

ENGLISH 2010: INTERMEDIATE WRITING  
Writing about Film  
SPRING 2012

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Office Hours: MWF 10:00—10:50  
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**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Brooker, Will. *BFI Film Classics: Star Wars*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.  
**ISBN: 978-1-84457-277-9**

Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing about Film, Eighth Ed.* Boston: Pearson, 2012.  
**ISBN: 978-0-205-23639-8**

Lopate, Phillip, ed. *American Movie Critics: An Anthology from the Silents until Now*. New York: The Library of America, 2006.  
**ISBN: 1-931082-92-8**

One volume (your choice) of the BFI Film Classics series. A list of the available titles can be found here: [www.palgrave.com/bfi](http://www.palgrave.com/bfi)

**RECOMMENDED TEXTS & MATERIALS**

College-level dictionary  
Active SUU e-mail account  
Writing notebook (to bring to class daily)  
Account with a film streaming or rental service

**COURSE GOALS**

This class will ask you to engage with movies and films in a critical, argumentative fashion, and encourage you to become more than just a passive consumer of entertainment by writing analytically and critically about film genres and ideology. In this way, you will refine both your critical and analytical abilities through writing, and engage in research by examining the arguments of other film critics and essayists.

Few (if any) of the questions we'll address this semester regarding film history, auterism, or genre have easy answers. How well you do in this class will depend more on your ability to think *critically* about the role of movies in contemporary society and your

ability to *argue* your position(s) well than it will on your ability to simply regurgitate the “right” answers.

We will spend a great deal of time reading and discussing books and essays written about film, so you should be prepared to engage in both regular discussions and writing activities related to the course texts.

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

*Screening Reports:* You will write at least four short essays (2 typed pages) detailing your reactions to the assigned readings and films for the course. You will include these, along with class free-writing exercises, in a notebook journal to be turned in at the end of the semester.

*Film Analysis Paper:* You will analyze the visual and narrative structure of a film of critical and/or historical importance.

*Genre Paper:* You will write one essay (2-3 typed pages) that defines the characteristics of a particular film genre and incorporates distinctive examples from film history.

*BFI Film Classics Review:* You will write a detailed review of one volume in the *BFI Film Classics* book series and compare the book’s perspective on a selected film with your own.

*Oral Presentations:* You will make two presentations in class during the semester: One on an article or chapter from the *American Movie Critics* text, and another on the *BFI Film Classics* volume you review.

*Final Paper:* You will write your own version of a *BFI Film Classic* text, incorporating a specific argument and/or interpretation of a film.

Further, more specific, details of each of these assignments will be provided during the course.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

*Grading:* To complete and pass this course successfully, you must attend class regularly, complete all writing assignments, prepare for and participate in class discussions, and complete the final paper. Specific requirements of individual assignments may vary, but in all cases my evaluation of your essays will consider purpose, content, development of ideas, organization, expression, and mechanics. It is your responsibility to contact me outside of class if you have a question about my comments or a grade you receive.

Regular attendance and participation in class discussions will be a vital component of our class sessions.

Free-writing journal	30%	100-93% = A	76-73% = C
Film analysis paper	5%	92-90% = A-	72-70% = C-
Oral presentations	15%	89-87% = B+	69-67% = D+
Genre paper	15%	86-83% = B	66-63% = D
BFI review	15%	82-80% = B-	62-60% = D-
Final paper	20%	79-77% = C+	below 60% = F

*Late Assignments:* Assignments will be due by 4:00 PM on the date indicated in the schedule. Work submitted after that time will receive a grade reduction of 10% per 24-hour period. Certain circumstances may warrant a deadline extension, but such extensions must be approved by me at least 48 hours prior to the due date. Missed exams may only be taken with the appropriate Dean's excuse.

*Academic Integrity:* Scholastic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in an immediate failing grade, in addition to university prosecution. You are expected to have read and understood the current issue of the student handbook (published by Student Services) regarding student responsibilities and rights, and the intellectual property policy regarding procedures about what constitutes acceptable on-campus behavior. Students who engage in deliberate plagiarism will receive a failing grade on the relevant assignment and be reported to the Vice President of Student Services, who will record the plagiarism incident on your permanent academic record.

Cheating, forgery, plagiarism or the use of work belonging to another are all considered academic dishonesty. The following are specific examples of such conduct:

- purchasing a paper or other project for which one then seeks to receive credit;
- copying from another student with the intent of receiving credit as one's own work;
- using "crib notes" or other stored information (in a computer or calculator) without expressed permission from the faculty member;
- collaborating on assignments when such collaboration is forbidden;
- failing to properly document source material in a paper or project;
- "cutting and pasting" source material from various internet sites and submitting it as your own work without proper citation.

*Use of Electronics:* Communication and/or entertainment devices are not welcome in my class. Please turn them OFF. This will be particularly important because of the number of film clips we will analyze in class

*Writers Lab Services:* Starting the second week of the semester, the BC204 Writing Center is **open 8-5 Monday through Friday** to help you navigate any stage of the writing process. Just visit the center or e-mail [writingcenter@suu.edu](mailto:writingcenter@suu.edu) to reserve a half-hour session or 50-minute appointment with an English major skilled in writing academic papers. The Writing Center also accommodates walk-in appointments when the schedule board is not filled. Please realize that the Center closes early (at noon) on class days that fall before school holidays. The Center is also closed on holiday weekend Saturdays and during Finals Week. For more information, visit the Writing Center website <http://suu.edu/hss/english/writingcenter/>

*ADA STATEMENT:* Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations or auxiliary aids will need to contact the Southern Utah University Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), in Room 206F of the Sharwan Smith Center or phone (435) 865-8022. SSD determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of services.

*EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STATEMENT:* In case of emergency, the University's Emergency Notification System (ENS) will be activated. Students are encouraged to maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the *mySUU* portal. In addition, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Emergency Response Protocols posted in each classroom. Detailed information about the University's emergency management plan can be found at <http://www.suu.edu/emergency>

*Advisory:* The promotion of intellectual development and open discussion in our class will occasionally entail exposure to ideas, images, and language with which you may be unfamiliar and/or uncomfortable. These ideas, images, and language may come from the course texts, other students, or myself. I highly value the freedom of thought and expression which makes the study and appreciation of film, literature, music, and writing possible and desirable. Be prepared to engage with the unfamiliar in this class and respond to it respectfully.

### ***SIX TIPS ON HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE***

1. **Read your syllabus.** This document contains the basic ground rules by which this course works. Under exceptional circumstances (e.g., life and death emergencies), I may be willing to bend some of the rules listed here; however, ignorance of those rules on your part is not such a circumstance.
2. **Show up on time, pay attention in class, and stay until the end of the period.** In a course centered around discussions of readings and recordings, what happens *in* the classroom becomes absolutely indispensable. If you miss large parts of class (either through absence or inattention), you will almost certainly struggle to do well.
3. **Ask thoughtful questions.** If you don't understand a major point from one of the discussions, ask about it -- if not in class, then online. This means more than simply asking me to say something a second (or third) time so that you can write it down word for word. And it means more than simply saying "I don't get it" and hoping that I can rephrase the entire original idea in words that make more sense.
4. **Argue your points . . . and argue them well.** When it comes to the essays you will write for the class, you will be expected to produce prose that is *persuasive*, not merely factually correct. For example, simply saying that you think that Eminem is a no-talent hack whose music should be banned is far less convincing (and receives far less credit) than explaining *why* you think so.
5. **Take advantage of my office hours.** I am happy to set up appointments to meet with students to talk about the course. Individual appointments help me to get to know you better and appreciate your needs. Please feel free to contact me so that we can meet at a mutually agreeable time.

6. **Think ahead.** Bear in mind that the work required of you this semester takes time -- and that time isn't available in great abundance, especially if you are taking other classes. This is not a course where simply memorizing a long list of names and dates in the last week of the session will earn you an acceptable grade. The semester will go by *much* faster than you think, so plan accordingly.
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### COURSE SCHEDULE

- T 1/10 Introduce texts & syllabus; purpose & goals of course  
Why write about the movies?  
**HW:** Read "Writing about the Movies" in Corrigan (pps. 1-17)
- R 1/12 Discuss Corrigan  
Discuss genres  
**HW:** Read "Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing" in Corrigan (pps. 36-82)
- T 1/17 Discuss film terms  
Sign up for oral presentations  
**HW:** Read AMC Introduction (pps. xiii-xxvii)
- R 1/19 Discuss film criticism  
Introduce BFI series, review & presentation assignments  
**HW:** Read Munsterberg (10-17) and Bakshy (45-47) in AMC
- T 1/24 Discuss Munsterberg & Bakshy  
Watch & discuss short film  
**READ:** Will Brooker (7-22)
- R 1/26 Discuss Brooker  
Introduce genre paper  
Discuss genre definitions  
**HW:** Read Gilbert Seldes (56-66) in AMC  
Write definition of a film genre using current & historical examples to illustrate your points.
- T 1/31 Discuss Seldes  
**HW:** Read Sennwald (86-89), Arnheim (90-95), Tolson (140-144), and Goodman (145-149) in AMC
- R 2/2 Discuss readings
- T 2/7 **FILM**  
**HW:** Read Will Brooker (23-46)
- R 2/9 Discuss film and Brooker  
Introduce film analysis paper  
**Genre paper due**  
**HW:** Read Deming (209-220) and Farber (221-232) in AMC
- T 2/14 Discuss Deming and Farber  
**HW:** Read Sontag (316-329) in AMC
- R 2/16 Discuss Sontag  
**HW:** Read Will Brooker (47-69)
- T 2/21 Discuss Brooker

R 2/23      **HW:** Read Kael (337-367) in AMC  
 Discuss Kael

T 2/28      **HW:** Read Haskell (426-450) in AMC  
 Discuss Haskell  
 Watch & discuss short film

R 3/1        **HW:** Read Schrader (456-466) and Gill (476-484) in AMC  
 Discuss Schrader and Gill  
 Introduce final assignment & proposal  
**Film analysis paper due**

T 3/6        **HW:** Read Hoberman (517-537) in AMC  
 Discuss Hoberman

R 3/8        **HW:** Read O'Brien (591-605) and hooks (617-621) in AMC  
 Discuss readings

**HW:** Read Rosenbaum (626-635) and Harvey (644-666) in AMC  
               View either *Eyes Wide Shut* or *Imitation of Life*

T 3/13      **SPRING RECESS**

R 3/15      **NO CLASSES**

T 3/20      Discuss readings and films  
**Final proposals due**

**HW:** Read film reviews of choice in AMC

R 3/22      Discuss reviews  
**HW:** Complete reading of Brooker

T 3/27      Discuss Brooker

R 3/29      Film TBA

T 4/3        Discuss film  
**HW:** Review BFI volume of choice  
**BFI review due**

R 4/5        Begin BFI presentations

T 4/10      Continue BFI presentations

R 4/12      Open office hours

T 4/17      Continue BFI presentations

R 4/19      Continue BFI presentations

T 4/24      Finish BFI presentations

R 4/26      Capstone film TBA  
**Final paper due**