

21L.011 The Film Experience
A HASS Communication-Intensive Subject
web.mit.edu/21L.011/www/
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21L. 011 is a HASS-D/CI subject. In this class, CI requirements will be satisfied by

- 1) A minimum of 20 pages of writing, in four separate assignments
- 2) Revision and resubmission of at least one of the assignments
- 3) An oral component as described below

Primary goals: This course is an introductory survey of classic films. Emphasis falls equally on cultural and on artistic matters: on films as anthropological and historical artifacts that articulate the values and assumptions of particular societies and eras and on films as works of art. The course aims to sharpen students' analytic skills, to give them a sense of the history and cultural significance of movies, and to improve their writing.

Format: Two lectures (Tuesdays 4-5 and 7-8 pm in 3-270) and one recitation section each week (Thursdays 3-4 or 4-5 pm in 2-146 or 2-105; 4-5 pm in 2-139). A screening of the required film will follow the Tuesday evening lecture. Video copies of all required films may be borrowed from the Film Office, 14N-428, to help students prepare for exams and papers.

Reading: The primary text is *A History of Narrative Film* by David A. Cook, 4th Edition (2004). Copies are at the MIT Coop. Reading assignments from this text should generally be done before or shortly after the Tuesday lecture listing this material. Some supplementary readings will be assigned; copies of these will either be distributed to all members of the class, or posted on the course website.

Writing requirements: The course satisfies the criteria for communication intensive subjects in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Students are required to write a short (1-2 page) response to some aspect of the material in the first two weeks, and three short essays, totaling a minimum of 20 double-spaced typed pages, devoted to films studied during the term.

All students must revise and resubmit at least one of their first two essays, and they are encouraged but not required to revise both. Only the grade received on the revised version of the paper will count toward the final grade in the term. Revisions must be submitted within one week of the date on which essays are returned.

Late papers: Essays submitted within seven days of the due date will be graded without penalty but will be ineligible for revision and may not receive written comments from the instructor. Papers will not be accepted beyond the seven-day grace period.

Paper topics: A list of suggested topics for each of the essays will be available on the course web site. Students may depart from these suggestions, but the alternative must be approved by their recitation instructor.

Oral expression: A central goal of the recitation hour in the course is to strengthen students' powers of oral expression. Attendance at recitation is mandatory. Every student is expected to participate actively in discussion and to give at least one short presentation to the class. This presentation will may be part of a group project, in which two or three students will work as a team to lead class discussion of a particular film or a topic relevant to the course.

Exams: a 30-minute quiz, a one-hour test, both given in class; and a three-hour final, given during the exam period. The quiz will consist of short identification items. Both tests will include essay questions as well as an identification segment. Material covered in lectures and in the assigned reading will supply most of the identification questions.

Grades: Grades will be calculated as follows:

Tests: 40% (5% for the quiz, 15% for the midterm, 20% for the final)

Essays: 50% (15%, 15%, 20%)

Oral Expression: 10% (5% presentation; 5% recitation participation).

Plagiarism—use of another's intellectual work without acknowledgement—is a serious offense. It is the policy of the Literature Faculty that students who plagiarize will receive an F in the subject, and that the instructor will forward the case to the Committee on Discipline. Full acknowledgement for all information obtained from sources outside the classroom must be clearly stated in all written work. All ideas, arguments, and direct phrasing taken from someone else's work must be identified and properly footnoted. Quotations from other sources must be clearly marked as distinct from the student's own work. If you borrow another person's phrasing, that material must be enclosed in quotation marks. If you use ideas conceived by others but reformulate them in your own prose, then you must acknowledge your collaboration in one of two ways: explicit acknowledgment in the body of your text ("As Lionel Trilling argues in his introduction to *Pride and Prejudice*, . . .") or in a footnote fully citing your source. For further guidance on the proper forms of attribution, consult the style guides available at the **MIT's Writing and Communication Center** (*now* in building 12) and useful links at: <http://web.mit.edu/writing/Citation/index.html>

Citations, footnotes: There are many accepted formats for citations and footnotes. The instructors in this course prefer the following simple principles.

1) *Italicize (or underline) titles of books, films, or TV programs;* use quotation marks to indicate titles of stories, articles, poems or episodes of television shows. Novellas or long stories that have been published in individual bindings are italicized as if they were full-length books. So: Conrad's short story "Youth" is placed in quotation marks, but *Heart of Darkness* (a novella) and *Modern Times* (a feature film) are italicized. Do not italicize urls.

2) Use parenthetical citations instead of footnotes wherever possible. For instance, in citing quoted passages from the primary text under discussion, the first reference should include full title, place and date of publication, and a page citation; thereafter, only the page citation is

necessary. Eg: (*Heart of Darkness*, London, 1898, p. 6). In the next citation: (p. 8). Note that **the period concluding the sentence goes outside the parenthesis citing the page number(s).**

3) An alternative to this practice: the first reference to the text can be footnoted, which note can include the remark “Subsequent parenthetical references are to this edition.”

(4) For **feature films**, the first citation should give **the last name of the director and the year of the film’s making or initial release—either date is fine, so long as you are consistent.** Thus: “This essay concerns the ideological implications of *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, 1925—henceforth *Potemkin*).” Or: “... Eisenstein’s 1925 masterpiece, *Battleship Potemkin*.” If you are using a special video or DVD version of the film, it is helpful to add this to the citation in the text or in a footnote; list the company of ownership and the catalogue number: “*High Noon* (Zinnemann, 1952; DVD version, Artisan #53496).

(5) If you cite secondary works in footnotes, use the following format: Martin Marks, *Music and the Silent Film* (New York, 1997), p. 17. Note that the publisher is not required.

(6) **MOST IMPORTANT:** Do not repeat information unnecessarily. For example, if your text reads “As David Cook states,” then the footnote should not repeat the author’s name; if you also mention the book title in your text, then the footnote should include only the place and date of publication and the page number.

Formatting quotations: When quoting material, integrate the quoted passage into the body of your own text using quotation marks if the passage is not longer than four lines. If the passage is longer than four lines, indent an extra five spaces left and right, forgo the quotation marks, and use single spacing.

Use an ellipsis (three spaced dots) to indicate omitted material. If the omission begins after a complete sentence, retain the original period and then introduce the ellipsis.

Use square brackets [] to indicate your additions or changes in the original material.

Example 1: A quoted passage integrated into the text

The Shadow Line repeatedly dramatizes scenes of tense conversation and even verbal coercion between the young protagonist and a series of older figures. As David Thorburn writes, “Though all his people are orphans, Conrad remains one of the great portrayers of the anguished impotence of fatherhood. One of his defining subjects is maturity’s useless generosity toward the young.”¹

Example 2: Extended quotation, separated by indentation from the essay text

André Bazin, in his essay “The Myth of Total Cinema,” argues that a silent cinema was never what the inventors of the film medium had in mind:

The guiding myth, then, inspiring the invention of cinema, is the accomplishment of that which dominated in a more or less vague fashion all the techniques of the mechanical reproduction of reality in the nineteenth century, from photography to

¹ *Conrad’s Romanticism* (New Haven, 1974), p. 45.

the phonograph, namely an integral realism, a recreation of the world in its own image It is understandable from this point of view that it would be absurd to take the silent film as a stage of primal perfection which has gradually been forsaken by the realism of sound and color. The primacy of the image is both historically and technically accidental.²

² *What Is Cinema?* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1967), p. 21. Essay first published in French in 1946. English translation by Hugh Gray.