

## INTRODUCTION TO FILM STUDIES

**Dr. Steven Thomas**

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office hours: even days, 1:00—2:15 pm  
and by appointment

**ENGL 286/COMM 286, spring 2011**

time: class, odd days, 2:40—3:50 pm

lab, Tues, 4:00—6:30

place: class, SJU Quad 349  
lab, SJU Quad 346

### OVERVIEW

Most of us love movies, which is why it's a multibillion dollar industry worldwide. In this course, we will think far beyond the question of whether you liked or disliked a movie. Instead, we will work toward a more theoretical, social, and historical understanding of film and its place in our culture. You will gain a socially aware understanding of film as we study the technical, aesthetic, ideological, generic, cultural, historical, and material aspects of filmmaking. You will also become familiar with various film terminologies.

We will watch and study twelve films in the course of the semester, and there is a lab scheduled for this purpose at 4:00 pm every Tuesday. Attendance at film lab is mandatory.

Some of the materials and class activities will be located on Moodle.

### TEXTS

Bill Nichols, *Engaging Cinema* (2010)

Articles on-line (Moodle)

### ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Ten blog posts and comments .....	50%	(5% each)
Midterm Exam .....	15%	
Final Exam .....	15%	
Attendance, Participation, and Quizzes .....	20%	

### ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

**Blog:** You will keep a blog that you will create on-line. I suggest Blogger or Wordpress. Each week you will compose a blog post about the movie for that week. However, you are allowed two free weeks. (In other words, we will watch twelve movies, but you are only required to write ten blog posts.) For each post, in addition to thinking about the movie, you are required to discuss the assigned reading for that week and use at least one of its ideas to help you think about the movie. You are also required to find at least one on-line review or short essay about the movie that you must respond to and say something about (and hyperlink to your blog.) Each post should be about four to six full paragraphs long.

You must also make insightful, helpful, or politely critical comments on the blogs of your classmates each week. I will divide the class into five groups of five, so you are only responsible for commenting on the blogs of the members of your own group.

**Midterm Exam:** For the exam, you will have to answer questions about the movies and the texts assigned between the days of January 17 and March 4. Questions might be multiple choice, matching, or short answer.

Final Exam: For the exam, you will have to answer questions about the movies and texts assigned between March 8 and May 6. Questions might be multiple choice, matching, or short answer.

Attendance, Participation, and Quizzes: Part of your attendance and participation grade is your attendance. This includes the film lab. You are allowed three absences. Unless you have a documented excuse, I will reduce your attendance grade by 20% for each absence in excess of those three. Part of this grade is your participation. I expect you to be prepared to discuss the assigned reading and films every day and to listen respectfully to your classmates. A key component to participation (both in class and in the blog-o-sphere) is respect and civility. Lastly, part of this grade will be pop quizzes and worksheets that we will do in class. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes and worksheets if you are absent.

## **POLICIES**

Any act of plagiarism can result in an F for the course and can go on your permanent academic record. Please see The College of St. Benedict and St. John's University's official policy on plagiarism here: < <http://www.csbsju.edu/Academics/Academic-Catalogs/2009-2011-Catalog/Programs/Rights/Plagiarism.htm>>.

All students have the right of non-discriminatory access to the programs at the colleges. If you have a disability and require special consideration, you must inform me as soon as possible.

I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any time during the semester and will inform you of all changes in a timely manner.

## CALENDAR

- Jan. 17 (Mon) Introductions
- Jan. 19 (Wed) *Engaging Cinema*, pp. 3 – 25
- Jan. 21 (Fri) in-class writing, applying concepts from *Engaging Cinema* to any movie
- Jan. 25 (Tue) *Engaging Cinema*, pp. 29 – 50
- Film Lab: *North by Northwest* (1959)**
- Jan. 27 (Thu) due: blog post #1  
discuss *North by Northwest*
- Jan. 31 (Mon) due: comments on group's blog posts  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 50 – 69
- Feb. 1 (Tue) **Film Lab: *Citizen Kane* (1941)**
- Feb. 2 (Wed) due: blog post #2  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 70 – 98  
discuss *Citizen Kane*
- Feb. 4 (Fri) due: comments on group's blog posts  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 99 – 135
- Feb. 8 (Tue) *Engaging Cinema*, pp. 136 – 153
- Film Lab: *The Panama Deception* (1992)**
- Feb. 10 (Thu) due: blog post #3  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 153 – 172  
be prepared to give an oral presentation on a war movie you've seen  
discuss *Panama Deception*
- Feb. 14 (Mon) due: comments on group's blog posts  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 175 – 208
- Feb. 15 (Tue) **Film Lab: *The Searchers* (1956)**
- Feb. 16 (Wed) due: blog post #4  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 248 – 267  
discuss *The Searchers*

- Feb. 18 (Fri) due: comments on group's blog posts  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 267 – 297
- Feb. 22 (Tue) *Engaging Cinema*, pp. 297 – 324
- Film Lab: *Once upon a Time in the West* (1968)**
- Feb. 24 (Thu) due: blog post #5  
discuss *Once upon a Time in the West*
- Feb. 28 (Mon) due: comments on group's blog posts  
“Movies in Ethiopia” (Moodle)  
“Technological Paternalism” (Moodle)
- Feb. 29 (Tue) **Film Lab: *Faat Kine* (2000)**
- Mar. 2 (Wed) due: blog post #6  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 209 – 247  
discuss *Faat Kine*
- Mar. 4 (Fri) **Midterm Exam**
- Mar. 8 (Tue) in-class viewing of *BaadAssss Cinema* (2003)
- Film Lab: *Shaft* (1971)**
- Mar. 10 (Thu) due: blog post #7  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 325 – 343  
discuss original *Shaft*
- Spring Break, March 12—20
- Mar. 21 (Mon) due: comments on group's blog posts  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 343 – 349
- Mar. 22 (Tue) **Film Lab: *Shaft* (2000)**
- Mar. 23 (Wed) due: blog post #8  
discuss re-make of *Shaft*
- Mar. 25 (Fri) due: comments on group's blog posts  
“Stereo Types: The Operation of Sound in... Racial Identity”

- Mar. 29 (Tue)      *Engaging Cinema*, pp. 350 – 358
- Film Lab: *Do the Right Thing* (1989)**
- Mar. 31 (Thu)      due: blog post #9  
discuss *Do the Right Thing*
- Apr. 4 (Mon)      due: comments on group’s blog posts  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 359 – 371
- Apr. 5 (Tue)      **Film Lab: *Hairspray* (1988)**
- Apr. 6 (Wed)      due: blog post #10  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 372 – 394  
“Notes on ‘Camp’” (Moodle)  
discuss original *Hairspray*
- Apr. 8 (Fri)      due: comments on group’s blog posts  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 395 –412
- Apr. 12 (Tue)      *Engaging Cinema*, pp. 412 –431  
in-class viewing of *Celluloid Closet* (part one)
- Film Lab: *Hairspray* (2007)**
- Apr. 14 (Thu)      due: blog post #11  
discuss re-make of *Hairspray*  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 435 – 454
- Apr. 18 (Mon)      due: comments on group’s blog posts  
in-class viewing of *Celluloid Closet* (part two)
- Apr. 19 (Tue)      **Film Lab: *You Only Live Twice* (1967)**
- Apr. 20 (Wed)      due: blog post #12  
discuss *You Only Live Twice*
- Easter Recess, March 21—25  
Recommended viewing over the recess: *Casino Royale* (2006)
- Apr. 27 (Wed)      due: comments on group’s blog posts  
“The Politics of James Bond”  
“James Bond and America in the 1960s”  
*Engaging Cinema*, pp. 454 – 476

Apr. 29 (Fri) Introduction to *Dignity and Defiance* (Moodle)  
look up “globalization” in Wikipedia

May 3 (Tue) “Globalization Theory and the New James Bond” (Moodle)

**Film Lab: *Quantum of Solace* (2008)**

May 6 (Fri) due: blog post # 12  
discuss *Quantum of Solace*

Final Exam Week **Final Exam**