

Film Studies (FILM) 405-01
Advanced Topic in Film Genre: *Film Noir*
Fall 2013
Screenings (Labs): Tuesdays 12:00 - 14:50
Lectures: Thursdays 12:00 - 13:50

Instructor: Lee Carruthers
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Location:
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Web Page: on Blackboard
Office Hours: Thursdays 14:00-16:00

Course Description

This course focuses on the enduring appeal of *film noir*, taken as a complex filmic phenomenon that opens up compelling issues related to film aesthetics, theory and history. To this end, we will examine a range of Hollywood films produced during the 1940s and 1950s to discern their distinct formal and thematic features; further, we will grapple with the idea of *film noir*, acknowledging its richness and resistance to categorization. Finally, the course is concerned to situate the films and criticism historically, and thus analyzes the cycle's literary and cinematic antecedents as well as more recent instances of 'neo-noir' via contemporary directors such as Robert Altman, Martin Scorsese, and Joel and Ethan Coen.

Additional Information

As a course with a prerequisite, (FILM 201), this class assumes and requires your familiarity with basic film terms. For your reference, a 6-page Glossary of Formal Terms is provided on Blackboard, under 'Course Documents.' **Students are expected to use this vocabulary correctly in class discussion and in written assignments.**

Objectives of the Course

This course has three main objectives:

- To develop a nuanced understanding of film noir that considers the films' historical and conceptual significance.
- To develop viewing and film-analytical skills that allow us to approach these films as complex, aesthetic objects.
- To appreciate the extent to which film noir is also a protean critical construct that has meant different things to different people over time.

Internet and electronic communication device information

This course observes a **strict laptop and cell phone policy**. Laptops are for note-taking only: anyone found using their laptop for email, unauthorized browsing, etc. during class time will jeopardize their participation grade. Likewise, texting and cell phone use is not permitted: turn off these devices when you arrive at the classroom to avoid embarrassment, annoyance, and irreversible grade penalties.

Viewing Requirements

Students are required to attend *all* the 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 at local video stores, as well. These resources are *not* a substitute for the scheduled screenings, but may prove helpful for review purposes.

Reading Requirements

Be sure to set aside enough time to complete the assigned readings every week. The **Reading Quizzes** are designed to confirm your preparedness for class: see the information provided under ‘Assignments and Evaluation,’ below.

Participation Requirements

Attendance and informed participation are essential components of this course and will determine your final grade. There is also a simple task to be completed on a weekly basis, as follows:

After the Tuesday screening, but *before* the Thursday lecture, go to the Blackboard site to submit a brief **screening note**. There will be a general question or prompt there to get you started: in order to receive marks, your post should address the question specifically and substantially. About a paragraph or so in length, your response should discuss the weekly screening in a precise, analytical, and thoughtful manner. Please note that cursory, vague, or superficial commentary will not be credited.

Textbooks and Readings

For purchase at the University Bookstore:

- James Naremore’s *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Second Edition, Revised, 2008) **MTN**
- James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice, Double Indemnity, Mildred Pierce, and Selected Stories* (Everyman’s Library Classics, 2003)

Additional **required readings** can be accessed via Blackboard, and are designated as ‘**B**’ on the schedule below.

Assignments and Evaluation

Grades will be determined as follows:

Reading Quizzes (5 dates: 4 count for marks)*	weekly	20%
Blackboard + In-class discussion	weekly	15%
Midterm (short film analysis, in-class)	Week 7, Oct. 24	25%
Final Essay	Week 13, Dec. 5	40%

A paper that deploys the available scholarly literature and performs film-textual analysis, 2500 words in length, on one of the central films or issues of the course. Detailed instructions for the successful completion of this essay will be distributed by November 12, 2013.

* The **Reading Quizzes**, listed above, are designed to confirm your familiarity with the weekly readings. As such, they will not be scheduled in advance but rather will happen on 5 separate occasions throughout the semester, usually during the lecture period. **Reading Quizzes cannot be re-scheduled or 'made-up'; if you miss a quiz, the marks are forfeited.** Only 4 out of 5 quizzes will count for marks, however: so, you can miss one, or discount one.

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: submit your essays directly to your tutor or instructor. 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 may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

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/ethics/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

A detailed schedule of dates, film screenings, and assigned readings will be made available once the course begins.