

Carol Siegel, ENGL 150: Introduction to Film as Narrative, TuTh 10:35-11:50, VUB 107

Office VMMC 202S, hours TTh 1:30-2:30, and by appointment

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Catalog Description: Introduction to analysis of techniques and elements of narrative film and to critical vocabulary for its study as art form.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment for this Course: This class will introduce students to viewing techniques and critical language that allow them to analyze the many ways that films tell stories. Students will learn to write persuasive arguments for specific interpretations of films and the ways films convey information and create effects. Students will also receive instruction and get practice making multi-media presentations that support claims about how films work. The class will be discussion based, with some lectures, and many visual aids.

→Note: We will not study pornography. However, some of the assigned films are rated R and do have scenes and images with sexual content. If you are under 18 or have objections to them for any reason, just let me know and I will create an alternative assignment for you. Let the film rating system and the discussions on the following detailed websites be your guide: <http://www.kids-in-mind.com/>, <http://www.common sense media.org/>, and <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1392170/parentalguide>

	At the end of this course, students should be able to:	Course topics that address these learning outcomes are:	This outcome will be evaluated primarily by:
Critical and Creative Thinking	Develop critical film viewing habits. Demonstrate knowledge of basic terms and concepts in film making. Analytically assess the use of specific cinematic techniques to convey ideas.	Lectures and reading assignments throughout the semester from the textbook, <i>How Movies Work</i> . Guidance for paper writing from Corrigan's <i>A Short Guide to Writing About Film</i>	Participation in class discussion, essay, presentation.
Communication	Craft clear and persuasive arguments for specific interpretations of films and aspects of films. Put together a multi-media	Lectures and reading assignments throughout the semester from the textbook. Models presented on "film days" by professor and	Participation in class discussion, essay, presentation.

	presentation that illustrates a claim about how a film represents individualism and society.	Corrigan's <i>A Short Guide to Writing About Film</i> .	
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GENERAL RULES

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is the cornerstone of the university and will be strongly enforced in this course. Any student found in violation of the academic integrity policy will be given an F on the assignment (with no option to revise) and will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. I will make an exception for failure to properly cite sources in cases where it is obvious that the failure was the result of ignorance, not an attempt to deceive. (That is, when the source is cited, but improperly/confusingly.) In that case the student will be given no credit, but allowed to rewrite the assignment correcting the problem. A second instance of violation will result in a grade of F for the class. For additional information about WSU’s Academic Integrity policy/procedures, please contact (360) 546-9573.

Audio, video, digital, commercial note-taking and other recording during class: Copyright 2016 Carol Siegel as to this syllabus, all lectures, and course-related written materials. During this course students are prohibited from making audio, video, digital, or other recordings during class, or selling notes to or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the express written permission of the faculty member teaching this course.

Disability Accommodation: Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Access Center at 360-546-9238 or van.access.center@wsu.edu. The Access Center is located in the Classroom Building (VCLS) room 160. Accommodations may take some time to implement so it is critical that you contact the Access Center as soon as possible.

Emergency Notification System:

WSU has made an emergency notification system available for faculty, students, and staff. Please register at zzusis with emergency contact information (cell, email, text, etc.). You may have been prompted to complete emergency contact information when registering for classes at RONet. In the event of a building evacuation, a map at each classroom entrance shows the evacuation point for each building. Please refer to it. Finally, in case of class cancellation campus-wide, please check local media, the WSU Vancouver web page and/or <http://www.flashalert.net/>. Individual class cancellations may be made at the discretion of the instructor. Each individual is expected to make the best decision for their personal circumstances, taking safety into account. [Safety plan website](#).

Important Dates and Deadlines: Students are encouraged to refer to the academic calendar often to be aware of critical deadlines throughout the semester. The [academic calendar can be found online](#). Questions regarding the academic calendar can be directed to the Office of Student Affairs in VSSC 100 or call 360-546-9559.

SOME SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: More than three absences will lower your grade at least two degrees (e.g. from B to C+), one for each extra day. If you are absent more than six times, you will not pass the class. Absences up to six can be made up through doing special assignments arranged with me. **No make-up work can be turned in for credit after the last week of classes begins.**

Personal Electronics Usage: The use of cell phones, netbooks, laptops, ipads and ipods, and all other personal electronics during class is prohibited. Please do take notes, but use a pen or pencil and paper. **If you are using personal electronics during class, I will count you absent (with no make-up allowed)** and if you are obviously distracting others, I will ask you to leave. Students with *documented* disabilities who *must* use personal electronics to take notes will be exempted from this rule. E-readers are allowed.

Readings: "Read" on the syllabus refers to readings you need to have completed before class. You may need to read assigned work or watch assigned films earlier in order to complete your paper.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES: You will be required to write **short responses** to assigned readings and films. In each 1-2 page paper, you need to discuss an aspect of the assigned reading relevant to analyzing how the assigned film communicated an idea. These responses will be graded on content alone (not grammar and mechanics) but they cannot be revised and will not be accepted late. They will not receive letter or numerical grades but will be given a check mark if they merely satisfy the requirement for the assignment or a plus mark if they go beyond merely discussing the reading/film and both make and support an interpretive point about it. If all the work is turned in on time and receives a check, your grade for this will be a B, anything above that will get a B+ or better. If all the work is not turned in (or does not satisfy the assignment), you will receive a grade below B for this segment of the class. Valid excuses will be accepted and make-up assignments allowed up to, but not during the last week of classes. **One 8-10 page paper** is also required. It should make an interpretive argument about one or more of the assigned films. You aren't restricted to writing about ones we will not yet have discussed when the paper is due, you are welcome to write about any film assigned. The paper must **make appropriate reference to ideas/theories in the assigned text book. You will be expected to discuss (not just mention) at least one idea in relation to your thesis.** If you know how to put your paper on the Web, you are very welcome to do so, although **you also need to turn in a hard copy**, so I can mark problems and errors. Some students prefer this as it allows them to incorporate film clips. You will also be asked to give a **ten minute presentation** in which you compare the ways that two the films deal with one particular problem

of representation. This project can be multi-media or consist of you reading a paper aloud. You will also need to answer questions about the film(s) you present on. If you cannot speak in class for any reason, you may, by special permission from me, arrange to turn in a 5-6 page essay instead of doing a presentation. Please refer to the handout, entitled "Analyzing Film" that follows for more information on how to do these assignments.

The 8-10 page paper will count as 1/3 of your grade, the presentation 1/3, and the short writing assignments will count as 1/3. Participation can raise your grade one degree (E.G. from B+ to A-).

REVISION: *Revision is optional.* Revision grades will replace the previous grades. Revision must be turned in by the dates on the syllabus below. No late revisions will be accepted. **You must turn in the MARKED original with your revision**, so PLEASE save the marked paper when it is returned to you. **Failure to address all marked comments in the revision will result in no change of grade.** I will be very happy to help you with the revision, just ask!

GRADES: You will be graded on a twelve point scale (A+=12, F=0). The grade will then be adjusted to reflect class participation and attendance.

Late Work: Paper grades will be lowered one degree (e.g. from B to B-) for every class day that it is late. **NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR A GRADE AFTER TUESDAY, April 26.**

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Bruce Kavin, *How Movies Work*

Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*

FILMS: *Gun Crazy, Rear Window, Sleepy Hollow, Daughters of the Dust, Spider, Paprika*

All of the films are on reserve in the library for library use only.

SYLLABUS

Jan 12: Orientation: lecture on representation vs. reality, some film conventions, differences between film reviews and film criticism, watching a movie and analyzing a film.

Jan 14: **Film in Class: *Gun Crazy*.** In *How Movies Work*, Read "Film Appreciation," "Parts and Wholes," and the section "The Narrative Film," in "Primary Categories."

Jan 19: Continued Screening and discussion.

Jan 21: Bring to class a written response to the film and reading, to be turned in at the end of class.

Jan 26: **Film in Class: *Rear Window*.** In *How Movies Work*, Read "Montage and Mise-en-Scène in the Narrative Film," "Raw Materials," and "Black-and-White Versus Color."

Jan 28: Continued Screening and discussion. Bring to class a written response to the film and reading, to be turned in at the end of class.

Feb 2: Film in **Class: *Daughters of the Dust***. In *How Movies Work*, Read "The Soundtrack" "The Shot," "The Scene," and "The Sequence."

Feb 4: Continued Screening and discussion.

Feb 9: Bring to class a written response to the film and reading, to be turned in at the end of class.

Feb 11: **Paper #1 Due. Film in Class: *Sleepy Hollow***.

Feb 16: Continued Screening and discussion. In *How Movies Work*, Read "Who Makes a Movie," "Development," and "Pre-Production."

Feb 18: **Papers Returned**. Bring to class a written response to the film and reading, to be turned in at the end of class.

Feb 23: **Film in Class: *Spider***. In *How Movies Work*, Read "Production," "Post-Production," and "Distribution."

Feb 25: Continued Screening and discussion. Bring to class a written response to the film and reading, to be turned in at the end of class.

March 1: **Revisions of Paper #1 due. Film in Class: *Paprika***. Read "An Introduction to *Paprika*" <http://www.steamthing.com/2011/03/an-introduction-to-paprika.html>

March 3: Continued Screening and discussion. Read "Dreams and Reality in *Paprika*" <https://wiki.rit.edu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=40830090>, "*Paprika* and The Truth That Came from Fiction" <http://www.screeningnotes.com/2015/03/paprika-dream-psychoanalysis-theory.html>

March 8: Bring to class a written response to the film and reading, to be turned in at the end of class.

March 10: **SIGN UP DAY FOR PRESENTATIONS**. Make appointments for technology help on the 29th or 31st, you will be given a contact email address for this. Discussion and workshop on successful presentations.

March 15 Spring Break

March 17 Spring Break

March 22: Film in Class: *Visions of Light*.

March 24: Continued Screening and discussion.

March 29: Work on Presentations: Appointments to work with a tech advisor on how to use the media equipment to do your presentation. Drop ins also accommodated as possible.

March 31: Work on Presentations: Appointments to work with a tech advisor on how to use the media equipment to do your presentation. Drop ins also accommodated as possible.

April 5: **PRESENTATIONS**

April 7: **PRESENTATIONS**

April 12: **PRESENTATIONS**

April 14: **PRESENTATIONS**

April 19: **PRESENTATIONS**

April 21: **PRESENTATIONS**

April 26: Last Day to turn in late papers for credit. Retrospective and Review.

April 28: Last Day of Class, Final discussions and Evaluations.

A SHORT GUIDE TO ANALYZING FILM

This guide is NOT meant to replace the texts assigned for this class. Do not expect it to tell you everything you need to know about writing a paper or doing a presentation on film. Corrigan's book is a helpful guide, and he goes into far more detail than I do here. I hope, though, that you will find this short guide useful in providing a few basic guidelines for the development of a properly focused discussion of film. Please do consult the required texts for more guidance.

Form: Passing papers have all the usual attributes of college essays: a TITLE; an introduction; a thesis; unified, coherent and developed body paragraphs; a conclusion; and standard documentation of quotes (following MLA rules). Standard grammar and usage are also expected. All composition textbooks offer help with these things, as does the Writing Center.

The Topic: The topic is different from the thesis. The topic is what you are going to talk/write about; the thesis is your idea about the topic.

1. The topic should directly concern one the assigned films and HOW IT IS MADE, in other words how specific details of the film work to create specific effects. For example, your topic might be the use of sound or camera angle to convey a specific idea about human relationships. If you don't want to talk about technical details, you can focus on development/organization of the narrative, just as you might with a literary text. You need not retell the story or stories presented in the films. I know these

stories. Instead, I want to see your ideas about how the stories are presented. Therefore, your paper must focus on the assigned films not on your life or other things watching the film made you think about. Also avoid focusing a paper on explaining how the characters and their experiences resemble or differ from those of our contemporaries and the experiences most familiar to us. For instance, you would make a mistake if the central claim (thesis) of your paper were that *Daughters of the Dust* realistically portrays the lives of African Americans in the Gullah community of coastal South Carolina in the in early twentieth-century. Such a paper would have to be founded in a great deal of *sociological* research, and so would take you away from talking about how the film works. A better topic would be the ways the film creates believable characters despite its use of surrealistic images and references to the spirit world. Also inappropriate, would be an essay on the topic of, for example, the immorality of the protagonist of *Rear Window* since such a topic implicitly asserts that your way of seeing things is naturally moral and correct. A better topic would be the vision of morality and immorality conveyed by the film.

2. The topic should be limited to fit the scope of the paper. Don't try to say everything possible about any film. The title of the film you are discussing can't also be the title of your paper; this implies you are going to say everything that can be said about the film.

The Thesis: Your thesis is the main point you make about your topic. Your thesis cannot be "the use of color in *Sleepy Hollow*." That is a topic. A successful thesis derived from this topic could be something like this: "*Sleepy Hollow* has a very distinctive color pallet in which specific colors and tones represent different moods and even ideas about the characters and events." Note that a thesis for a paper longer than 2 pages generally contains more than one assertion.

Your thesis must make a different point about your topic than the film does. For instance, if your topic is the intersections of concepts of gender and mental illness in *Spider*, your thesis CANNOT be that subscribing to the traditional idea that women are either evil or good based on whether or not they show sexual desire can drive men dangerously mad. This is a bad thesis for two reasons. First, the film is fictional and thus cannot *prove* anything about real life; it can only express an opinion about cause and effect in real life. Second, the film itself makes this point overtly, so if you were to develop it as your thesis, you would just be repeating, in your own words, the plot of the film. Instead, you might look at the techniques used to convey this point indirectly, perhaps focusing on such things as the film's use of lighting and mise-en-scène. In choosing a thesis, ask yourself not only what ideas the film conveys but HOW they are conveyed. Ask yourself what details cause you to interpret the film the way you do. The most important rule to remember is that your paper should not focus on "that" but on "how." By this I mean that although you will often have to say THAT something happens in the film or THAT a particular piece of information is conveyed, what is most important for you to focus on is HOW the film gives us information.

Originality : I know that it's hard to believe, but a paper that argues with me is more interesting for me to read than one that just restates what I have said in class. Note, however, that I want you to argue, not simply contradict my views or tell me that you don't like some film that I like. You must explain why you have the opinions you do. If you find yourself in complete agreement with things I say in class, remember that my personal interpretations of film are just that, personal interpretations, not facts, so you still have to explain why YOU think so and give supporting evidence for your claims.

Supporting Evidence: You need to present your own ideas and also to convince your reader that they are reasonable and worth considering. You do this by presenting supporting evidence for your claims in both of the following two ways.

1. Working with material from the assigned readings and from published essays on the films. Notice that I say "working with" rather than quoting. In English studies we treat expert opinions as OPINIONS, not facts, consequently they can never PROVE a point. Therefore, when you quote a film critic's idea about a film or about films in general, you have not shown that this is the correct view to have. If you agree with the critic you still have to explain what in the film being discussed causes you to agree.

2. Referring directly to the film you are discussing. Quote or describe sections relevant to your points. When doing this, avoid providing too much material so that you seem to be summarizing the whole film plot. Also avoid providing too little material (so that your reason for thinking what you do is unclear). When it is not clear why you think that a particular scene, quote, or feature of the film supports your claim, you must explain how it does. Students in English classes often fear that they will explain something unnecessarily. This almost never happens. WHEN IN DOUBT, EXPLAIN.

==> If you are unused to watching foreign films or films without linear narratives, you may have difficulty getting details right. You may find that you have to watch specific scenes several times, you may need to refer to newspaper or magazine reviews, but don't indicate in your paper that you couldn't follow the film you are writing about. If you consult film reviews be especially careful not to plagiarize actual words or general ideas.

Anticipating Objections: The best way to convince other people is to anticipate their arguments with your claims and provide material that will answer those arguments. In an English paper, just as in conversation, you don't convince others by repeating the same idea over and over, emphasizing it more each time. For instance, if you want to argue that *Gun Crazy* is not really concerned with the ways stereotypes of femininity undermine the ethics of male identity construction, and you anticipate from what I've said in class that I will strongly disagree, you cannot hope to convince me by writing: "The film is just entertainment meant to make money. It doesn't have any message about gender relations." However, I would be impressed and willing to consider your view if you wrote something like, "While

Gun Crazy features a central male character struggling to recover a sense of self after a traumatic experience and show how he is impeded in his struggle by his ideas about women, his problems are presented as universal ones that any audience member who has ever been in love or felt desire, irrespective of gender, might have. So the film's dramatization of the tragedy that results for the protagonist seems designed to cause (lucrative) audience identification." This would be especially persuasive if you went on to discuss the techniques the film uses to universalize the main character's experiences.

Issues and Problems: Some students taking this class in the past have seemed to feel that because they typically think of watching movies as a form of casual entertainment, the primary purpose of this class is to entertain students. Instead, like all other English classes, this class has as its primary purpose helping students develop analytical skills they can use to create critical essays about a specific art form. Here cinema is that art form. So, just as in a literature class, you may find that you do not enjoy all the assigned material. Nonetheless, you will be required to see all the films (or substitutes I find for them in the case of your preference not to see R rated films) and **write about/present on at least two of the films** chosen for the class. **Please do not ask if you can write about films you like better than the ones on the syllabus.** All that said, I hope you do like these films and find them entertaining!

Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It

(Adapted to fit standard practice in English studies from the online *Guide Produced by Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University* <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml#original>)

What is Plagiarism and Why is it Important?

It is very important that we give credit where it is due. Plagiarism is using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information.

How Can Students Avoid Plagiarism?

To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use

- another person's idea, opinion, or theory;
- any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings—any pieces of information—that are not common knowledge;
- quotations of another person's actual spoken or written words; or
- paraphrase of another person's spoken or written words.

How to Recognize Unacceptable and Acceptable Paraphrases

Here's the ORIGINAL text, from page 1 of *Lizzie Borden: A Case Book of Family and Crime in the 1890s* by Joyce Williams et al.:

The rise of industry, the growth of cities, and the expansion of the population were the three great developments of late nineteenth century American history. As new, larger, steam-powered factories

became a feature of the American landscape in the East, they transformed farm hands into industrial laborers, and provided jobs for a rising tide of immigrants. With industry came urbanization the growth of large cities (like Fall River, Massachusetts, where the Bordens lived) which became the centers of production as well as of commerce and trade.

Here's an UNACCEPTABLE paraphrase that is **plagiarism**:

The increase of industry, the growth of cities, and the explosion of the population were three large factors of nineteenth century America. As steam-driven companies became more visible in the eastern part of the country, they changed farm hands into factory workers and provided jobs for the large wave of immigrants. With industry came the growth of large cities like Fall River where the Bordens lived which turned into centers of commerce and trade as well as production.

What makes this passage plagiarism?

The preceding passage is considered plagiarism for two reasons:

- the writer has only changed around a few words and phrases, or changed the order of the original's sentences.
- the writer has failed to cite a source for any of the ideas or facts.

If you do either or both of these things, you are plagiarizing.

Here's an ACCEPTABLE paraphrase:

According to Joyce Williams, Fall River, where the Borden family lived, was typical of northeastern industrial cities of the nineteenth century. Steam-powered production had shifted labor from agriculture to manufacturing, and as immigrants arrived in the US, they found work in these new factories. As a result, populations grew, and large urban areas arose. Fall River was one of these manufacturing and commercial centers (Williams 1).

Why is this passage acceptable?

This is acceptable paraphrasing because the writer:

- accurately relays the information in the original
- uses her own words.
- lets her reader know the source of her information.

Here's an example of quotation and paraphrase used together, which is also ACCEPTABLE:

According to Joyce Williams, Fall River, where the Borden family lived, was typical of northeastern industrial cities of the nineteenth century. As steam-powered production shifted labor from agriculture to manufacturing, the demand for workers "transformed farm hands into industrial laborers," and created jobs for immigrants. In turn, growing populations increased the size of urban areas. Fall River was one of these hubs "which became the centers of production as well as of commerce and trade" (Williams 1).

Why is this passage acceptable?

This is acceptable paraphrasing because the writer:

- records the information in the original passage accurately.
- gives credit for the ideas in this passage.
- indicated which part is taken directly from her source by putting the passage in quotation marks and citing the page number.

Note that if the writer had used these phrases or sentences in her own paper without putting quotation marks around them, she would be PLAGIARIZING. Using another person's phrases or sentences without putting quotation marks around them is considered plagiarism **EVEN IF THE WRITER CITES IN HER OWN TEXT THE SOURCE OF THE PHRASES OR SENTENCES SHE HAS QUOTED.**

Plagiarism and the World Wide Web

The World Wide Web has become a more popular source of information for student papers, and many questions have arisen about how to avoid plagiarizing these sources. In most cases, the same rules apply as to a printed source: when a writer must refer to ideas or quote from a WWW site, she must cite that source.

Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism

1. Put in **quotations** everything that comes directly from the text especially when taking notes.
2. **Paraphrase**, but be sure you are not just rearranging or replacing a few words.

Instead, read over what you want to paraphrase carefully; cover up the text with your hand, or close the text so you can't see any of it (and so aren't tempted to use the text as a "guide"). Write out the idea in your own words without peeking.

3. **Check your paraphrase** against the original text to be sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words, and that the information is accurate.

What is Common Knowledge?

Common knowledge: facts that can be found in numerous places and are likely to be known by a lot of people.

Example: John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960.

This is generally known information. **You do not need to document this fact.**

However, you must document facts that are not generally known and ideas that interpret facts.

Example: According to the American Family Leave Coalition's new book, *Family Issues and Congress*, President Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation (6).

The idea that "Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation" is not a fact but an *interpretation*; **consequently, you need to cite your source.**