

WASHINGTON THROUGH CINEMA
Lutheran College Washington Semester
Spring 2012
Wed: 6:00-8:30 pm

Dr. Antonio Barrenechea
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Office Hours: After class and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides students with the basic tools for a critical understanding of the cinema and of the film industry. With a particular emphasis on Washington, DC, we examine filmmaking in relation to the business demands of production, distribution, and marketing. We also explore conventions of genre, individual cinema artistry, and the aesthetic intersections of literature and film across cultural contexts.

REQUIRED TEXTS (Available at the University Bookstore)

Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction* (McGraw-Hill, 9th edition)
Capra, Frank. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (DVD)
Rosales, Jean K. and Michael R. Jobe *DC Goes to the Movies* (iUniverse)
Sorkin, Aaron. *A Few Good Men* (Samuel French, Inc.)

*In addition, students should arrange to view films when required for classes individually or in groups.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course has a constant and sometimes demanding work load. Active participation during class discussion is essential to doing well. At a minimum, I expect you 1) to have excellent attendance, 2) to arrive and leave on time, 3) to have done assigned readings/viewings carefully before class, 4) to turn in your work on time, 5) to bring the necessary materials and texts to class, 6) to listen respectfully to me and to your classmates, and 7) to contribute to class discussion and activities on a regular basis. **It is your own responsibility to find out what you miss when you are not in class.** I suggest that you exchange email information with at least one other classmate in order to ensure that you are always prepared. **I will accept no late submissions of any kind unless you have a medical note.**

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

I want students to learn and to receive the good grades they deserve, so please make an appointment with me should you have undue difficulty with the course. Assignments include: 1) a shot-by-shot breakdown and analysis (“segmentation exercise”) of a scene from *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, 2) three viewing/location reports that link your viewing of films with visits to Washington, DC locations, and 3) a final consisting of essays pertaining to the course topics. You will receive detailed directions for completing each one of these assignments before they are due. The following is the course grade distribution:

Attendance and Participation: 20%
Viewing/Location Reports: 20%
Segmentation Exercise: 30%
Final: 30%

GRADING CRITERIA

Students often complain that they do not understand “what professors want” when it comes time to complete required assignments. I have designed the following criteria guidelines to help you grasp how I conduct a large part of the grading. I divide formal written assignments in the following ways:

**Papers: Content and Analysis (70%)*

An average paper (C) demonstrates a superficial understanding of the topic; it is usually based almost exclusively on class notes. It generally relies too much on summary rather than explicit analysis of textual points, and uses quotations ineffectively.

A better paper (B) incorporates readings that have been assigned in other contexts (including in-class assignments), analyzes literary and film devices as they are employed in a text, and uses specific quotations from texts in order to illustrate the grounding of its analysis.

A superior paper (A) demonstrates all the qualities of a “B” paper, and includes a more sophisticated understanding of the chosen topic. That is, an “A” paper uses the tools of textual analysis, apt use of quotation, concise and explicit remarks justifying that analysis, while drawing on all the available resources of the course.

**Papers: Form, Style, Mechanics and Usage (30%)*

An average paper (C) demonstrates a reasonable control of basic English syntax, verb and subject (including pronoun) agreement, tense consistency, proofreading, paragraph organization, etc.

A better paper (B) demonstrates an ability to vary sentence structure, has few if any proofreading errors, employs careful transitions and organization in a more sophisticated way, and controls grammar.

A superior paper (A) demonstrates all the qualities of a “B” paper, and in addition demonstrates an ability to control complex sentence structure, vary verbs effectively, and contains no proofreading errors.

GRADING SCALE

100-99	A+
98-94	A
93-90	A-
89-87	B+
86-84	B
83-80	B-
79-77	C+
76-74	C
73-70	C-
69-67	D+
66-64	D
63-60	D-
59 or below	F

CALENDAR

Week #1 Wed 1/18	FILM GRAMMAR Introduction to the course In-Class Screening: Chuck Jones, <i>Duck Amuck</i> (1953)
Week #2 Wed 1/25	<i>Industry</i> : Bordwell/Thompson, <i>Film Art</i> [chapter 1] Discussion: Washington, DC and the Movie Business
Week #3 Wed 2/1	<i>Mise-en-Scene</i> : Bordwell/Thompson, <i>Film Art</i> [chapter 4] Discussion: Staging in <i>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</i>
Week #4 Wed 2/8	<i>Cinematography</i> : Bordwell/Thompson, <i>Film Art</i> [chapter 5] Discussion: Photographing <i>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</i>
Week #5 Wed 2/15	<i>Editing</i> : Bordwell/Thompson, <i>Film Art</i> [chapter 6] Discussion: Montage in <i>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</i>
Week #6 Wed 2/22	<i>Sound</i> : Bordwell/Thompson, <i>Film Art</i> [chapter 7] Discussion: The Soundtrack of <i>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</i>
Week #7 Wed 2/29	GENRE: Film Noir & Horror Film Introduction to Genre Due: Segmentation Midterm Exam
Week #8 Wed 3/7	<i>Film Noir</i> : Alfred Hitchcock, <i>Strangers on a Train</i> (1951)
Week #9 Wed 3/14	<i>Horror Film</i> : William Friedkin, <i>The Exorcist</i> (1973) Due: Viewing /Location Report #1
Week #10 Wed 3/21	AUTEURSHIP: Oliver Stone Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962" (1962) <i>JFK</i> (1991)
Week #11 Wed 3/28	<i>Nixon</i> (1995) Due: Viewing/Location Report #2
Week #12 Wed 4/4	ADAPTATION: A Few Good Men Linda Hutcheon, "Beginning to Theorize Adaptation: What? Who? Why? How? Where? When?" (2006) Aaron Sorkin, <i>A Few Good Men</i> (1989)
Week #13 Wed 4/11	Rob Reiner, <i>A Few Good Men</i> (1992) Due: Viewing/Location Report #3
Week #14 Wed 4/18	Due: Final Exam Essays