HU 2324: Introduction to Film
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Theme: Suspense films

Text: Film Art: An Introduction (Bordwell and Thompson, 5th edition)

Course Description: The purpose of HU 2324 is to broaden your knowledge and critical understanding of film by studying its history, technical development, structure, and cultural contexts and meanings. To accomplish these goals the class has been organized around five activities.

Screenings: Each Monday we will screen a different film related to the theme for the term. Prior to the screening I will present background material on the film’s historical and social context, director, actors, cinematic techniques, etc. in order to better prepare you to watch and think about the film. We may also use part this time to continue our discussion of the previous week’s film. Please take notes during this introduction as well as during the film. (Lighting will be kept at a suitable level.) You should not, if at all possible, miss any of these screenings. If you must do so because of a serious illness, plant trip, or job interview, please contact me immediately so that we can make other arrangements for you. Please note: In general, for technical reasons, videotape or television versions cannot substitute for screening the films.

Readings: Each week you should come to Monday’s class having read the assigned chapter of Film Art. Reading the chapter in advance of the week’s screening will help you get more out of the film, prepare you for doing the written responses, and facilitate our discussion.

Mid-term Exam: On Wednesday of week 7 or 8 there will be an in-class short-answer exam on the concepts and technical terms covered thus far in the text and in class.

Writing Assignments: On Mondays before the screening I will give you a specific topic or question to prepare to write on informally and/or discuss in Wednesday’s class. These questions will often take a concept or technique introduced in the text or in class and ask you to reflect on its use in the film we are seeing that week.

Twice during the term you will write typed, double-spaced 2-3 page responses outside of class. (See syllabus for due dates.) These responses are designed to be focused, concise discussions using specific examples from the film. Late papers will be subject to a grade reduction. At the end of the term I will distribute the topics for a third, longer takehome writing assignment, which will be due Monday of finals week.
**Group Presentations:** Each Wednesday beginning week three or four, a group of 3-4 students will give an informal 25-30 minute presentation on the film screened during the previous Monday’s class period. Although presentations have no rigid format, they should address dimensions of the film the group feels are particularly important, such as narrative structure, themes and motifs, mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, sound, etc. Groups are strongly encouraged to focus at least part of their presentation on a particular scene from the film that is 3-5 minutes in length. Presentations should conclude with 1-3 questions or topics for general class discussion.

Each member of the group should plan to speak for approximately 5 minutes. I will meet with each group in the last 15 minutes of class on Monday prior to their scheduled Wednesday presentation.

**Discussion and Participation:** Although Monday’s class meeting will be primarily devoted to the introduction and screening of the week’s film, your comments and questions are encouraged. Wednesday classes will be devoted to large and small group discussion and are designed for individual participation. Consistent, active participation will contribute positively, and lack of participation negatively, to the final grade in the class.

**Evaluation:**

- **Formal topic responses (2): 40%**
- **Midterm exam:** 15%
- **Group presentation:** 15%
- **Final writing assignment:** 20%
- **Participation (including in-class writing): 10%**

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**NOTE:**

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students, (2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (3310).

---This syllabus subject to change at any time for pedagogical and/or unexpected circumstances. You will be notified of such changes if they take place.---