

Bergen Community College
Department of Communication
Division of Arts, Humanities, and Wellness

Course syllabus

CIN-170 American Cinema

Basic Information about Course and Instructor

Semester and year:

Course and Section Number:

Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:

Office Location:

Phone:

Office Hours:

Email Address:

Course Description

CIN-170 American Cinema is a study of the language, history, and cultural impact of the American Film Industry. This course explores the technology and aesthetics of Hollywood and non-Hollywood films. It also deals with how these films reflect the changing images Americans have had of themselves. Through in-class screenings, students gain an understanding of each film's form, content, development, and criticism. Some specific areas covered include film production and language, the Studio System, and film genres.

2 lecture, 2 labs, 3 credits

Prerequisites: None

Humanities Elective

General Education Course [pending]

Student Learning Objectives:

As a result of meeting the requirements of this course, a student will be able to

1. develop a working knowledge of American film history from the silent cinema to present day.
2. identify and use the technical and critical language of film.
3. recognize the role Hollywood film plays in American popular culture.
4. identify the relationship between film technology and art.
5. explain the fundamental economics of the film industry.
6. discuss the role of genre in American film history, and recognize the connection between some of the most popular genres and American cultural and social tensions.
7. state and justify his/her own views (orally and in writing) on the films screened with greater coherence, clarity, depth, and insight.

The Student Learning Objectives in this course are intended to be consistent with the college's Core Competencies and General Education Goals.

Course Content

The most basic aspects in this course that must be covered are

1. instruction on the basic language and technical elements of the film medium (lighting, editing, narrative structure, etc.);
2. instruction on how to view films with the proper techniques;
3. instruction on understanding the different cinematic genres;
4. instruction on the history of American film and its relationship to the culture of the corresponding period in the United States;
5. instruction on how to speak and write about film clearly;
6. determination of final grades for this class through a combination of critical writing assignments and fact-based tests.

Critical Thinking

The Instructor of this course teaches critical thinking skills such as how to analyze a film; what interpretation means; how a student can challenge his/her own assumptions; what it means to support a hypothesis; what "point of view" means; how to write in the critical mode. The Instructor will respond in detail (and in a timely fashion) to students' work both in the classroom and during office hours. A minimum of two formal written assignments of critical writing about the subject matter of the course will be assigned. There must also be evaluation of students' specific knowledge of this subject matter (names of directors, relevant dates, e.g.).

Textbook(s)

American Cinema/American Culture, 3rd ed., by John Belton (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009). ISBN: 978-0-07-338615-7

Study Guide

American Cinema/American Culture, 3rd ed., by Ed Sikov (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009). ISBN: 978-0-07-726547-2

Supplementary Videos (available in BCC library)

American Cinema (10 one-hour and 3 half-hour programs on 6 video tapes or DVDs).

Grading Policy

Students will be evaluated on the quality of their work.

Attendance Policy

The instructor will follow the guidelines of the BCC attendance policy: All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements

Plagiarism is cheating and stealing. If you use someone else's ideas, words, phrases, paragraphs, without giving that person credit, you are guilty of plagiarism. If you copy even a small passage from another text and present it as your own, you are guilty of plagiarism. The penalties for plagiarism can be severe, from course failure to expulsion from the college.

Student Support Services

Smarthinking Tutorial Service: www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp

The Tutoring Center: S118 (201-447-7908)

The Writing Center: C110 (201-447-7136)

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) www.bergen.edu/owl

The Office of Specialized Services: S153 (201-612-5270)

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE

Bergen Community College
Departments of Communication
Division of Arts, Humanities, and Wellness

**CIN-170 American Cinema
Course Outline and Calendar**

Semester and year:
Course and Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:
Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Office Hours:
Email Address:

CIN-1XX American Cinema is a study of the language, history, and cultural impact of the American Film Industry. This course explores the technology and aesthetics of Hollywood and non-Hollywood films. It also deals with how these films reflect the changing images Americans have had of themselves. Through in-class screenings, students will gain an understanding of each film's form, content, development, and criticism. Some specific areas covered include film production and language, the Studio System, and film genres.

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Text and Study Materials:

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Study Guide: *American Cinema/American Culture*, 3rd ed., by Ed Sikov (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009). ISBN: 978-0-07-726547-2

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Course Requirements:

1. Textbook and other assigned readings/viewings which will include supplementary videos.
2. Film screenings in class and outside of class as assigned.
3. Participation in class discussions.
4. Completion of homework assignments.
5. Three examinations.
6. Film Reaction Essays.

Grading Policy:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Formal Written Assignments (2) | 25% (10%, 15%) |
| Examinations (3)..... | 40% (5%,10%,20%) |
| Class Participation..... | 10% |
| Homework Assignments..... | 25% |
| TOTAL: | 100% |

Attendance Policy:

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Screening Protocol:

Turn off all cell phones before you enter the classroom. Entering and leaving during a screening is impolite and annoying, so do whatever it takes to be able to sit through each screening. Talking during a screening is even more impolite and annoying. After the screening, stay in your seats until the lights are turned on and class is dismissed.

Students are responsible for all films screened in class.

Advice for Getting the Most Out of American Cinema:

WATCH: Be an active viewer. Be attentive (and awake) during film screenings. Consider films outside your normal experience and expectations as an opportunity to broaden your knowledge and appreciation of movies. Take notes on key points of plot, form and style (*during and*) after screenings.

READ: Be aware that the textbook is a crucial component of the course. Set aside time well in advance of the lectures and discussion sections to go through - in detail and closely - the assigned readings. Re-read if necessary, take notes, use a highlighter, and go over the questions for review and analysis at the end of each chapter. The textbook offers insights, concepts, and terms not covered in lectures. Remember: you are expected to read each week's assigned reading before you come to class.

ASK: I am always happy to answer questions, address concerns, suggest films, and discuss concepts presented in class. Please don't hesitate to stop by during my office hours.

**Sample
Weekly Class Calendar**

| Week | Date(s) | Topic/Activity | Readings | | Other Assignments |
|------|---------|---|------------------|-------------|--|
| | | | Textbook | Study Guide | |
| 1 | | The emergence of American cinema. | Chapter 1 | Unit 1 | Study 'Supplementary Unit 1 ("Film Language") |
| 2 | | The Hollywood Style | Chapters 2 and 3 | | Written Homework Assignment on the film screened in class |
| 3 | | The Studio and Star System | Chapters 4 and 5 | Units 2-3 | |
| 4 | | Genres – The Western | Chapter 11 | Unit 4 | Written Homework Assignment on the film screened in class |
| 5 | | Romantic Comedy and the Great Depression | Chapter 8 | Unit 6 | Exam #1 |
| 6 | | The Musical | Chapter 7 | Unit 5 | First Film Reaction Paper Due Written Homework Assignment |
| 7 | | The Combat Film and Newsreels | Chapter 9 | Unit 7 | |
| 8 | | Film Noir | Chapter 10 | Unit 8 | Written Homework Assignment |
| 9 | | Film Noir and the Cold War | Chapter 13 | | |
| 10 | | Horror and Science Fiction | Chapter 12 | | Exam #2 |
| 11 | | The Television Age | Chapter 14 | Unit 9 | Written Homework Assignment |
| 12 | | 1960's Counter Culture | Chapter 15 | | Second Film Reaction Paper Due |
| 13 | | Film School Generation | Chapter 16 | Unit 10 | |
| 14 | | American Cinema in the 21 st Century | Chapter 17 | Unit 11 | Written Homework Assignment |
| 15 | | Review | | | Final Exam |