

SYLLABUS

Please print out this syllabus, read it carefully, and consult it from time to time during the semester.

Purpose. I hope in this course to achieve two things. First, I want to introduce you to classic or important movies that you have not previously seen. I want to fill in some of the gaps in your general education about film. Second, I want to introduce you to a specific method of analysis that has wide application (as "holistic reasoning") in other areas of knowledge. Accordingly, we will be focusing on integrating themes derived from what you see in the film itself. We will be less concerned with film technique, film history, biographies of the creators, and other background information, although I will bring in such information insofar as it seems useful.

Contacting me. I will be in my office (TUR 4221) immediately before the Tuesday and Thursday sessions. You can see me then. You will do better, however, to e-mail me (nholland@ufl.edu) with your concerns, or telephone (352.377.0096), and we can arrange a meeting that way.

The films. On the first day, I will read off a list of films, longer than we can possibly cover, and ask you to tell me the ones that you have already seen. I will try to show films in this course that as few students as possible have seen previously. After the first day, I will make up a schedule for the films we will see during the semester and circulate it to you.

Format. I will screen the film in a two-hour period on Thursday and we will discuss them in a one-hour period on the following Tuesday. Sometimes the films will take longer than two hours, so plan your schedule accordingly. And sometimes our discussion will take longer than one hour.

Grades. Your grade will be based entirely on the one-page papers that you will hand in at the beginning of the discussion period (see below). I will grade hard at the beginning of the semester, more easily towards the end. If it seems fair I will, uniformly for all the students, drop one or two of the lowest grades in the average for the final grade.

One-page papers. I am asking you to write a one-page paper about each movie that you see and that we discuss. I will describe these papers in more detail the first day, and I will be writing these papers along with you, so that you can see what I think a good paper is.

The first step comes with watching the movie. Remember or, better!, jot down as you watch, things you see in the film that strike you as interesting or significant. These could be persons, situations, settings or objects that appear on the screen; film techniques; allusions to other films; errors (goofs); in short, anything that stands out for you as interesting or meaningful.

Second step: group these items into themes. That is, think of a concept that will include one or more of the things you found interesting. You should end up with a series of concepts and under them examples of significant things from the film that fit within that concept.

Third step: try now to group the themes from the second step into a single unifying idea that will bring them all together into a whole.

Your paper then should consist of two parts: step number two (call this section "Significant Elements") and step number three stated intelligently (call this section "Unifying Idea"). You need not write in sentences; you can use outline form if you wish. Technically, this kind of thinking goes under the name of "holistic analysis" or "qualitative analysis," and it is widely used in the humanities (literature, history) and social sciences (anthropology, archaeology, clinical psychology) and sometimes in the natural sciences (geology, astronomy, paleontology).

Put your name in the upper left and the name of the film you are talking about in the upper right. Your paper should be no more than one page. Wordiness does not impress me—just the opposite. Do not attempt to substitute bulk for intelligence. I will simply ignore anything beyond one page. Hand in a paper copy at the beginning of the period in which we discuss the film. Send me an e-mail copy at the same time or sooner. I will use the paper copy to mark on a scale of 1-10 and hand back to you. And I will use the e-mail copy so that I have all your work for the semester in one place. Late papers will receive no credit, since class discussion of the film will already have taken place.

Internet sources. People write an immense amount about movies on the World Wide Web. There is no way I can prevent your drawing on that vast sea of information, nor should I. But very little of what is written on the Web will prove useful for the kind of holistic analysis we use in this seminar. If you find some information on the Web and use it to jump-start your own thinking, that's all right, provided you really think the movie through for yourself. Outright plagiarism I will deal with as required by university regulations. If you draw too much on others' work, of course, you defeat one of the major purposes of the course: teaching you to reason for yourselves about film.