

CTVA 319. CRITICISM IN CINEMA AND TELEVISION ARTS—Fall 2009. John Schultheiss

A curriculum that is concerned with: (1) *the creative process*—a survey of the defining philosophical, literary, artistic, thematic patterns and influences for cinema and television; (2) *the critical process*—an examination of established critical approaches or methodologies, a survey of noteworthy critical problems and intellectual issues, a review of cultural credentials relevant to the process of criticism; the screening of selected motion pictures.

For a schedule of all Cinematheque screenings (including syllabus films which will be the focus of each Wednesday evening's lecture): www.cinematheque.csun.edu => "Monthly Screening Schedules."

Office Hours: Armer Theater (MZ100)—Tuesday @6:30PM; Wednesday @3:00PM and 6:30PM; Thursday @3:00PM. Please e-mail in advance for appointments. John.e.schultheiss@csun.edu — Department of Cinema and Television Arts.

For copies of this syllabus: <http://www.ctva.csun.edu/AcademicsSyllabi.html>

REQUIRED READING:

1. F. Scott Fitzgerald. *The Great Gatsby*.
2. William Harmon, Hugh Holman. *A Handbook to Literature*.
3. John Hill, et. al., editors. *Film Studies: Critical Approaches*.
4. *Critical Models: Approaches & Definitions—Applications to The Great Gatsby & Citizen Kane*

GUIDELINES FOR THE ARMER THEATER. Please be considerate: there is no eating or drinking in the ARMER THEATER. Think of this theater as a holy place. Please do not bring any food or drink into this holy place; please turn off cell phones and pagers—and please do not put your feet or chewing gum on the seats. Violators of holiness will be asked to leave. =>No form of wheeled personal transportation (skateboard, skates, scooter, etc.) is allowed in the Armer Theater. As a courtesy, we will make a holding area available for the storage of these items should a student insist on bringing them. However, items are left in this holding area at the student's risk. The Armer Theater, CTVA, and the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication assume no responsibility for their security.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND GUIDELINES:

Course values

The Great Gatsby Examination — 10%

A Handbook to Literature Examinations — 15 points each (45%)

Film Studies: Critical Approaches Examination — 20%

Final Examination — 25%

Minimum requirements demand attendance at the *Wednesday* screenings listed on the separate Cinematheque schedule to be found at [Cinematheque.csun.edu](http://www.cinematheque.csun.edu) [click on *Monthly Screening Schedules*]. Attendance is mandatory, and roll will be taken.

Extra credit will be given for attendance at *additional (non-Wednesday) Cinematheque events or screenings*. Attendance at *seven* additional events or screenings will allow for the dropping of the *lowest* grade of the four *Handbook to Literature* and *Great Gatsby* examinations. **NOTE: There are NO make-up examinations.** Therefore, if an examination is missed, the additional seven Cinematheque screenings necessarily become the essential mechanism to compensate for that missed examination; otherwise, a "zero" for the missed examination will be calculated into the final course grade. Be sure to sign the attendance sheet at each of those events. (**ALSO**, there is NO recompense for a missed *Film Studies* examination or a missed Final Examination—these will be marked as "zero.") All students availing themselves of the extra-credit option must submit—on the date of the final examination—a listing of the seven screenings attended; so carefully keep a log of these screenings throughout the semester.

The following schema will be used to determine student ambition and achievement:

In Order to Achieve:

"C-" to "B+" Grade in Course

The Following Must Be Accomplished:

Earn a minimum of "C-" to "B+" on the examinations. [*Cinematheque Credit* will allow for the dropping of the *lowest* grade of the four *Handbook to Literature* and *Great Gatsby* examinations.]

In Order to Achieve:

"A-" to "A" Grade in Course

The Following Must Be Accomplished:

Earn a minimum of "A-" to "A" on the examinations and on *one* critical essay. The essay needs to employ films selected *exclusively* from those screened in the current Cinematheque schedule, and executed according to the specified directions. [*Cinematheque Credit* will allow for the dropping of the *lowest* grade of the four *Handbook to Literature* and *Great Gatsby* examinations.]

A SIDEBAR ON GRADING. The final course grade (plus/minus evaluation) is based on the quantity of grade-appropriate work successfully completed. The instructor is intensely aware of the minimum "C" requirement for one's continuation in the CTVA major. Much contentious discussion usually ensues when one is awarded a "C-" in the course—including a supplication to roll the grade over into the "C" category, since surely this has been a close call and why not give the benefit of the doubt in the spirit of humanistic charity anyway? In actual fact, the granting of the "C-" has already been the result of scrupulous deliberation and humanistic charity, and has already received the benefit of the doubt in order to protect the student from an even lower grade. Please do not petition to have a "C-" grade raised to a "C".

EXAMINATION SCHEDULE

16 September 09—EXAMINATION—*The Great Gatsby* (novel) [10%]

7 October 09—EXAMINATION—*A Handbook to Literature*: Theater of the Absurd, Acronym, Adaptation, Aesthetic Distance, Affective Fallacy, Ambiguity, Ambivalence, American Dream, Anthropomorphism, Antihero, Anti-Intellectualism, Archetype, Autotelic, Bathos, Beat Generation, Belief, The Problem of; *Bildungsroman*, Biographical Fallacy, *Carpe Diem*, Catharsis, Chiaroscuro, Dadaism, Darwinism, Deconstruction, *Dénouement*, Determinism, *Deus ex Machina*, Didacticism, Dramatic Irony, Dramatic Monologue, Elegy, Empathy, Epigram, Epiphany, Ethos, Exegesis, *Fin de Siècle*, Flat Character, Framework-Story, *Götterdämmerung*, Grotesque, Hagiography, Harlem Renaissance, Heresy of the Paraphrase, Hubris, *In medias res*, Intentional Fallacy, Interior Monologue, Intrusive Narrator, Irony. [15%]

4 November 09—EXAMINATION—*A Handbook to Literature*: Existentialism, Existential Criticism, Expressive Theory of Criticism, Fatalism, Formalism or Formalist Criticism, Genre Criticism, Freudian Criticism, High Comedy, Ideology, Intertextuality, Kitsch, Leitmotif, Luddites, Malapropism, Manichaeism, Marxist Criticism, Metacriticism, Metaphor, Metonymy, Motif, Narratology, Naturalism, Nonfiction Novel, Oxymoron Paeon, Panegyric, Pathetic Fallacy, Pedantry, Modernist Period in English Literature, Period of Modernism and Consolidation in American Literature (1930-1960), Period of the Confessional Self in American Literature (1960—), Picaresque Novel, Point of View Shot, *Reductio ad absurdum*, Rococo, Rodomontade, *Roman à Clef*, Spoonerism, Stream of Consciousness, Structuralism, *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress), Subjective Camera, Suspension of Disbelief, Synecdoche, Tautology, Transcendentalism, Trope, Unreliable Narrator, Utopia, Voice-Over, Well-Made Play, Young Man from the Provinces. [15%]

18 November 09—EXAMINATION—*A Handbook to Literature*: Alienation Effect, Allegory, Analogy, Anathema, Antirealist Novel, Apocalyptic, Apollonian, Avant-Garde, Banality, Baroque, Brahmins, Burlesque, Cant, Coda, Collective Unconscious, Comedy of Manners, Conceit, Contrapuntal, Cruelty, Theater of; Decadence, Dionysian, Dystopia, Electra Complex, Gestalt, Hermeneutics, Jeremiad, Agitprop, "Art for Art's Sake," Black Humor, Canon, Caricature, Mythic Criticism, Naive Narrator or Hero, New Criticism, Objective Correlative, Objective Theory of Art, Oedipus Complex, Omniscient Point of View, Pathos, Persona, Philistinism, *Poète Maudit*, Postmodern, Roman Noir, Romanticism, Seven Cardinal Virtues, Seven Deadly Sins, Stoicism, Surrealism, Verisimilitude, Vulgate. [15%]

2 December 09—EXAMINATION—*Film Studies: Critical Approaches* (Hill, et. al., text) [20%]

16 December 09—FINAL EXAMINATION—*Critical Models: Approaches & Definitions—Applications to The Great Gatsby & Citizen Kane* [and all of the above reading]. NOTE: This examination will be a combination of ESSAY and OBJECTIVE questions. [25%]

Objective examinations will be graded with the following scale: 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, 59-below = F.

CTVA 319. CRITICISM IN CINEMA AND TELEVISION ARTS *Directions and Philosophy for the Critical Essay.*

WRITING HELPS ALL VIEWERS TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY KNOW AND DON'T KNOW. It is unlikely any person would be able to analyze any film in depth without writing. *Writing is thinking.* Deficiencies in one's writing—which traduce the rules of usage, the elementary principles of composition, word choice, or style—will have a harmful effect on the course grade. The qualities of good writing—which reflect, for example, *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk and E.B. White—are essential to positive class performance.

These essays could be conceived as both reading and viewing assignments; i.e., the papers should serve equally to demonstrate as careful an examination of reading material as they do a close scrutiny of the film text. This can be accomplished by *quoting* from assigned reading and citing concepts—by author, primary source (plays, novels), essay titles, page numbers—and connecting these concepts to specific moments and situations in a film(s), or relating them to a particular thesis which you have created to explore a specific interdisciplinary theme. The intention of these assignments is to encourage you to find ways to **apply** the general, theoretical **ideas contained in the reading to concrete applications in the film itself (in the manner of the critical models being applied to *The Great Gatsby* or *Citizen Kane* in the reading).**

PLEASE NOTE WELL that last sentence—because it alludes to and helps define the central pedagogical approach of the course. It is essential that you read *The Great Gatsby* and view *Citizen Kane* as soon as possible. The key critical models which you are required to employ in writing the critical papers are illustrated (in the *Critical Models* booklet) by analyses of Fitzgerald's novel and Welles's film. The better you know these works, the better you will be able to *demonstrate your understanding* of the critical methodology that you are using for the film(s) you select as the subjects of your critical essays. Your demonstration of your understanding of the critical method that you are employing is the central purpose of your essay. [As additionally emphasized elsewhere: "More than any intelligence you might provide about the film itself being discussed, your central mission is to convey an understanding of the *critical process or method* that you are employing in the discussion of that film."]

ESSENTIAL GUIDELINES FOR THE WRITING OF THE PAPER FOR THE "A" COURSE GRADE

The paper will be *typed and double-spaced—and of sufficient length, typically five to seven pages*—to defend and support, with intellectual cogency and research integrity, the thesis statement asserted. The paper topic must focus on syllabus films shown in class or as part of the current Cinematheque programming. For a schedule of all Cinematheque screenings (including syllabus films which will be the focus of each Wednesday evening's lecture), go to www.cinematheque.csun.edu => "Monthly Screening Schedules."

- The critical essay will begin with a *thesis statement (a conceptual basis)* that employs *and clearly identifies* one of the critical models or approaches to be found in the Cinematheque document entitled "*Critical Models: Approaches & Definitions - Criteria for Academic Criticism - Individual Critical Applications to The Great Gatsby and Citizen Kane*," or in *Film Studies: Critical Approaches*. Though it may seem overly schematic, the analytical paper should begin with a definition (quoted from the reading) of the specific critical model that is being employed as the perspective for the film under scrutiny.
- The critical essay will contain, identify, and employ in an analytical manner a minimum of five critical terms—each term clearly highlighted in **bold** letters—from *A Handbook to Literature*. The essay must explicitly indicate—as part of the paper's structure—the critical *apparatus* that is being utilized in the analysis. *More than any intelligence you might provide about the film itself being discussed, your central mission is to convey an understanding of the *critical process or method* that you are employing in the discussion of that film.
- Only syllabus films screened in class (and other approved Cinematheque titles) may be employed as the central focus of the critical essay [www.cinematheque.csun.edu => "Monthly Screening Schedules"]. Scenes and sequences from the film texts need to be explicitly cited and discussed in a detailed manner.
- The essay will be evaluated on the basis of clarity, logic, and organization. Identify all *research material* (the use of which is encouraged) by appropriate quotation marks and citation of sources. All statements of substance must be supported by concrete, explicit illustrations from the films under discussion. Avoid generalities. (See extended Grading Criteria below.)

Revision Policy. A paper may be revised one time.

- *Revision* is defined as "a significant re-shaping of a paper's thesis, organization, or conceptual design—NOT a cosmetic facelift, with only mechanical errors corrected."
- *The revision must be accompanied by the earlier, previously evaluated version.*

Additional Notes:

- Keep a protection copy of all papers submitted.
- Do not use binders or covers or other extraneous wrapping; simply staple the typed pages in the upper left-hand corner.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR THE CRITICAL PAPERS

The felicities of individual writing style will always influence the final, subjective judgment, but the following are general CRITERIA relevant to an evaluation of the essays:

"A" & "B" PAPERS

Substantially exceeds minimum standards: it is clear from the structure and development of the essay that the ultimate number of pages produced is the result of a logical pursuit of an explicit thesis that has been defended and supported by documented evidence, and not the result of a literal observance of the barest specified requirements.

Characteristics: copious quotations from the reading, complete and lucid definition of terms, extended and logical development of themes and ideas under scrutiny, consistent use of detailed examples from the films or works under discussion, abundant evidence that the reading is being integrated and supplementary research sources are being employed—a rich, extended, textured, and nuanced presentation.

"C" PAPER

Meets minimum standards: a passing, acceptably competent fulfillment of the assignment.

Characteristics: spare quotations, limited employment of the reading assignment, abbreviated definition of terms, superficial development of themes or concepts, skeletal discussion of allied topics or implications, little documentation or support of generalities or assertions through the use of examples from the films or works under discussion, no indication that additional reading was accomplished or research sources were consulted, a generally thin and barren presentation.

"N/A" [not acceptable]

Does not satisfy minimum class standards: a paper clearly incompatible with literate communication.

Characteristics: extensive and pervasive mechanical, grammatical, spelling, syntactical, structural errors; sloppiness, clearly no attempt at proofreading or revision; non-responsiveness to the content, directions, or guideline requirements of the assignment.

~ ~ ~

NOTES: Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services agreement each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. Students who are approved for test taking accommodations must provide a proctor form to their faculty member signed by a counselor in the Center on Disabilities prior to making testing arrangements. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110. Staff can be reached at (818) 677-2684.

The CSUN Cinematheque takes a purist perspective on all screenings--attempting to preserve the pictorial intentions, director compositions & *mise-en-scène*, and aspect ratios of the original works. Consequently, all material is screened **without** close captions and artificially imposed subtitles, which alter or distort original screen space. Other accommodation will be made for students who need this type of visual or hearing assistance.

Student Learning Outcomes:

The ability to identify, define, and apply major critical methodologies to specific film texts;

The ability to understand and apply traditional literary terms and concepts to relevant filmic moments and dramaturgical situations;

The ability to formulate concrete thesis statements and paragraphs, as part of an overall construction of an essay of "academic criticism," as defined by criteria in the course syllabus;

The capacity to relate to and recognize social patterns and historical continuities in the specific film texts screened as part of the course syllabus and the Cinematheque program;

The creation of an appreciation for and a concrete descriptive analysis of the peculiar accomplishments of the guest artists who have appeared as part of the course curriculum and the Cinematheque screenings.