code

50.0601 - Film/Cinema/Video Studies.

Repeatability Code

No

Grading Option

Letter grade OR P/NP

Minimum Qualifications

Minimum Qualifications	And/Or
Film Studies (Masters Required)	Or
Multimedia	Or
Drama/Theater Arts (Masters Required)	End

GE Information

Check GE Types Requested

AA/AS C - Humanities

Cal-GETC Areas

Approved Cal-GETC Area

AREA-3B

Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives

Learning Objective
1. Analyze the relationship of art, technology, and business in the process and product of filmmaking.
2. Analyze and identify specific elements of film production, such as mise-en-scene, cinematographic properties, performance, and sound.
3. Demonstrate an ability to identify and discuss elements of screenplay structures and narrative techniques, in relation to specific filmic texts.
4. Illustrate and identify the central role of post-production processes and the art of editing and sound design.
5. Differentiate filmic texts using critical categories of genre and auteur theories.
6. Analyze a specific scene and/or film through the exploration of creative and technical choices to understand social and cultural themes and impact.
7. Analyze and identify patterns of movie marketing and distribution in Hollywood, independent, and global markets.
8. Demonstrate understanding of movie business and how creative and technical choices convey meaning through project-based learning.
9. Explore the history of gender, racial/ethnic, and LGBT representation in American cinema, and the impact of expanded technologies, globalization, and transnational cinema on representation.

Learning Outcome Information

Course Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome

1. The student will analyze the elements of film form, including cinematography, editing, sounds, etc.
2. The student will understand the elements of narrative structure and form of film.
3. The student will identify how the elements of film create meaning and reveal larger historical and social contexts.
4. The student will investigate filmic literature from ethnically diverse voices.

Content

Course Lecture Content

1. Course overview and expectations
2. Looking at Movies – Meaning and Film Literacy
 - a. Reading Cinema
 - i. Explicit vs. Implicit Meaning
 - ii. Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle
 - b. Movies as societal and cultural mirrors - reflecting social dynamics, stereotypes etc. regarding race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, etc.
 - c. Movies as time capsule
 - d. Individual lens - meaning and interpretation is determined by elements of identity and lived experience
3. Brief history of Cinema
 - a. Early Cinema Innovations
 - i. Early moving image devices
 1. Magic Lantern and Zoetrope
 2. Eadweard Muybridge
 - a. Series photography
 - b. Zoopraxiscope
 3. Lumiere Brothers
 - a. Cinématographé Actualities
 - b. First Theatrical, commercial screenings
 - c. Early efforts toward cinema business and globalization
 4. (Thomas) Edison Company
 - a. Kinetograph and Kinetoscope films
 - b. Early efforts toward cinema business and globalization
 5. Georges Méliès
 - a. Start of cinema as entertainment and storytelling
 - b. Innovations in genre, special effects, and editing
 6. Alice Guy Blaché
 - a. First female film director and (eventually) studio head
 - b. Start of cinema as entertainment and storytelling
 - c. Innovations in genre, narrative, editing, and sound
 - b. American Cinema History
 - i. Move to Hollywood
 - ii. Studio Era
 1. Star System
 2. Production Code
 3. Vertical Integration – The Paramount decision
 4. Heterogeneity and lack of diversity
 - a. Notable exceptions – Anna May Wong, Sessue Hayakawa, Ramon Novarro, Dolores Del Rio, Hattie McDaniel
 5. End of the Production Code
 - iii. Movie Brats
 - iv. Independent Cinema Era

1. Creative Control
2. Diverse Voices and Underrepresented Stories - broader attention brought to diverse filmmakers and films examples: Spike Lee, Robert Rodriguez, Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*, *Smoke Signals*, *Boys Don't Cry*, *Stand and Deliver*, *The Joy Luck Club*, etc.).
4. Business of Movies
 - a. Phases of Movie Business
 - i. Production – Funding/Budgeting
 1. Independent vs. studio
 2. Remakes vs reboot vs redevelopment
 - ii. Distribution
 1. Marketing
 2. Distribution decisions
 3. Movie rating system
 4. Film festivals
 - iii. Exhibition
 1. Theatrical
 2. Streaming
 - b. Globalization
 - i. Importance/Impact of Global Markets
 1. Impacts on Style, Content, ratings, and representation
 2. Distribution models
 3. Diaspora Cinema - expansion of representation to stories made for/by/about underrepresented diaspora communities
5. Pre-Production Phase
 - a. Role of Producer
 - b. Role of Director
 - i. Auteur Theory
6. Types of Films
 - a. Experimental Cinema
 - b. Documentary
 - c. Narrative Cinema
 - i. Key Genres and their Conventions
7. Narrative Elements
 - a. Role of Screenwriter
 - b. Types of Narrators
 - i. 1st and 3rd person
 - ii. Direct address
 - iii. Voice-over
 - c. Exposition
 - d. Types of Narration
 - i. Restricted vs. unrestricted
 - ii. Omniscient
 - e. Narrative Time Relationships
 - i. Summary and stretch time
 - f. Characters
 - g. Three-Act Structure
8. Mise-en-Scene
 - a. Role of Production Designer
 - b. Elements of Mise-en-Scene
 - c. Design and Composition
 - d. Setting
 - i. Soundstages vs. on-location
 - ii. Set design
 - e. Props
 - f. Actor appearance (hair/make-up, costumes)
 - g. Color Theory
9. Performance

- a. Casting
- b. Types of Roles
- c. Method Acting
- d. Elements of Performance Analysis
- 10. Cinematography
 - a. Role of the Cinematographer
 - b. Composition and Frame
 - i. Shot types
 - ii. Rule of thirds
 - c. Lighting
 - i. German Expressionism
 - d. Camera Movement
- 11. Editing
 - a. Role of the editor
 - b. Evolution of editing
 - i. Soviet Montage
 - c. Four Editing Relationships
 - d. Editing and Narrative Time
 - e. Editing and Cinematography
 - i. 180 degree rule
 - f. Techniques and transitions
- 12. Sound
 - a. Role of Sound Designers
 - b. Types/Uses of Sound
 - c. Perceptions of Sound
 - d. Music
 - i. Composers
 - ii. Score vs. Soundtrack
 - e. Sound Mixing vs. Sound Editing
 - f. Diegetic vs. Non-diegetic sound

Methods of Instruction

Method

In-class Exercises

Integration

Film texts will be screened, followed by individual student analysis (written journals), larger group discussion, and potential small group discussions of how specific artistic and technical choices create meaning. These exercises will be used to hone student's analytical and critical thinking skills

Method

Film/video Viewing and Discussion

Integration

In-class screenings followed by large group discussions and potential small group discussions of meanings derived from artistic and technical choices will provide instruction on film analysis, methods of rhetorical persuasion, and strengthen student's critical thinking skills

Film clips/stills and screenings will be selected with diversity and inclusion in mind - reflecting both on-screen and behind the scenes diversity. When discussing roles in film production, attention should be paid toward highlight contributions of women, people of color, and LGBTIA+ creatives.

Method

Lecture

Integration

Instructor-led lectures will instruct students on the key points of the chapter and the elements of film form in question in order to provide a basis to build from for individual student analysis.

When discussing roles in film production, attention should be paid toward highlight contributions of women, people of color, and LGBTIA+ creatives. For examples, The Film History Module may discuss early film contributions from women (Example: Alice Guy Blaché), as well as discuss the lack of representation and presence of racism and stereotypes in early and studio era cinema which limited access for people of color, highlighting notable exceptions (Bill Robinson, Hattie McDaniel, Anna May Wong, Sessue Hayakawa, Dolores Del Rio, Ramon Novarro, etc.). Further exploration of American film history may discuss the rise of independent cinema as place for underrepresented voices and stories; attention should be paid to note significant films and filmmakers (examples: Spike Lee, Robert Rodriguez, Julie Dash's Daughters of the Dust, Smoke Signals, Boys Don't Cry, Stand and Deliver, The Joy Luck Club, etc.). In discussing the business elements of the industry, lecture may explore issues of globalization and its impact on cinema. Students may be asked to complete a review of domestic and global box office numbers to explore the kinds of films (and their elements of film form and representation) that are most successful in the global market. Exploration of globalization will also include discussing diaspora cinema and expanding diversity and representations in Hollywood cinema aimed at increasing revenue and access to global audiences.

Method

Projects

Integration

Students will complete a summative project to demonstrate their understanding of the key elements of film business and how artistic and technical choices convey meaning. The project provides additional opportunities for instruction on key business practices in the film industry, including pitching/pitch decks, budgets, comparables, seeking return on investment, marketing and distribution, and key audience demographics.

For this project students are encouraged to craft a film concept -through choices of story, casting, etc. - which mirrors the world they live in, their reality, and their community.

Methods of Evaluation**Method**

Class Work

Integration

Film journals conducted in class and in-class exercises will be assessed on student's engagement with the materials, understanding of how artistic and technical choices convey meaning, and demonstration of critical thinking and writing skills.

Method

Projects

Integration

Students will choose a film from a list provided by the Instructor to pitch for redevelopment. Students will examine the business aspects of the original film, make key business decisions for their redevelopment, and create a written proposal about the project's financial viability and audience appeal. Throughout the semester, students will create a pitch deck which discusses key elements of genre, narrative, mise-en-scene, casting, cinematography, and sound. Students will create a written or video pitch to accompany their pitch deck discussing the project. Project goal: For students to demonstrate their understanding of the key elements of film business and how artistic and technical choices convey meaning. Project Assessment: How well the student demonstrates understanding and application of key concepts, including narrative structure, film business, and how artistic and technical elements (lighting, cinematography, sound, mise-en-scene, etc) are used to convey specific meanings.

Method

Exams/Tests

Integration

In-class quizzes and examinations will test student's understanding of textbook readings and lecture materials. Midterm and Final exam will may also include clip review and analysis sections. Students will be assessed on their demonstration of understanding regarding how specific elements of film form convey meaning, as well as the demonstration of their analytical skills.

Method

Homework

Integration

Students may be asked to complete a shot list and sequence analysis of a brief film sequence. Students will be assessed on their ability to recognize specific filmic techniques and correct use of class vocabulary terms. The sequence analysis essay will be assessed on the student's analytical skills and the ability to discuss how these artistic and technical choices convey meaning

Method

Homework

Integration

Students may be asked to review box office figures for US domestic and international box offices for recent years, and analyze how globalization impacts the types and styles of films produced. Students will be assessed on their analytical and critical thinking skills

Method

Homework

Integration

In relation to an in-class screening, Students may be asked to write a 450 word essay addressing how choices of mise-en-scene and/or sound reflect on-screen representation of culture and/or identity.

Possible screenings/prompts:

- How do the music choices in a film like Coco or Black Panther reflect the onscreen cultural representation?
- How do the sound design/editing choices in films like A Quiet Place or Sound of Metal specifically convey the perspective of deaf or hard of hearing characters?

read two articles (at least one scholarly, the second may be a trade article or interview) about a notable filmmaker or studio executive who is committed to expanding representation in front of and behind the camera.

Students will be assessed on their presentation of ideas and analytical skills which engage with issues of representation related to diversity and inclusion.

Assignments**Assignment Type**

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

In Class Film Analysis Journals: Based on the film screened, write 150-250 words regarding how the specific artistic and technical choices of cinematography, editing, sound, performance, etc. are used to convey meaning. Be sure to use specific details and examples, as well as terms learned in the reading and lecture to support your analysis.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Over the course of the semester you will be asked to complete a pitch deck, pitching a redevelopment of a older film. You will choose a film from a list provided by the Instructor and identify how you might change the narrative and artistic elements of the new for a contemporary audience. You should consider adjusting the story and casting to reflect the world you live in, and create a film that reflects yourself and the people in your community. You'll need to examine the business aspects of the original film, make key business decisions for your redevelopment, and create a written proposal about the project's financial viability and audience appeal. Throughout the semester, you will create a pitch deck (slide presentation) which discusses key elements of genre, narrative, mise-en-scene, casting, cinematography, and sound. At the end of the semester, you will create a written or video pitch to accompany you pitch deck which discusses the project, pitching it to potential investors. The goal of this project is to demonstrate your understanding of the key elements of film business and how artistic and technical choices convey meaning.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Based on a screening of a brief film sequence - you will be asked to complete a shot list breakdown and scene analysis. As you watch the sequence - make note of number of shots, the framing and camera movement in the shots, and editing techniques and transitions between shots. Write a 300-500 word essay which discusses how the choices of editing and cinematography convey meaning.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Review the box office figures for US domestic and international box offices for recent years on BoxOfficeMojo.com, and write 300 words analyzing how globalization impacts the types and styles of films produced.



Assignment Type

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

In relation to an in-class screening, write a 450 word essay addressing how choices of mise-en-scene and/or sound reflect on-screen representation of culture and/or identity.

Possible screenings/prompts:

- How do the music choices in a film like Coco or Black Panther reflect the onscreen cultural representation?
- How do the sound design/editing choices in films like A Quiet Place or Sound of Metal specifically convey the perspective of deaf or hard of hearing characters?

Assignment Type

Reading

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Read the following article and write a 450 word post which discusses how the concept of Cinema of Attractions might be applied to contemporary blockbusters.

Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde." The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded, edited by Wanda Strauven, Amsterdam University Press, 2006, pp. 381–88. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n09s.27>. Accessed 9 Jan. 2025.

Course Materials**Textbooks**

Monahan, Dave, and Richard Meran Barsam. 2025. Looking at Movies : An Introduction to Film. 8th edition. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Bordwell, David, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith. 2017. Film Art : An Introduction. Eleventh edition. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.

Class Size Information**Class Size**

40

Class Size Category

A - Lecture/discussion 40

Diversity and Inclusion

Course Design and Materials: Course will incorporate diverse perspectives, authors, and examples that reflect a variety of cultures, identities, and lived experiences. Instructional materials will be reviewed regularly to ensure representation, inclusivity, and alignment with equity-minded practices across disciplines.

Inclusive Learning Environment: Instructors will establish classroom norms and policies that promote respect, civil discourse, and belonging in both online and face-to-face classes. Clear expectations for communication and engagement will support a learning space where all students feel valued and heard.

Accessible Instruction: Course content will be delivered using accessible design. Materials will follow accessibility guidelines within the CMS, including captioned media, readable document formats, and multiple means of engagement to support diverse learning.

Equitable Teaching Practices: Instructors will use transparent and grading criteria, varied assessment methods, and timely feedback to promote fairness and student success. Opportunities for revision, reflection, and multiple demonstrations of learning may be incorporated when appropriate to the discipline.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogies: Instructional strategies will encourage critical thinking about diverse perspectives and systems of power relevant to the course content. Faculty will foster opportunities for students to connect course material to real-world contexts.

Ongoing Reflection and Improvement: Faculty will engage in continuous professional development related to IDEAA principles and reflect on course practices using metacognition to identify opportunities for increased equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Explain how diversity and inclusion(e.g., gender, culture/race, sexuality, etc.) is infused into the course.

Film clips/stills and screenings will be selected with diversity and inclusion in mind - reflecting both on-screen and behind the scenes diversity. When discussing roles in film production, attention should be paid toward highlight contributions of women, people of color, and LGBTIA+ creatives. The Film History Module will discuss early film contributions from women (Example: Alice Guy Blaché), as well as discuss the lack of representation and presence of racism and stereotypes in early and studio era cinema which limited access for people of color, highlighting notable exceptions (Bill Robinson, Hattie McDaniel, Anna May Wong, Sessue Hayakawa, Dolores Del Rio, Ramon Novarro, etc.). Further exploration of American film history will discuss the rise of independent cinema as place for underrepresented voices and stories; attention should be paid to note significant films and filmmakers (examples: Spike Lee, Robert Rodriguez, Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*, *Smoke Signals*, *Boys Don't Cry*, *Stand and Deliver*, *The Joy Luck Club*, etc.). Students may be asked to do a director/studio executive study on a notable industry insider whose work is focused on expanding representation in Hollywood. For this assignment students may be asked to engage with how representation is or is not present enough in Hollywood media. In discussing the business elements of the industry, the course will explore issues of globalization and its impact on cinema. Students may be asked to complete a review of domestic and global box office numbers to explore the kinds of films (and their elements of film form and representation) that are most successful in the global market. Exploration of globalization will also include discussing diaspora cinema and expanding diversity and representations in Hollywood cinema aimed at increasing revenue and access to global audiences. Students may be asked to complete a summative project proposing a film redevelopment, for this project students are encouraged to craft a film concept that mirrors the world they live in, their reality, and their community.

Describe how assignments, instruction, evaluation, course content, and interactions are contextualized for diverse learners promoting an equitable course.

Short, in-class journal exercises where students are asked to analyze how meaning is conveyed through the elements of film form are intended to provide voice and opportunity for critical engagement for those uncomfortable speaking in class or contributing to in-class discussions. Project-based learning via a proposed film redevelopment is intended for students to demonstrate their mastery of the concepts in a visual and creative format, while also exploring elements of representation. Students may be asked to do a director/studio executive study on a notable industry insider whose work is focused on expanding representation in Hollywood, this will allow students to engage with issues of representation through individual research and reflection. Exams feature multiple modalities - multiple choice, image identification, short answer, and critical analysis to best assess student knowledge.

Interactions

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-student interaction.

Students will participate in in-class discussions of film screenings to encourage students to strengthen critical thinking skills, demonstrate the diversity of interpretation through individual and intersectional lenses. Students might also be asked to engage in small group close-reading discussions or small group brainstorm for group projects to foster community, strengthen critical thinking skills, build conceptual knowledge and foster comfort with group interaction.

Explain how the course will incorporate instructor-to-student interaction.

The instructor will offer lectures on course concepts, close reading and film analysis, and the history and socio-historical impact of the film industry. The instructor will participate in class discussions, asking students to apply close reading skills and critical analysis,

clarify concepts, pose questions, explore socio-historical contexts, and/or encourage students to make connections between course content and both their personal viewing practices and larger social and global issues. The instructor will design course assignments which are aimed at allowing students to demonstrate mastery of the subject in a wide array of modalities. Instructor may opt to include ADA accessible embedded video instructions on assignment pages, and additional multimedia examples which support a multitude of learning styles.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-content interaction.

To learn filmic terms and concepts, analytical approaches, and critical writing strategies student will have access to accessible assigned readings from the textbook, in-person slide deck and clip/still driven lectures, lecture slides on CMS, and CMS resource pages with additional embedded or linked multimedia content (film clips, interviews, explanatory featurettes, etc.). Students will be asked to do close readings of film content screened in class, and may be asked to explore specific sequences in greater depth through sequence analysis and shot list assignments.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-self interaction (metacognitive).

This course explores how artistic and technical choices create meaning in cinema, and emphasizes that meaning and interpretations are subjective, and may be impacted by a viewer's identity and lived experience. Students are encouraged to engage with elements of identity and intersectionality while completing close readings of in-class film screenings, and explore how topics might resonate with them based on identity and lived experience. With these issues in mind, students are encouraged to consider the intention and impact of artistic and technical choices, as well as the rhetorical tools used to create reactions, and to keep in mind that all media is constructed with particular intentions and viewpoints in mind. A strong focus is placed on critical and analytical skills, as they have important application for students' lives beyond the classroom and future media consumption.

Key: 2869