COMM 6393, Film and Society  
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Office hours:
Monday 11-12pm  
Tuesday 2-4pm  
Thursday 2-4pm  
Friday by appointment  
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Course description: Welcome to Film and Society! This course looks at how American films of the 20th and 21st century have been a “mirror to society.” By viewing a selection of significant films from various decades, we will accumulate a portfolio of social issues set against the backdrop of American history. We will study each film for its production/aesthetic values and we will analyze the “film inside the film” for its social (gender, race, politics, economics, violence, war, etc.) issues. My hope is to “use film to expose you to new ways of thinking about the relationship between movies and society” (Ross). Please note: this is a writing-intensive class.

A word of caution: some of the films we will view this semester are difficult to watch for a variety of reasons. They may include violence, coarse language, sex and complex moral/ethical questions. Please look at the list of films we may watch (final selection will be made during the semester) and decide now if you are ready to see them. If not, you should drop the course now as I will not give you a “pass” out of any of these films. None of the potentially disturbing realities represented in these films are gratuitous but rather, necessary to the telling of the story.

Given the importance of the collective viewing experience, I expect you to come to class and watch the film with your classmates. Attendance and participation are crucial in a course of this nature—more than one absence will severely affect your ability to perform well in this class and may cause you to fail it. If you have three unexcused absences, I will automatically drop you from the class. Also, please note that all your journal entries and assignments must be typed and turned in class in paper copy, on the day assigned. While I will not accept late assignments, you may drop one journal entry. No electronic copies will be accepted.

Have a good semester and don’t hesitate to seek my assistance outside class. You can stop by during my office hours, but please make an appointment via email for any other times.

If you have a documented disability that may impact your work in this class, please contact me to discuss your needs. Additionally, you will need to register with the Counseling and Disability Services Office in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or 6953.

A note on plagiarism: as stated in the UST Handbook, written and/or oral plagiarism is absolutely forbidden; it may cause you to fail the class and to be dismissed from the university.


Grading criteria:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
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<td>Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper/Power Point</td>
<td>25% (you will turn in an additional research paper, 8 pages, double-spaced)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Course breakdown:

January 14
Introduction/Course explanation
Handout on analyzing film/aesthetics
“The Godfather” (1972), F.F. Coppola

January 21
“The Godfather” (cont.)
Reading: AF&S, chapter 5, pp. 101-131
“Kramer versus Kramer” (1979), R. Benton

January 28
“Good Night and Good Luck” (2005), G. Clooney
Reading: AF&S, chapter 3, pp. 41-69

February 4*
“To Kill a Mockingbird” (1962), R. Mulligan
Reading: AF&S, chapter 4, pp/ 71-100

February 11*
“The Shining” (1980), S. Kubrik
“Sophie’s Choice” (1982), A. Pakula
“Platoon” (1986), O. Stone
Reading: AF&S, chapter 6, pp.133-168

February 18*
“The Breakfast Club” (1985)
“Fatal Attraction” (1987), A. Lyne

February 25*
“The Accused” (1988)

March 4*
“When Harry met Sally” (1989)
“Moonstruck” (1987), N. Jewison

March 11
Spring Break

March 18
“Do the Right Thing” (1989), S. Lee
Mid-term Exams Due

March 25*
“Boyz’n the Hood” (1990), J. Singleton
Reading: AF&S, chapter 7, pp. 169-216

April 1*
“Mississippi Masala” (1991), M. Nair
“Boys Don’t Cry” (1999), K. Peirce
“Theelma and Louise” (1991), R. Scott
“Philadelphia” (1993), J. Demme

Paper/PowerPoint DUE (via email)

April 8*
“The Shawshank Redemption” (1994), F. Darabont
“A League of their Own” (1992), P. Marshall

April 15*
“Erin Brokovich” (2000), S. Sodebergh
“Forrest Gump” (1994), R. Zemeckis
“The People versus Larry Flynt” (1996), M. Forman
“Brokeback Mountain” (2005), A. Lee
Reading: AF&S, chapter 8, pp. 271-280

April 22*
“Mystic River” (2003) C. Eastwood
“Crash” (2004)
“Milk” (2008), G. Van Sant
“The Kids are All Right” (2010), L. Cholodenko

April 29*
Film Power Point Presentation and screening

(*) Journal entry due (for the film watched the previous week)

Final exam: Wednesday, May 13th, 6-8:30pm (in the same location)