



Máster en Estudios Textuales y Culturales en Lengua Inglesa 60701 - Issues in Film Studies

Course 2010 - 2011

Curso: 1, Semestre: 1, Créditos: 7.5

Basic information

Teachers

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Recommendations to attend this course

Basic knowledge of the workings of film narratives and of film analysis is advisable but not indispensable. Students who have never done Film Studies will be provided with a basic bibliography on request.

Course Schedule and Deadlines

Presentation and discussion of the theoretical approaches included in the programme and analysis of film texts from the various perspectives provided by these approaches (cif. course schedule). Group analysis of a selection of film texts from the perspective of the critical approaches and methods presented in the theory sessions (cif. course schedule).

Presentation of a 3,000 words essay: last day of the first semester.

Home

Learning outcomes that define this course

The student, in order to pass the course, will have to show her/his competence in the following skills:

- 1:** The student can use the basic critical tools to understand and analyse films and audiovisual texts in English.
- 2:** The student can contextualize the study of film texts within the most relevant critical and theoretical approaches in Film Studies.
- 3:** The student can use the English language in a scholarly and critical environment.
- 4:** The student can provide a critical response to audiovisual texts.

Introduction

Brief presentation of the course

The main aim of this course is to provide students with the necessary critical tools for the academic study of films and other audiovisual texts within the context of Film Studies. Together with the subject "Approaches to the Study of the Literary Text" (also a compulsory subject in the first semester) it introduces students to relevant critical approaches and the critical analysis of texts in English, and seeks to develop students' critical response to these texts. Together with the subject "How to Write a Research Article: Empirical and Applied Insights into Academic Writing" (also a compulsory subject in the first semester), it introduces students to the application of the basic critical tools to the understanding and analysis of texts in English and to the development of skills in the use of English in a scholarly and critical environment. This subject also provides the basis for the study of the following optional courses in the Film Studies Module ("Cinema, Culture and Society", "Issues in Representation" and "Film Genres").

Bibliografía

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Compulsory readings (by topic)

Dyer, Richard. 'Introduction to Film Studies'. In John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson, eds. *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Oxford: Oxford U.P. 1998, 3-10. **(1)**

Miller, Toby. 'Stars and Performance: Introduction'. In Robert Stam and Toby Miller. *Film Theory: An Anthology*. Oxford & Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000, 595-602. **(2)**

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Supplementary readings

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Competences

General aims of the course

The expected results of the course respond to the following general aims

The main aim of this subject is to provide students with an introduction to some of the most relevant approaches used in Film Studies and to test their explanatory power through the close analysis of a selection of films in English. The specific aims of this subject are the following: i) to provide the students with basic critical tools to understand and analyse film texts in English, ii) to familiarise the students with the most relevant approaches to film texts in Film Studies, iii) to test the explanatory power of these approaches through the analysis of a selection of film texts, iv) to improve the students' skills in the use of English in a scholarly and critical environment, v) to reinforce the students' critical response to audiovisual texts.

Context/Importance of the course for the master degree

This subject is the compulsory component of the Film Studies itinerary and is therefore linked with the three optional courses related to Film Studies: "Genre, Culture and Society", "Film Genres" and "Issues in Representation".

After completing the course, the student will be competent in the following skills:

- 1:** Developing and applying original ideas in a professional as well as in a research context.
- 2:** Understanding and applying acquired knowledge to solve problems related to professional and social contexts as well as to broader multidisciplinary contexts.
- 3:** Being able to relate knowledge from different subjects, handle complex information, apply the proper methodology and frameworks, express informed critical views and provide conclusions in the form of written essays and oral presentations, in clear and proper English, aimed at both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- 4:** After acquiring the required critical and methodological skills, students are expected to possess the ability to carry out a piece of research in an autonomous way.

Relevance of the skills acquired in the course

The proposed aims of this course are crucial to provide students with a sound theoretical and methodological background that will allow them to conduct research in English successfully. Similarly, the specific aims of this subject are essential skills to carry out the research process (i.e. using critical tools to understand and analyse film texts in English, applying critical approaches to film texts and developing a critical response to these texts).

The ability to develop and apply original ideas in a professional as well as a research context is a fundamental skill to conduct successful research in the field of English studies. The same applies to the ability to interrelate knowledge from different subjects, handle complex information, apply the proper methodology and frameworks, express a critical view and provide conclusions in both written essays and oral presentations, in clear and appropriate English, aimed at both specialised and non-specialised audiences, and the ability to conduct work (research) in an autonomous way.

Evaluation

Assessment tasks

The student will prove that he/she has achieved the expected learning results by means of the following assessment tasks:

1: During the course, students will be given a list of films, some compulsory and some recommended, as well as a list of compulsory and recommended readings related to the films and to the theoretical approaches covered in the syllabus. Both the films and the theoretical and critical texts will be part of the class work and of the student's individual work. The aim of the critical texts is to provide students the critical tools they will be expected to use in film analysis and to sharpen the students' skills in analyzing films academically.

The textual analysis and the critical discussion of the readings will show that the students have achieved learning objectives 1, 2 and 3. These activities will be assessed following the assessment criteria and the established level of exigency. The activities will be graded from 0 to 10 and represent 10% of the final grade of the student in this subject.

The analysis and discussion of textual models should follow the "Guidelines for the analysis and discussion of textual models".

1: Before the end of the course, students will also be required to write a **3,000 word essay** in correct academic English on a specific aspect of the course contents, on a topic previously agreed with one of the teachers. In this essay the students are expected to assimilate the critical approaches to films presented by the teachers and to prove their ability to use those approaches in the analysis of specific texts. The textual analysis and critical discussion of the readings will credit students' achievement of learning objectives # 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. This essay will be graded from 0 to 10 and this grade represents **90%** of the final score of the student in this subject. A pass mark in this essay is a *sine qua non* condition to pass the subject.

This 3,000-word essay must follow the norms and format specified in the "Guidelines for preparing the essay"

Assessment criteria

CRITERIA FOR RATING ESSAYS

<p><i>From 0 to 4</i></p> <p><i>Hypothesis</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the <i>hypothesis</i> stated? • Is the research question answered? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Is the research question justified by its importance either in practice or in the research literature? <p><i>Theoretical framework/model</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a theoretical framework used (and justified)? • Are the analytical categories defined clearly, non-overlapping, and related to sources in the literature? • Where appropriate, are the central analytical categories problematised? <p><i>Methodology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the method adequately described? • Is the method used appropriate to the field in which the writer is working? <p><i>Material (primary sources -i.e. texts analysed)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the material relevant? • Is the material used appropriately to answer the research questions? <p><i>Secondary sources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the essay demonstrate that the student has understood the relevant secondary sources? • Are those sources referred to in accordance with academic conventions for attribution in general (properly attributing the work of others) and citation in particular (quoting and paraphrasing)? • Is the secondary material used appropriately to support the analysis and conclusions? • Are the relevant sources compared, contrasted, and synthesized? <p><i>Argumentation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the argumentation effective? If applicable, are possible counterarguments or alternative interpretations of evidence brought up and, if so, is the claim made in the essay convincingly defended against those counterarguments? <p><i>Conclusions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the conclusions clearly stated? Do they follow logically from the evidence that has been presented in the essay? • Are the implications of the findings discussed and connected to a wider context?
<p><i>From 0 to 3</i></p> <p><i>Independence, originality and critical examination</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the writer worked independently, showing high level of initiative in both reading and research? • Has the writer been able to contribute novel or original ideas (such as improved methodology; creative analysis; new findings) that are of value to the research community? • Has the writer been able to critically examine the various aspects of the study (such as secondary sources, the material, methods, conclusions drawn)?
<p><i>From 0 to 3</i></p> <p><i>Information structure and organisation of essay</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the information structured appropriately such that the text is both coherent and cohesive? Is the text well-structured both at sentence and paragraph level? • Is the essay organised in a clear and logical manner? Are the expected components present (presentation of background; statement of aims; description of method and material; presentation and analysis of results; and conclusion)? <p><i>Formatting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the appropriate formatting and referencing conventions been followed consistently? <p><i>Language and style</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the language correct with respect to spelling, punctuation and grammar? • Is the style appropriate for an academic text?

Reference documents

Guidelines for preparing the essay and participating in seminars

The students may find it useful to follow the following guidelines:

"Documento de referencia para la elaboración del ensayo"/"Guidelines for writing the essay"

1. Define appropriate key concepts and apply them appropriately to the field of research.
2. Prepare the literature review (i.e. what other scholars have stated about the topic of the essay, or about related topics).
Make sure that the literature review is sufficient in scope and relevant regarding the topic under investigation.
3. Define a thesis statement / Define the research questions.
4. State and justify the theoretical framework.
5. Define clearly the analytical categories (where appropriate, indicating overlapping or problematisation of those categories).

6. Describe the analytical methodology used for the study of the topic of the essay.
7. Provide an effective argument (factual evidence, exemplification, illustration, citations, etc.) in order to make convincing claims.
8. State a conclusion in accordance with your arguments and relate it to a wider context.
9. Show independence in reading and researching, originality and critical examination.
10. Follow the information and style conventions of the subdisciplinary field (literature, film studies, cultural studies or linguistics).

"Documento de referencia para el desarrollo de los seminarios teóricos y analíticos/"Guidelines for the development of theoretical and analytical seminars"

1. The theoretical part of the seminar, imparted by the teacher, will provide an active learning environment in which students can develop the ability to read/view/analyze critically and conceptually, and therefore to speak and write in the classroom.
2. The seminar will provide general introductions to theoretical frameworks or an application of a given research methodology/framework to a selection of texts/films.
3. Students should bring to the seminar a draft or notes on the text or film under analysis and participate actively in the classroom discussion.
4. Questions can be posed to improve the quality of discussion.
5. Assignment of formal presentations and critical comment may also be requested for stimulating discussion.

(Adapted from www.oid.ucla.edu/students/cutf/cutfguidelines.doc)

Activities and resources

Course methodology

The learning process that has been designed for this course is based on the following activities:

This course has been specifically designed to train researchers in the basics of Film Studies. For this reason, the proposed activities (the critical analysis of films and the comments on, presentation of, and reflections on these analyses from various theoretical perspectives) are aimed at the application of the fundamental principles of the most relevant critical and theoretical approaches to the analysis of various sorts of representative literary texts in English.

The course is organized in three stages: 1. Learning of the critical approaches and analytical tools; 2. Application of the learnt concepts through the analysis and collective discussion of the selected films in English; and 3. Writing of an individual critical essay, applying the theoretical approaches and methods learnt, as well as the specific tools employed for the development of the selected topic of research.

Outline of the Programme

The programme offered to the students to help them achieve the learning results includes the following activities :

- 1:** Seminars on "Issues in Film Studies" 0.4 credits. Onsite.

Theoretical and analytical seminars aimed at introducing the main theoretical approaches in the field of Film Studies. These seminars will be conducted following the "guidelines for the development of theoretical and analytical seminars"

- 2:** Tasks/activities. 3 credits. Onsite.

Classroom activities will provide students with models for film analysis. Students will discuss both individually and in group the textual and critical analyses of a selection of films. The aim of the tasks/activities is to learn how to use/apply the critical and textual analytical tools and theoretical approaches dealt with in the course. These activities will be conducted following the "guidelines for the analysis and discussion of compulsory and

recommended readings”.

3: Individual and group tasks. 5.8 credits. Onsite.

Analysis of a selection of films, which will be later discussed in class from the perspective of the theoretical frameworks proposed. These activities will be conducted following the “guidelines for activities on the analysis and discussion of compulsory and recommended readings”.

4: Tutorial activities. 0.6 credits. Onsite and online.

Assessment tasks/activities and self-assessment of classroom work. 0.2 credits. These activities will be conducted following the “guidelines for activities on the analysis and discussion of compulsory and recommended readings”.

5: Assessment tasks/activities and self-assessment of classroom work. 0.2 credits. Offsite.

These activities will be conducted following the “guidelines for preparing the essay”.

Course planning

Calendar of actual sessions and presentation of works

1. Introduction. Revision of the basic concepts in the analysis of film narratives. The methodology of academic research in Film Studies. The importance of mise en scène analysis.

2. Star texts: The study of the film star. The origins and history of Hollywood film stars. Stars as semiotic and cultural signs. Star approaches to the analysis of film texts.

3. The author and the text: Film directors and authorship. 1950s and 60 *auteur* theories. The death and rebirth of the author. Authors as texts and as marketing strategies. Postmodern authors.

4. Contemporary Hollywood cinema: Issues and tendencies I. The New Hollywood: industrial rearrangements, the primacy of special effects, the return of the blockbuster. Independent cinema.

5. Contemporary Hollywood cinema: Issues and tendencies II. 21st century cinema. Hollywood and beyond. The new cultural context. Transnational cinema.

Practical activities

Film viewing

Compulsory films (by topic)

2. *The Big Heat* (Fritz Lang, 1953), *Human Desire* (Fritz Lang, 1954).

3. *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (Woody Allen, 1989), *The Curse of the Jade Scorpion* (Woody Allen, 2001).

4. *The Little Mermaid* (Walt Disney, 1989), *Stranger than Paradise* (Jim Jarmusch, 1984).

5. *Babel* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006), *Auf der anderen Seite* (Fatih Akin, 2007).

Recommended films (by topic)

2. *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946), *Crossfire* (Edward Dmytryk, 1947), *In a Lonely Place* (Nicholas Ray, 1950), *Oklahoma!* (Fred Zinnemann, 1955), *The Bad and the Beautiful* (Vincente Minnelli, 1952).

3. *Annie Hall* (Woody Allen, 1977), *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (Woody Allen, 2008), *Eyes Wide Shut* (Stanley Kubrick, 1999), *En la ciudad* (Cesc Gay, 2003).

4. *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997), *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009), *sex, lies, and videotape* (Steven Soderbergh, 1989), *Out of Sight* (Steven Soderbergh, 1998), *My Blueberry Nights* (Wong Kar-Wai, 2007)

5. *Lantana* (Ray Lawrence, 2001), *The Terminal* (Steven Spielberg, 2004), *Syriana* (Stephen Gaghan, 2005), *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005), *The Visitor* (Todd McCarthy, 2008), *Gran Torino* (Clint Eastwood, 2008), *Sin nombre* (Cary Joji Fukunaga, 2009).

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Dyer, Richard. 'Introduction to Film Studies'. In John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson, eds. *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Oxford: Oxford U.P. 1998, 3-10. **(1)**

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E-learning

virtual platform

virtual platform

Moodle Universidad de Zaragoza

<http://moodle.unizar.es>

Part of the contents of the programme and bibliography are available in this site.

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