

Film Culture
Cinema 180.301
Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Donovan
Film Culture Program Director: Ekin Pinar
Film Culture Associated Faculty: Lance Wahlert
Film Culture Associated Graduate Student: Emily LaDue
Film Culture Managers: Jennifer Preys, Ann Molin, Michael Molisani

Description

Designed for the participants of Gregory College House's Film Culture residential program, this course provides a flexible, immersive cinema studies experience, intended to introduce students to a wide range of films and to provide practice both speaking and writing about the art form. There are a number of weekly screening series (generally Sunday through Thursday, with some weekend events); the majority of these screenings are followed by moderated discussions. The screenings/discussions, which take place evenings in the Gregory College House cinema on the first floor of Van Pelt Manor, serve as the coursework for the class; there is no regular weekly meeting time, but rather a quota of screening attendance.

To fully engage with contemporary cinema, there are also a minimum of six excursions per semester to area theatres to see and analyze contemporary releases; some past trips have included "12 Years a Slave," "The Social Network," "The Artist," "Black Swan," "Gravity," "Hugo," "Argo," "Drive," "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," "Amour," "Foxcatcher," "Lincoln," "The Skin I Live In," "Gone Girl," "Interstellar," "The Descendants," "Holy Motors," "Life of Pi," "Inside Llewyn Davis," "The White Ribbon," "The Hunger Games" and "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire," "A Separation," "Blue is the Warmest Color," "Zero Dark Thirty," "The Hurt Locker," "The Grand Budapest Hotel," "The King's Speech," "Dallas Buyers Club" and many more. These trips are announced in advance on the listserve; most take place on weekend afternoons, so having weekend afternoons free over the course of the semester is a must. Generally, the House will cover transportation costs as well as half the ticket price; we will also supply food for the discussions, which take place in the Van Pelt Library once we get back.

Note that Cinema 180 is a half-credit per semester course; participants may do a second semester for the full credit, though this is not required. Non-residents need permission to participate.

Attendance Requirements

The requirements for credit participation include:

1. Attendance at a minimum of ten (10) in-House screenings followed by moderated discussion. *Active participation in discussion is mandatory.* Signup sheets are provided at each discussion. Note that there will be at least 50 for-credit discussions from which to choose.
2. At least three of those films must be drawn from a subset of cinematic classics

3. Attendance on a minimum of three (3) film excursions, *including active participation in discussion*. There will be at least 6 trips, so you need to find time for half, including *at least one of the first three*.

Assignments

Credit requirements include:

1. An “anatomy of a scene” presentation on a scene and film of your choosing from our semester schedule. This is close reading of a scene that touches on both technical attributes and thematic significance. Presentations take place in the final weeks of the semester, with a choice of several nights. **Enrolled students must attend a scene reading discussion moderated by a member of the Gregory senior staff before preparing their presentation.**
2. A capstone assignment, of one of four varieties:
 1. A 4-page review of one of the films on our semester schedule (**but not the same film you analyzed in your presentation**)
 2. A 3-5 page critical analysis (**see above**)
 3. An original screenplay excerpt (10 pages minimum) inspired by one of our screening series themes
 4. An original short film (2-10 min) inspired by one of our screening series themes

More details on these requirements will be provided in advance.

Guidelines for participation

Simply signing the attendance sheet is not enough to get full credit for screenings. Our expectations include:

- Being *on-time* for the start of the film and remaining until the conclusion of the discussion.
- **Giving your full attention: no texting, surfing, chatting (whether out loud or online), sleeping or working on assignments for other classes. You cannot leave a screening to take a phone call and expect to receive credit.**
- Speaking up: *taking part in the discussions, not just observing.* **We should never have to pry comments out of enrolled students; you should watch the films at full intellectual engagement and be prepared to discuss what you find most interesting, intriguing, perplexing or moving.**

Communications

Semester schedules will be handed out at the introductory meeting in the Film Lounge during the first week of classes. The schedule will also be posted on canvas and the FCP website: http://gregory.house.upenn.edu/film_culture

In addition, there is a facebook group for the program where we regularly add trailers for our screenings, info on our trips, and any changes in schedule or other relevant notes: <http://www.facebook.com/filmcultureprogram>.

Lastly, there is a listserv designated for both credit and non-credit program participants, used to announce time changes, additions, and especially trips, for which we usually require RSVPs. If you are not receiving emails, please contact Leah Donnella (leahdonn@upenn.edu) to make sure you have been added to the listserv.

Contact Information

Ekin Pinar: epinar@sas.upenn.edu

Christopher Donovan: cdonovan@upenn.edu

If you need to discuss the course, both Chris and Ekin are generally available within the House; you can request an appointment, or attend Chris's office hours (in 111A Van Pelt), which will be posted within the first week of the semester