FILM GENRES, PART 1

THE 405  Spring Session A 2017
January 9 – February 28
SLN 27885/27886

Instructor: Philip J. Taylor
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Textbook: none
COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Course Objectives:

► Recognize and distinguish between film genres
► Identify the characteristics, tropes, and elements that define each genre
► Identify key events in the history of cinema, with a concentration on American films
► Recognize how each genre developed and was refined over time
► Compare specific revisionist films and franchises from the genre
► Explore the sub-genres of each genre
► Analyze key directors’, writers’, and actors’ contributions to each genre

For over 27,000 years, since the first cave paintings, long before man learned to write, stories have been told. Throughout civilization, stories are a powerful and necessary presence in all societies as a conveyor of entertainment, education, and both cultural and moral values. Have you ever stopped to wonder why most children’s fairy tales are so creepy? They are intended to instill ethical principles and learning skills and scare tactics seem to be effective with children! Stories come in different guises, depending on the goal of the storyteller: true stories, tall tales, scary fairy tales, inspirational stories, political allegories. Both Shakespeare and Chaplin knew that sometimes it’s more effective to achieve social change or awareness by making an audience laugh rather than by preaching at them.

Certain people are drawn to certain types of story. Centuries ago, writers began to realize that a promise is implicit when a reader opens a book of a particular kind of genre. Simply put, genre is a French word meaning, kind or type. Over the years it has come to mean a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a specific style, form, or content. Genres have been around way before the advent of moving pictures in the late 19th century. In fact, over 2,000 years ago, the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, was beginning to analyze the characteristics of comedy and tragedy.

Documentary filmmaker, Paul Rotha once remarked that cinema is “the great unresolved equation between art and industry.” As the studio system began to flourish at the end of World War I, a unique relationship was cemented between creative artists – actors, writers, directors, etc. – and the movie industry’s founding fathers who were first and foremost businessmen. Their bottom line was money. Hollywood churned out dozens of movies per week. To feed this entertainment monster, filmmakers copied or stole from narrative conventions and styles which had their beginnings in centuries of theatre and literature. Meanwhile, the businessmen – the producers and the exhibitors – began to formulate marketing strategies which the publishers and theatrical producers of the 19th century never dreamed of. Film genre became an important selling tool.

After World War I, Hollywood films began to not only dominate the domestic market, but they also made major inroads into foreign theatres in Europe and South America. In fact, they became a phenomenon with unprecedented cultural and social influence in a world which was rapidly polarizing with the emergence of radical regimes in China, Germany, Japan, and the U.S.S.R. This put even more pressure on Hollywood to perform. In order to keep up with this
insatiable demand for more and more product, films had to be produced as quickly and as economically as possible. It was a conveyor belt. Formulas began to emerge… the repetition of plot devices, identifiable characters and locations, camera and editing techniques, that would soon establish the basis not just for Hollywood genres but for cinema throughout the world.

By the time this course is over, you will be able to identify the standard conventions of each film genre. You will also learn how those conventions evolved over time, due to world events, cultural changes in our society, and the innovations of film artists and film technicians. Along the way I will show you clips from classic examples of each genre. Each module will conclude with the Movie of the Module, a film which I think gloriously represents that genre. I will select films that you may not have seen before. I would like to expand your knowledge and appreciation of film, so screening “Guardians of the Galaxy” or “Bridesmaids” as examples of their genres would be fun, no doubt, but it would be hardly be a rewarding learning experience.

Please keep in mind that another professor may select a totally different group of films to illustrate these genres. The clips and films in this course are entirely my choices. Some of those choices are obviously there out of sheer inevitability – “Citizen Kane”, “Star Wars”, for example – while others are my purely personal selections.

Film Genres, Part One is divided into four modules.

Module 1: Action/Adventure
Module 2: Comedy
Module 3: Drama
Module 4: Science Fiction & Horror

Film Genres, Part Two will cover animation, musicals, war, westerns, religion and epic films. It will be available in a subsequent session.

Each module contains from two or more lectures. Scattered throughout the lectures will be “RESEARCH ALERTS”. Whenever I say those words in these lectures – and I will say them quite often – it means that you need to research a subject that I won’t be covering in depth in the course itself. You’re going to have to do the research yourself. Why? Because there will certainly be a question on that subject in the quiz. This is a further learning component of the course which also ensures that you listen to the entire lecture and watch all the clips. And, speaking of quizzes…

**QUizzes**

At the end of each module there will be a quiz consisting of 20 multiple choice and/or fill in the blank questions based on the lectures, clips and the film you have viewed in that module. You will have 25 minutes to complete the quiz, and it must be taken before you can continue to the next module. You will be penalized one point for every two full minutes you go over that time limit. Overtime penalties are applied upon successful submission of your quiz, and any points you lose will be displayed alongside your final score on your quiz receipt. Please note that the
quiz program does not cope well with foreign characters such as é ŋ ç. No need to use them on fill in the blank questions. Simply use regular e, n, c, etc.

There is no on-screen timer during the quizzes, so you are responsible for tracking your time and ensuring that you don’t exceed the time limit. All overtime penalties are based on the starting and ending times of a quiz as determined by the Herberger Online servers, not the time displayed on your computer screen, or any other timer you may use. Do not waste your time sending me or Tech Support any screenshots of the time on your phone, computer, etc., in order to appeal an overtime penalty. Please note that you will not be able to pass the quiz unless you have listened to all the lectures and watched all the clips and films in that module. Please keep in mind that Herberger Online has a record of exactly how much time you spend on the course website. You are advised to make extensive handwritten notes as you listen to the lectures and watch the films. You can use your handwritten notes during the quizzes. A number of the questions in these quizzes will focus on the final couple of reels of the films, just in case you decide to opt out early from a screening.

It should go without saying that the best way to avoid overtime penalties is to study the material beforehand, and simply be prepared. If you attempt to open new tabs to Google for an answer, or listen again to a lecture, not only will you risk an error upon submitting the quiz, but activity like that only eats up more of your time. There’s plenty of time for any prepared student to answer all the questions. You may use your handwritten notes during quizzes.

Below are the dates when each module opens and closes. The closing date for the module is also the closing date and time for both the quiz and the discussion board for that particular module. Discussion boards are explained further on in the syllabus.

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<tr>
<th>MODULE</th>
<th>OPENS</th>
<th>QUIZ &amp; DISCUSSION CLOSES</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 9</td>
<td>Monday, January 23 11:59 PM</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>January 9</td>
<td>Friday, February 3 11:59 PM</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>January 9</td>
<td>Thursday, February 16 11:59 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>January 9</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 28 11:59 PM</td>
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This class is intensive but extremely workable if you pace yourself. You are strongly advised not to leave taking the quizzes until the last minute. The Herberger Online staff are not 24/7. Technical support is only available Mon-Fri, 8am to 5pm. There is no technical support on weekends. You will be on your own if you attempt a quiz with “wet ink”. That’s an old show business term for last minute. It comes from the time when the writers would fax quick rewrites directly to the set; in other words, the actors were reading lines and the ink had not dried on the page. Be warned.

GENERAL CONDITIONS FOR TAKING AN ONLINE QUIZ:

You need to have reliable access to the Internet on the assigned day of the quiz.

Quizzes can only be taken online. Submission of quizzes via email or in printed form will not be accepted.
The use of smart phones for taking a quiz is forbidden. Do not even attempt it.

Quizzes are not to be taken as a group effort or with any other form of collaboration.

No other Web pages can be open while taking a quiz. The system logs all browser activity. Opening new browsers or new browser tabs can invalidate your quiz session. All your browser activity is logged by the Web server. Accessing course videos while you are taking a quiz will result in a failed quiz session.

**SUBMITTING ONLINE QUIZZES**

Certain conditions apply for the submission of an online quiz. The important ones are:

Online quizzes that have been submitted CANNOT be reset (see below). Grades will stand as posted.

If you experience computer or technical problems during an online quiz DO NOT SUBMIT the quiz. For instance, if text or images fail to load, or the quiz itself seems incomplete or unresponsive.

If you suspect a technical error, exit the browser immediately and address the problem by trying to take the quiz again on a different computer, or by contacting technical support at holsupport@asu.edu. Do not contact the instructor.

Remember: submitted quizzes cannot be retaken. No exceptions.

**RESETS FOR ONLINE QUIZZES**

A reset for an online quiz is an action usually taken by a student prior to contacting technical support. If you experience a glitch during an online quiz, click the course logout button and close your browser. When you attempt to restart the online quiz, the system will ask you to confirm the reset. Some important facts about resets:

- Only one online reset is allowed per online quiz.
- In total, only two online resets of online quizzes are allowed in any given semester. In other words, you can only reset two of the four quizzes available in this online course.

**MISSED QUIZZES**

It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of the dates and times for the online quizzes, however, there are conditions that apply for missed online quizzes. The important ones are:

An online quiz can be taken if it was missed because of an excused absence (see below). Permission from the instructor is necessary.
A missed online quiz for reasons other than an excused absence can be taken only with permission from the instructor.

If you miss an online quiz, you must inform the instructor immediately or at least within the subsequent 48 hours and provide an electronic copy (e.g., a PDF file) of the document supporting your absence (e.g., doctor’s note, funeral announcement, letter from ASU’s Athletic Department, etc.).

If you experience personal, medical or other unforeseen problems during a quiz, DO NOT TAKE OR SUBMIT THE ONLINE QUIZ – instead, email the instructor immediately to begin a discussion of your situation.

Depending on the situation, the instructor may ask for a different type of quiz as the replacement for a missed online quiz.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Excused absences apply for online quizzes. They include:

- Personal illness (documented);
- Religious holidays (conforming to the ASU list);
- Unexpected personal emergencies such as death of an immediate family member (documented);
- Jury duty or other similar court obligation (documented);
- Military duty and/or assignment (documented);
- Direct participation in a sport event as an ASU athlete (documented).

Absences that will not be considered include:

- A previously scheduled obligation such as a family reunion or trip;
- Personal obligations prior to or after an official holiday;
- Job obligations;
- Attending a wedding (even your own);
- Illness of a family member;
- Workload in other courses;
- The death of a pet.

MAKE-UP QUIZZES

If granted, the date for a make-up exam will be determined by the instructor in concert with student needs.

PLEASE NOTE: Any act that violates the implicit code of academic integrity will be dealt with in the appropriate manner. See Policy on Academic Integrity, below.
DISCUSSION BOARDS

Each module will also have a discussion board. The discussion board will close at the same time as the quiz for that module. You should post comments about the films and the clips that you have viewed in the module. You can respond to your colleagues’ comments, but please keep each post to a maximum of 50 words. If you exceed the 50 max word count per comment, you will be penalized. Your comments will be graded. If you make frequent contributions which are original, intelligent and well-written (spelling and grammar!), then you could earn a maximum of 50 points toward your cumulative score for the course. If you make no contributions at all, then you will earn 0/50 points. You don’t need to be a math genius to figure out that this will put a significant dent in your final grade. I am the sole arbiter of what constitutes “original, intelligent and well-written”.

I’ve been doing online courses for quite some time and I know pretty much every trick in the book. Do not post an observation on the discussion board which is a virtual repeat of something I said in one of my lectures. That’s such a glaringly obvious trick and will result in a point deduction. Please don’t include queries or comments about the quizzes on the discussion board. According to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), I cannot discuss a student's grades or scores in a public forum such as the discussion board. Email me privately about such matters.

I will post updates on new films on my blog on the discussion board when I think they’re worth mentioning. Material in this section will not be included in the quizzes, but I’ve received a great deal of positive feedback about this feature in previous classes. I will sometimes post an extra credit opportunity in an update as an incentive for you to read them.

GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

You are also required to participate in a two group assignments. The number of students in each group will depend on the final enrollment numbers. Participation in this group assignment is mandatory. If a majority of the members of your group do not think you have contributed proportionately and fairly, you will not receive any points for that assignment.

How you communicate with each other is entirely up to you. Just as in the real world, moaning and griping are not going to get the job done and waste valuable time. You need to get organized ASAP, communicate, and deliver the assignment on time. The groups will be selected at random and I will appoint a group coordinator, again at random, at the start of the semester. Please remember that, regarding any questions about the group assignments, I will only respond to the group coordinator. The group coordinator is the only channel to me for group assignments. I hope that’s clear. If a group delivers its two assignments on time and in adherence with the instructions of the assignment, then the group coordinator will receive 15 bonus points.

GENERAL WARNING AND ONLINE POLICIES

Some of the films we’ll be screening will contain language that is considered obscene or profane. Also, there will be scenes that are graphically explicit in portraying sexual, horrific
or violent acts. And there may be ideas or practices endorsed by a specific motion picture that are considered immoral or amoral by some standards. Please consider the cautions above carefully because this class might not be for you and the appropriate time to withdraw is now.

Some film clips may be in a foreign language with subtitles. Also, if you find material in glorious black-and-white with monaural sound distracting or difficult to view, please make that a big part of your consideration for taking the class. You are responsible for all viewing materials.

Most of the lectures contain clips which are embedded in the lectures themselves. Each module has a Movie of the Module which you are required to view in its entirety before moving on to the module quiz. All the feature films are available in the Screening Room unless posted otherwise.

Online courses are significantly different from ‘live’ courses. Consequently, students need to be aware of protocol and conditions that govern such courses.

COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS

You must have a computer – your own or have access to a computer on campus – that will allow you to interact with the online course. The computer must be capable of consistently streaming Quicktime movie files. The use of smart phones (iPhone, Blackberry, etc.) is not recommended. This course is known to work on all major browsers, including Safari, Firefox, Chrome, and Internet Explorer, on both Macintosh computers and PCs. Note: the use of Safari or Firefox is highly recommended.

Additionally, you must have computer skills that will allow you to surf the internet, access specific sites, confer via email, download and upload files, and any other course-related activities.

OFFICE HOURS

There are no office hours for this online course. With the exception of questions about technical issues, please communicate directly with the instructor via email (Philip.Taylor@asu.edu). Because of ASU policy you must use your ASU email address when communicating with the instructor. Please be mindful that emails are not always effective in communicating the intent of your message. Consequently, take the time to compose what you want to say. Remember: You are not texting a friend who knows you well!

GENERAL CONDITIONS

As stated above, access to a suitable computer and adequate computer skills are critical for your success in this online course. Consequently, the instructor will not consider computer-related excuses for the failure to meet course requirements (excuses such as: technical incompatibility, sudden infection by computer viruses, inadequate access to the Internet or any other similar reasons). Neither will inadequate computer skills be considered as a valid excuse for not successfully completing the course.
NOTE: You are strongly advised not to enroll in the online course if either computer access or computer skills are an issue.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS: VERY IMPORTANT!

To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the ASU Disability Resource Center. http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc  (480) 965-1234

This is a very important step as accommodations may be difficult, if not impossible, to make retroactively. If you have a letter from the Disability Resource Center indicating that you have a disability which requires academic accommodations, in order to assure that you receive your accommodations in a timely manner, please present this documentation to me no later than the end of the first week of the semester so that your needs can be addressed effectively.

WITHDRAWAL POLICIES

If you wish to withdraw from this course, it is your responsibility to do so. You can find the withdrawal deadlines, and other important dates, on this web page. Course registration changes are processed through My ASU: http://my.asu.edu

BARRETT HONORS CONTRACTS

Barrett College honors contracts are accepted, but please contact Prof. Taylor as early as possible. No honors contracts are accepted after January 31, 2017.

GRADING

Your final grade will be a factor of the following elements:

QUIZZES: Each of the four quizzes will contain 20 questions with a value of 5 points per question. Therefore, the quizzes will have a total point count of 400.

DISCUSSION BOARD: You can earn a maximum of 50 points for your contributions to the discussion board.

ASSIGNMENTS: Each assignment carries a maximum of 100 points per student. Therefore, the maximum points you can earn for the assignments will be 200. The group coordinators will receive an additional 15 points if the group’s assignments are delivered in a timely manner.

The maximum points you can receive are 650.

Your final point count will be converted to a letter grade as follows:

97% ↔ 100% A+
94% ↔ 96.9% A
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<tr>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% ↔ 93.9%</td>
<td>A –</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>87% ↔ 89.9%</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>84% ↔ 86.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80% ↔ 83.9%</td>
<td>B –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76% ↔ 79.9%</td>
<td>C+</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>70% ↔ 75.9%</td>
<td>C</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>60% ↔ 69.9%</td>
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Anything below 60% is an E

If you are found cheating on the quizzes, you will fail this class. The use of resources from the Internet, including but not limited to former exams, and recorded classes will also be considered a violation of the ASU Academic Integrity policy.

Your work will be checked by anti-plagiarism software, so please do not attempt it. One of the possible consequences is failure in the class, with a designation of “Academic Dishonesty” as the reason. You could also be expelled from the university.