COMM 274 – Introduction to Cinema
Mondays & Wednesdays, 2:00p-5:20p
Instructor: Professor Aaron Greer, MFA
Office Hours: by appointment
Email Address: agreer1@luc.edu

Course Objective
Introduction to Cinema will study film as a complex art form by examining some of the best Italian cinema from the last 70 years. The objective of this course is to provide students with the basic terminology, observational skills, theoretical knowledge, and historical background necessary for understanding and appreciating movies more deeply. The format of the course will consist of screenings, discussion, guest lectures and visits to iconic locations of Italian film.

Goals of the Course: The work of the course will be structured so as to meet the following learning outcomes:
• Acquisition of the vocabulary necessary for describing and analyzing cinema.
• Improved critical reading, writing, viewing, and thinking skills.
• Increased ability to evaluate motion pictures in both aesthetic and historic contexts.
• Increased ability to articulate and to defend your views both verbally and in writing.

Class Textbook and Other Materials: There is one, primary textbook for this course. In addition, each week you will be assigned a film to screen outside of class. These films, along with the field trips and supplemental materials posted to Sakai are also requirements of the course.

Texts & Screenings
Required: David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*
Materials placed on Sakai.
Film Screenings online and/or on reserve in the library.

Grading and Evaluation

Attendance Policy and Late Assignments:
Students are expected to complete all of the assigned projects and readings on time. Late projects will automatically be penalized 2 points (i.e. one letter grade) per day.

Students are expected to arrive on time and attend every class. There will be a short quiz at the beginning of some classes. Quizzes cannot be made up, so your absence from more than 1 class—you lowest quiz grade will be dropped—will undermine your quiz grade and ultimately your final grade in the class.

Grading & Evaluation:
Your final grade will be based on your participation in classroom discussions, your performance on quizzes, your close textual analysis assignment and your final exam. Computer problems, corrupted files, etc. are not a valid excuse for late or missed assignments. The student must insure that assignments are submitted on time and readable by the instructor. Plagiarism and/or any other form of academic dishonesty such as cheating on an exam will be penalized and could result in a failing grade for the class (Refer to University “Statement on Plagiarism”).
EVALUATION
Close Textual Analysis OR Design Assignment – 20%
6 In-class Quizzes – 10% each – 50% total (lowest quiz dropped)
Final Exam – 20%
Participation & Attendance – 10%

The grading scale is as follows:
- A = 93-100
- A- = 90 - 92
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 83-86
- B- = 80-82
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 73-76
- C- = 70-72
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 63-66
- D- = 60-62

Close Textual Analysis: You have 2 choices for this assignment: 1) a critical analysis of a classic Italian film OR 2) creating design and pre-viz materials for a new film (script provided).

For choice 1, the Critical Analysis Assignment: Select an Italian film catalog on Kanopy (one not assigned for or screened in class) and complete a close, textual analysis of the film, examining the relationship between the film’s form and content.

Consider one formal element of the film (editing, cinematography, mis-en-scene or sound) and focus your analysis of the film around that aspect. How does the use and manipulation of this element affect your interpretation of the film as a whole?

Select 3 specific scenes or sequences in the film and explore them closely. Explain how each is crafted to impact your understanding of both that particular scene as well as how it relates to the larger theme, design, story and/or meaning of the film.

This project can be completed as a traditional, written paper (3-5 pages typed) with embedded pictures, links to audio, video, etc. OR as a video essay (3-5 minutes). Either way, the project should be submitted electronically (as YouTube link, Word Document, PDF, etc.) by the beginning of class on your assigned due date.

You will also present a summary of your analysis to the class. Your 5-minute, in-class presentation will consist of screening one of the scenes you analyzed for your assignment and briefly explaining your analysis of said scene and the film as a whole.

Grading Rubric (20 points total)
- Writing – structure, grammar, spelling, clarity, organization, etc. (scale 1-5)
- Analysis – analysis of the film’s meaning and relationship between form and function (scale 1-5)
- Evidence – selection/reference to specific scenes images, audio, video, etc as evidence (scale 1-5)
- Presentation – in-class summary and presentation of the analysis (scale 1-5)

For the Design and Pre-viz Assignment: read the script for the feature film, The Gondolier, provided by the instructor. Focusing on one of the formal elements we studied in class (mis-en-scene, sound or cinematography), breakdown and analyze the script as if you were working on this film as its art director, sound designer, or cinematographer.
First, describe your overall design concept for the film in writing (1-2 pages), connecting your specific design ideas to the film’s theme(s), meaning or genre (i.e. describe how your design aesthetic aligns with and/or expands on the film and its story). Second, breakdown the script, listing the major design elements needed for each major scene or sequence within your chosen area (e.g. props, sound fx, special camera moves). Third, create a designer’s “look-book” or “mood reel” that provides concrete examples of your intended style, drawing on examples from other films, art, etc. You will present your look-book to the class on your assigned due date.

For the script, as well as guidance about the sort of questions you should answer as a designer and/or example look-books, refer to the materials posted by the instructor on Sakai.

Grading Rubric (20 points total)
- Writing – structure, grammar, spelling, clarity, organization, etc. (scale 1-5)
- Analysis – analysis of the film’s meaning and relationship between form and function (scale 1-5)
- Look-book & breakdown – organization, thoroughness, selection of scenes images, audio, etc (scale 1-5)
- Presentation – in-class summary and presentation of the look-book (scale 1-5)

How participation is evaluated: Class participation encourages comprehension and memory retention…and it usually makes the class more exciting. Participation includes but is not necessarily limited to speaking in class. Looking attentive in class, taking notes during screenings and discussions, and corresponding via email are also important means of class participation.

Poor participation (0-6 pts):
- Student regularly arrives to class late
- Student sleeps in class and/or is obviously inattentive in other ways
- Student never willingly participates in class discussion, and is unable to respond to questions when called upon
- Student regularly disrupts class (e.g. noisily leaving screenings, rattling food wrappers)

Average participation (7-8 pts):
- Student is attentive in class, actively takes notes and clearly listens to in-class discussions and lectures
- Student rarely volunteers to speak in class, but is able to answer questions with thoughtful, cogent responses when called upon
- Student asks questions or adds comments about course material after class or via email

Excellent participation (9-10 pts):
- Student is attentive in class, actively takes notes and clearly listens to in-class discussions and lectures
- Student volunteers regularly to speak in class, asks questions and responds thoughtfully to comments and questions offered by me and by other students
- Student rarely arrives late to or misses class
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading for 5/23: <em>Film Art</em>, chapters 1 (Film as Art)</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>Field Trip: tour Cinecitta Film Studios and Museum. Quiz 1 and scavenger hunt: the tools and history of film production. Reading for 5/28: <em>Film Art</em>, chapter 2 (Film Form) and 3 (Narrative). Out of class Screening: <em>Ossessione</em> (1943)</td>
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<td>June 19</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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