

Film Studies FILM 301.20 L01

Topic in National Cinema (Independent American Cinema)

Fall 2013

R 14:00-15:50 (lecture), T 15:00-17:45 (screening)

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Office Hours: T 13:00-15:00 or by appointment

Course Description

Topics will focus on the style, narrative form, and historical evolution of selected genres, for example, the Documentary, the Western, the Melodrama, the Musical, etc. This course may be repeated for credit.

Objectives of the Course

To speak of “independent film” is to confront one of the thorniest issues in our studies of the film industry: what precisely do we mean when we employ this term? Independent, yes, but *from what*? This course will chart the historical organization of power within the American film industry, and examine how over time various claims of independence from the dominant system have been made. Particular attention will be paid to the period beginning in the 1980s and continuing through the present day. We will explore how a confluence of factors have affected the American independent cinema, including: new technologies of production and exhibition, new industrial formations (including specialty units and film festivals), and changing taste cultures and audience demographics. We will also screen the work of some of the most significant filmmakers of the American independent cinema and trace the stylistic trends over time.

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Produce a sustained written analysis that incorporates ideas that are introduced during the course
- Demonstrate a mastery of the theoretical and historical issues covered in the course, as well as an engagement with the films screened in the course
- Write a term paper that follows all appropriate academic protocol

Additional Information

Attendance at lectures and screenings and informed participation are essential components of this course and will help determine your final grade. Students must come

to class prepared to discuss the required reading. Some of the materials and topics presented in class may include explicit content (sex, violence or language). If these materials make you uncomfortable, you are encouraged to speak with the professor. You will not be exempt from any class assignments but we will work together to accommodate your concerns.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Students are welcome to use laptops and other electronic notetaking devices in this course. That being said, the classroom is a space for learning, and I expect that students' behaviour will reflect a shared appreciation for the importance of an open and high-level discourse within the classroom. Towards that end, the use of laptops should be strictly limited to the purposes of taking notes. **Laptops (and all other electronic devices) are expressly prohibited during course screenings.** Likewise, mobile phones and other devices are prohibited at all times. Failure to respect these rules may result in a revocation of your privileges to use devices in the classroom.

Textbooks and Readings:

Michael Z. Newman, *Indie: An American Film Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Yannis Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema: An Introduction*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006.

Additional readings available via the course website.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Will be posted on Blackboard.

Assignments and Evaluation

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Participation <i>Students are expected to regularly attend class and actively participate in class discussions. Full marks will be given to students who regularly demonstrate through their participation in class discussions an engagement with the course readings and screenings.</i>	10%
Midterm Exam <i>Students will write the mid-term examination in class on October 24. The multiple-choice and short answer exam will be drawn from the readings, screenings, and lectures covered during the first six weeks of class.</i>	30%
End-of-Term Quiz	25%

*Students will write a quiz in class on **November 21**. This multiple-choice and short answer quiz will cover the readings, screenings, and lectures introduced after the mid-term (i.e., it is non-cumulative).*

Final Paper (1500-2000 words) 35%

Students are required to write a final paper for the course, following guidelines that will be distributed in class. The expectation is that the student's argument will reflect a significant degree of engagement with existing scholarly literature, and/or a demonstration of significant original research.

*Papers are due on the last day of the term (**December 6**), and should be submitted via the course website.*

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of one-third of a letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Quizzes and examinations will not be rescheduled except in the case of medical emergencies. Students without proper medical documentation will not be permitted to make up missed quizzes or examinations.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:
<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>