

Coffeyville Community College

#ARTS-155

COURSE SYLLABUS

FOR

**CINEMATIC TRADITIONS:
FILM GENRES**

**Jed Claybrook
Instructor**

COURSE NUMBER: ARTS-155 **COURSE TITLE:** Cinematic Traditions: Film Genres

CREDIT HOURS: 3

INSTRUCTOR: Jed Claybrook

OFFICE LOCATION: 215 Arts and Sciences

PHONE: (620) 251-7700 ext, 2060

OFFICE HOURS: 1:00 – 4:00 M – F

PREREQUISITE(S): None

REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS: *Hollywood Genres* by Thomas Schatz

COURSE DESCRIPTION: A critical survey of the accomplishments of artists and craftspeople in the relatively short history of film making, a record of creative collaborations which changed critical and commercial perceptions of visual art and storytelling.

EXPECTED LEARNER OUTCOMES:

1. Understand the structure of the studio system
2. Recognize popular cinematic story formulas
3. Discuss the Western as genre
4. Describe the classic screen gangster
5. Understand the emergence of film noir
6. Understand the social commentary of screwball comedy
7. Discuss the significance of the movie musical
8. Recognize the development of the melodrama

LEARNING TASKS & ACTIVITIES:

Chapter 1 The Genius of the System
Chapter 2 Film Genre and the Genre Film: Order vs. Integration
Chapter 3 The Western
Edwin S. Porter, *The Great Train Robbery*
John Ford, *Stagecoach*
Chapter 4 The Gangster Film
Howard Hawks, *Scarface*
Chapter 5 The Detective Film

Orson Welles, *Touch of Evil*
 Chapter 6 The Screwball Comedy
 Frank Capra, *It Happened One Night*
 Chapter 7 The Musical
 Mervyn LeRoy, *Gold Diggers of 1933*
 Chapter 8 The Family Melodrama
 Douglas Sirk, *Written on the Wind*
 Critical essays on two of the following films:
 George Marshall, *Destry Rides Again*
 Fred Zinnemann, *High Noon*
 Charles Walters, *Barkleys of Broadway*
 Vincente Minnelli, *The Pirate*
 John Huston, *The Maltese Falcon*
 Orson Welles, *Citizen Kane*
 Billy Wilder, *Double Indemnity*
 William Wellman, *Nothing Sacred*
 Preston Sturges, *Miracle at Morgan's Creek*
 Frank Capra, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*
 Vincente Minnelli, *Home from the Hill*
 Robert Altman, *Thieves Like Us*

**ASSESSMENT OF
 OUTCOMES:**

Grades of	A	=	100-92%
	B	=	91-84%
	C	=	83-71%
	D	=	70-60%

are given in this course. Incompletes given at the semester end will only be given if previously agreed upon by the student and instructor with a specific time designated for the completion of the incomplete work. Please note the college's policy on incompletes as stated in the college catalog.

Requirements and final evaluations: A student's final grade will be based on the following

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| 1. | Attendance at all class meetings | 10% |
| 2. | Participation in class discussion | 10% |
| 3. | Eight quizzes on reading assignments | 35% |
| 4. | Two critical essays on films seen outside of class
(two typed pages for each) | 25% |
| 5. | Final examination | 20% |

Quizzes must be taken on the scheduled day. Only if arrangements are made with the instructor prior to the test date will a student be

allowed to take a test late, and then it must be taken before the second class period following the test.

**ATTENDANCE
POLICY:**

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes. Absences resulting from participation in college sponsored activities or due to serious illness or death in the family are excused if prior notification is given by the student.

The result of an excused absence is the opportunity for the student to make-up missed work, and then it must be made up before the second class period following the absence. **It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements for classes missed.**

COMPETENCIES:

Section I The Genius of the System

UNDERSTAND THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDIO SYSTEM

1. Relate the function of the Hollywood production companies. (Synthesis)
2. Explain the reciprocal relationships between artist and audience. (Comprehension)
3. Identify the characteristic(s) of a genre film. (Knowledge)
4. Describe the auteur policy. (Knowledge)
5. Explain genre as a social force. (Comprehension and Evaluation)

Section II Film Genres and the Genre Film

RECOGNIZE POPULAR CINEMATIC STORY FORMULAS

6. Distinguish genre as a system. (Analysis)
7. Explain film genre as a static and a dynamic system. (Comprehension)
8. Define semiology. (Knowledge)
9. Define iconography. (Knowledge)
10. Distinguish between character and setting. (Comprehension)
11. Describe the plot structure of a genre film. (Knowledge)
12. Relate narrative strategy and social function. (Synthesis)

Section III The Western

DISCUSS THE WESTERN AS GENRE

13. Point out the characteristics of the western which makes it the most enduring genre. (Analysis)
14. Explain the importance and significance of 'landscape' to the western. (Comprehension)
15. Relate the stability of the westerner's character to his community. (Synthesis)
16. Identify two landmark western movies. (Knowledge)
17. Explain the Western as an element of our national mythology. (Comprehension)
18. Summarize the contributions of John Ford to the Western genre. (Synthesis)

Section IV The Gangster Film

DESCRIBE THE CLASSIC SCREEN GANGSTER

19. Relate the peculiar history of the gangster genre. (Analysis)
20. Distinguish between the Western hero and the gangster-hero. (Comprehension)
21. Contrast the Western society to the gangster film society. (Evaluation)
22. Identify the gangster prototypes (Knowledge)
23. Relate the Production Code to the gangster genre. (Application)

24. Describe the evolution of the gangster film through the 1930's and 1940's. (Knowledge)

Section V The Detective Film

UNDERSTAND THE EMERGENCE OF FILM NOIR

25. Explain the visual and thematic aspects of “black film.” (Comprehension)
26. Show that noir films reflected changing cultural attitudes during the 1940's and 1950's. (Application)
27. Identify Schrader’s seven recurring techniques which characterize film noir. (Knowledge)
28. Define American Expressionism. (Knowledge)
29. Distinguish between the hard-boiled detective and the police-detective films. (Analysis)

Section VI The Screwball Comedy

UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL COMMENTARY OF SCREWBALL COMEDY

30. Explain screwball comedy domination of the Depression-era comedy. (Comprehension)
31. Name and describe three basic elements of a screwball comedy. (Knowledge)
32. Identify this genre’s dilemma. (Knowledge)
33. Summarize the causes for the postwar screwball comedy’s reformulation. (Comprehension)
34. Relate the influence of Frank Capra and Robert Riskin to screwball comedy. (Application and Evaluation)

Section VII The Musical

DISCUSS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOVIE MUSICAL

35. Explain the roots of the movie musical. (Comprehension)
36. Identify musical motifs. (Knowledge)
37. Describe the influence of Fred Astaire on the Hollywood musical. (Knowledge)
38. Summarize the musical’s atmosphere of illusion. (Synthesis)
39. Define what is meant by integrated musically. (Knowledge)
40. List the contributions of Arthur Freed and Gene Kelly. (Knowledge)

Section VIII The Family Melodrama

RECOGNIZE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MELODRAMA

41. Relate the development of the melodrama. (Analysis)
42. Identify the melodrama’s narrative formula. (Knowledge)
43. Explain the melodrama’s relationship to the family unit. (Comprehension)
44. Point out three variations of melodrama. (Analysis)

45. Describe the conventions of setting, plot, and character in the melodrama. (Knowledge)
46. Explain Douglas Sirk's style. (Comprehension)

This syllabus is subject to revision with prior notification to the student by the instructor.