

**University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Film Studies (FILM) 403.24 L01
Topic in the Director's Cinema: The Cinema of David Lynch
Winter 2023**

January 3 – January 7

**Screenings and Lectures:
TWRFS, 9:00am-5:00pm**

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

Within the canon of Hollywood cinema, few directors have permeated the collective unconscious as definitively as David Lynch, so much so that the term “Lynchian” is today a household adjective to describe a range of affects, objects, and situations. Lynch’s ascension as a popular filmmaker was also contemporaneous with the rise of film theory, and has been deployed to illuminate psychoanalytic, phenomenological, and cognitive approaches to the cinema. And yet, while film scholars can agree upon the singularity of Lynch’s combination of Hollywood narrative with avant-garde aesthetics, the “Lynchian” has remained as easy to recognize as it is hard to define. This class will provide a comprehensive survey of the director’s filmography, from his early avant-garde shorts, to his major critical successes and failures in feature-length filmmaking, to his ground-breaking experiments with televisual narrative. We will use Lynch’s work to both illustrate and challenge some of the most influential concepts in critical theory over the 20th and 21st century, including: the abject, the uncanny, the postmodern sublime, the weird and the eerie, the time-image, and the male gaze. In aiming a critical lens toward the director’s formal tendencies and ideological attitudes, we will further tease out the social implications of Lynch’s work, grappling with how his sustained obsession with the 1950s speaks to certain contradictions and anxieties surrounding class, sex, and race in American postmodernity.

This is a block week course.

We will be in class from 9am-5pm Tuesday through Saturday. This is an extremely intensive learning format, and will require your full attention for all five days. There will be assigned readings each night, so students should not plan any additional activities (work shifts, volunteer activities, etc.). Students should expect to spend approximately

two hours each night during the week in preparation for the next day's class. This intensive learning format can be exciting and invigorating, but it can also be exhausting, so do whatever you can to protect your time during the week of classes.

Objectives of the Course

Following the completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a comprehensive familiarity with the cinema of David Lynch and the broader discourses of authorship and art.
2. Perform close readings of film texts, which are informed by film theory.
3. Establish an understanding of major concepts in critical theory.
4. Draw connections between Lynch's cinema and the broader social contexts that have defined American postmodernity.

Textbooks and Readings

All assigned readings for the course will be uploaded to D2L.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops should be used for note-taking purposes only. Cell phones should be turned off during screenings and lectures to avoid deductions from your participation grade.

Viewing Requirements

Students are required to attend all screenings. If you miss one, it is your responsibility to view the film(s) at the Media Library (3rd floor, TFDL) as soon as you are able. Certain titles (though not all) may be available via streaming platforms or online. These resources are not a substitute for the scheduled screenings, but may prove helpful for review purposes.

Assignments and Evaluation

10%	Participation	Full week
25%	In-class writing assignment	Jan. 5
25%	Test on D2L	Jan. 11
40%	Final Assignment	Jan. 27

Participation: 10%

Since this is a block week class that involves both challenging films and ideas, attendance, participation in class discussion, and completion of the readings are absolutely necessary. Lecture content will usually move beyond the day's assigned readings, so students will need to have read the required materials each night before class in order for their learning experience to remain meaningful. Class participation grades will be evaluated based on the quality of your contributions to in-class discussions and the completion of short in-class assignments.

In-class writing assignment: 25%

On the afternoon of Jan 5, students will write a reaction to one of two essays assigned on that day: either Sharon Willis, "Do the Wrong Thing: David Lynch's Perverse Style," or David Foster Wallace, "David Lynch Keeps His Head." The response will be submitted

on D2L at the end of the day. Students should provide a cogent and brief précis of their chosen reading followed by a critical analysis. Critical analyses might include situating the reading in relation to other arguments surveyed in the course, relating the reading to a film screened in class, or following a particular strand of the reading's argument in order to pursue it further. Since both of these essays take a polemical approach to Lynch's work, I would like for students to take an equally strong position in their response. Length: 3-4 pages (approx.)

Test on D2L: 25%

On January 11 at 9:30am, students will get access to a timed test (1 hour and half) on D2L that covers the lectures and readings from the entire block week class. Students have a 24-hour window to complete the test, which will have ten multiple choice questions, ten true and false, and one short answer. The test is open book, but students may not consult each other.

Final Assignment: 40%

On Friday January 27, students will submit a 6-8 page (double-spaced) paper via Dropbox on D2L. A detailed assignment sheet on the final paper will be posted to D2L by January 3.

*Note: Each written assignment will be accompanied by a rubric and instruction sheet on D2L

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No.

Note: You do not have to complete all the assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox. Include your name and ID number on all assignments. Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for

students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors.

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, letter grades will be used for written assignments, while percentage or numerical grades will be used for quizzes and participation grades.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%

1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright*

at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy> and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct

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

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Jan 3, Morning

Introduction

Screening: *Six Figures Getting Sick* (USA, 1967)
The Alphabet (USA, 1968)
The Grandmother (USA, 1970)
Twin Peaks, Season 3, Episode 8

Reading: Dennis Lim, "Weird on Top," in *David Lynch: The Man from Another Place*, pp. 1-15.

Kate Rennebohm, "A Little Night Music: *Twin Peaks: The Return*, Part Eight," *Cinema Scope* 72 (2017): <http://cinemascope.com/columns/a-little-night-music-twin-peaks-the-return-part-eight/>

Jan 3, Afternoon

The Uncanny

Screening: *Eraserhead* (USA, 1977)

Reading: Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, pp. 1-21.

Michel Chion, "A Film That Stays With You," in *David Lynch*, pp. 3-44.

Jan 4, Morning

The Abject and the Exhibition Complex

Screening: *The Elephant Man* (USA/UK, 1980)

Reading: Julia Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection," in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, pp. 1-18

Paul Anthony Darke, "The Elephant Man: An Analysis from a Disabled Perspective," *Disability & Society*, 9.3 (1994), pp. 327-342.

Jan 4, Aft

Postmodernism and the Logic of Late Capitalism

Screening: *Blue Velvet* (USA, 1986)

Reading: Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, pp. 111-125.

Dennis Lim, "Now it's Dark," in *David Lynch: The Man from Another Place*, pp. 50-70.

Recommended: Laura Mulvey, "Netherworlds and the Unconscious: Oedipus and *Blue Velvet*," in *Fetishism and Curiosity*, pp. 137-154.

Jan 5, morning The White Male Gaze

Screening: *Wild at Heart* (USA, 1990)

Reading: Sharon Willis, "Do the Wrong Thing: David Lynch's Perverse Style," in *High Contrast: Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood Film*, pp. 131-157.

Jan 5, Aft Authorship and the Question of the "Lynchian"

Screening: *David Lynch: The Art Life* (USA, Barnes/ Neergaard-Holm/ Nguyen, 2016)

Reading: David Foster Wallace, "David Lynch Keeps His Head," in *A Supposedly Funny Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments*, pp. 146-212.

Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, pp. 561-564.

Jan 6, Morning The Puzzle Film

Screening: *Lost Highway* (France/USA, 1997)

Reading: Warren Buckland, "Introduction: Puzzle Plots," and "Making Sense of *Lost Highway*," in *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, pp. 1-12; 42-61.

Recommended: Todd McGowan, "Finding Ourselves on a Lost Highway: David Lynch's Lesson in Fantasy," *Cinema Journal*, 39.2 (2000), pp. 51-73.

Jan 6, Aft Desire, Fantasy, and the Femme Fatale

Screening: *Mulholland Drive* (France/USA, 2001)

Reading: Todd McGowan, "Lost on Mulholland Drive: Navigating David Lynch's Panegyric to Hollywood." *Cinema Journal*, 43.2 (2004), pp. 67-89.

Recommended: Frida Beckman, "From Irony to Narrative Crisis: Reconsidering the Femme Fatale in the Films of David," *Cinema Journal*, 52.1 (2012), pp. 25-44.

Jan 7, Morning The Time Image

Screening: *Inland Empire* (France/Poland/USA, 2006)

Reading: Gilles Deleuze, "Beyond the Movement Image," in *The Time-Image*, pp. 1-24.

Alanna Thain, "Into the Folds: David Lynch's Hollywood Trilogy," in *Bodies in Suspense: Time and Affect in Cinema*, pp. 100-130.

Jan 7, Aft Welcome to *Twin Peaks*

Screening: *Twin Peaks*, Pilot (USA, 1990)
Twin Peaks, Season 1, Episode 3 (USA, 1990)
 Selected Episodes of *Twin Peaks: The Return* (USA, 2017)

Reading: David Lavery, "Introduction: The Semiotics of the Cobbler: *Twin Peaks*' Interpretive Community," and Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Bad Ideas: The Art and Politics of *Twin Peaks*," in *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*, pp. 11-21; pp. 22-30.