

DePaul University
School for New Learning
Elements of Film & TV: An Aesthetic Approach (AI 299)
Instructor: Gary Fox

Location: Loop Campus - Summer 2009 | **Phone:** 312-362-5952
Dates & Times: Wed. 6/17 – 8/19 6-9 P.M. | **e mail:** gfox@depaul.edu
2 or 4 credit hours (1 or 2 competences)

Competencies Offered:

- A-1-X** - Can analyze and articulate the similarities and differences between various aesthetic components of film & television.
- A-2-C** - Can employ principles of design to enhance the functions and aesthetics of objects or environments.
- A-5** - Can define and analyze a creative process.

Course Description: There's more going on in a film or TV show than the story! Understanding the principles of media aesthetics allows both consumers and creators to experience film and television on deeper levels—both intellectual and emotional. This course is intended to help students learn how to interpret film and TV's aesthetic elements while building critical thinking skills. By exploring a variety of genres--- narrative films, television dramas, documentaries, even commercials--- we will develop criteria to help us see beyond the obvious text. Working within the limitations of the medium, we will learn how filmmakers manipulate and exploit the aesthetic elements at their command to obtain desired effects.

Instructor Bio:

I've been a member of SNL's visiting faculty since 2001 teaching film, ethics and public speaking courses. I'm also on the adjunct faculty at Columbia College Chicago where I teach a variety of film and TV courses. I have worked behind the camera as a film & video director and producer, and in front of the camera as a stage and film actor. I received my B.F.A. in Speech Communication and Theatre Arts from Drake University and his M.A. from DePaul's *School for New Learning*.

The Learning Experience/Course Objectives:

Through lectures, class discussion, film examples and in-class exercises, students will learn:

- Possess an understanding of the fundamental aesthetic elements and techniques used to create film, thus being able to better deconstruct and comprehend the filmmaking process.
- Be able to articulate differences and similarities between film forms and styles such as, but not limited to, auteurism, genre, narrative, documentary, and alternative forms.
- Consider their film analysis-oriented writing skills vastly improved.
- Consider their filmic vocabulary and conversational skills vastly expanded.

Readings: No text is required. Class readings will be posted on the course Blackboard
Recommended: Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 1989.

Learning Activities: Students will be asked to:

- Complete all assigned readings and attend all classes
- Participate in all large and small group discussions
- Complete quizzes
- Complete two shorter analytical papers
- Complete a final analytical paper
- Make a brief class presentation of a weekly topic

Course Assessment will be based on the following:

- **Analytical Papers:** 35%
- **Final Paper:** 35%
- **Presentation:** A short presentation on a weekly topic 10%
- **Class Participation:** You are expected to regularly contribute to discussions on topics discussed in class. 10%
- **Quizzes (2):** Short answer questions based on lectures and vocabulary. 10%

Competences:

A-1-X: Can interpret works of art and relate them to one's own experience.

Through a presentation on an assigned aesthetic topic and the completion of quizzes, a persuasion and a mise-en-scene paper, students will demonstrate their ability to analyze filmic meaning and relate that meaning to their own aesthetic sensibilities.

A-2-C: Can employ principle of design to enhance the functions and aesthetics of objects or environments.

Option 1: Through the completion of analytical papers on film form and design, students will demonstrate their ability to deconstruct and comprehend the filmmaking process and assess its impact on modern culture.

Option 2: Students will be given a three-minute scene from an obscure screenplay and:

- a) Write an analysis of the scene's essential dramatic elements and describe your visual concept for it. This "director's vision" should include your interpretation of the drama and should address the scene's genre, setting, and atmosphere.
- b) Produce a shot-by-shot list for filming the entire scene. You will be assessed on your ability to create logical sequences and use creative angles, appropriate camera movements and transitions while avoiding jump cuts and crossing the line-of-action.
- c) Provide a character analysis that describes each character physically, sociologically, and psychologically.

A-5: Can define and analyze a creative process.

Students will write an eight to ten (8-10) page paper (double-spaced) critically analyzing the development process of a film or television series of your choice. Students must submit a proposal for the paper identifying the film, critical approach, initial ideas of what the paper's thesis will be, and a preliminary bibliography of resources.

Written assignments will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

- **Content:** Detailed and insightful discussion of the chosen topic, using relevant examples and support from course readings, class discussion, personal experience, and (where appropriate) outside research.
- **Organization:** Clear thesis statement, logical development of main points, and well-structured paragraphs.

- Stylistics: Logical sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation; careful proofreading; appropriate documentation of outside sources.

Academic Integrity: As the instructor of this class, I will uphold the University's guidelines on academic integrity found in the Student Handbook. Other than in collaborative writing assignments, students are expected to produce their own writing. In addition, students are encouraged to consult sources outside the class in the development of their assignments. In using these sources, students will be expected to cite any words in their text that are not their own work. It is necessary to give credit to other writers who have influenced a learner's work. Using the words of others as if they were your own is called plagiarism-academic dishonesty-and will not be accepted in work submitted for this course. In general, you can assume that I will uphold the University's guidelines on academic integrity found in the Student Handbook.

Attendance: All students are expected to attend all class meetings and be prompt. If you know you cannot attend, please advise the instructor as soon as possible. *Missing more than two classes will have serious consequences on grading.*

Topics and TENTATIVE Time Framework:

READINGS AND SCREENINGS WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN CLASS

Week 1

Introduction: What is Aesthetics?

Course orientation, discussion of the physical phenomenon of vision, fundamental semiotics, and shot vocabulary. In-class exercise.

ASSIGN 1. Persuasion Paper 2. TV Series analysis option

Week 2

STORY STRUCTURE & NARRATIVE FORM

Classical Hollywood Narrative

INTRODUCE CLASS PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT

PERSUASION PAPER DUE

Week 3

MISE EN SCENE.

Film vs. TV, Definitions, components of mise en scene

Handout: Criteria for Frame analysis

ASSIGN Mise en scene Analysis Paper

Week 4

LENSES & CAMERA TECHNIQUES

Cinematography & Lighting styles.

TAKE QUIZ 1

Week 5

Camera & Lenses cont'd

EDITING & TRANSITIONS
ASSIGN: Shot by shot analysis
DUE: Mise en scene Paper

Week 6
Editing & Transitions cont'd
SOUND

Week 7
CHARACTER ANALYSIS AND ACTING THEORY
Class Exercise
TAKE QUIZ 2
DUE: Shot by shot analysis
ASSIGN FINAL PAPERS

Week 8
DOCUMENTARY FORM
Discuss Documentary style, propaganda and documentary modes

Week 9
GENRE STUDIES
Discussion of popular genres and their identifying characteristics
DUE: BEGIN PRESENTATIONS

Week 10
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: Discussion of ethics and artistic responsibility
DUE: Continue PRESENTATIONS

Week 11 (no class session)
FINAL PAPERS DUE

Class Policies:

- **MORE THAN 2 ABSENCES WILL SERIOUSLY IMPACT YOUR GRADE!**
You are responsible for notifying the instructor prior to any planned absence in order to get your assignments, and as soon as possible after any unplanned absence.
- All cell phones must be turned off. All pagers must be turned off or in vibrate mode.