

# ENGL 273: Film History

Spring 2020

English Department

St. John Fisher College

Dr. Scott O'Neil

**Office:** Kearney 321

**Office Hours:** Thursday 5-6pm (in Cyber) and Friday 1:30-2:30pm (in Kearney 321)

**E-mail:** [soneil@sjfc.edu](mailto:soneil@sjfc.edu)

**Class Information:** Wednesday, 6:15 to 9:20 pm, Basil Hall 211

## **Required Texts:**

-*Turning Points in Film History* by Andrew J. Rausch

## **Course Description:**

In this course, we will explore the history of film in two distinct ways—first by discussing key turning points in cinematic history (as detailed by the Rausch textbook), and then by discussing films that have influenced later films. In effect, we will be looking at the cinematic equivalent of influencers, studying the originals and then the after-effects of those films. As part of this work, we will also be focused on learning the basics of film analysis.

## *Required Films*

- Citizen Kane*
- Metropolis*
- 12 Angry Men*
- The Godfather*
- The Bigamist*
- Shane*
- Robocop*
- The Seventh Seal*
- Jaws*
- The Towering Inferno*
- This is Spinal Tap*

## **Assignments/Grading:**

- 10% -Attendance/Participation
- 20% -3 short responses
- 10% -Commentary Pitch
- 20% -Midterm
- 20% -Film Introduction
- 20% -Commentary Track assignment

## *Attendance*

So much of any discussion-based class is reliant upon your presence. Please only miss

class when absolutely necessary, and communicate with me when that happens.

### *Reading and Participation*

The reading for each day is listed below on the syllabus next to the appropriate dates; please read, annotate, and think about the reading far enough in advance to participate on or before the participation deadlines. I would encourage you to be as specific as possible in your participation (page numbers, external links, etc).

### *Short Responses*

For each course meeting, I have listed one or more films as options for short responses. The idea here is to apply the discussions from class to those films, and write a 1 to 2-page response discussing how that film demonstrates the influences discussed in class. These should reference specific scenes and details from the films. You will write three of these short responses over the course of the semester. There are no set due dates for these responses, however you can only submit one short response in any given week.

### *Commentary Track (in lieu of a paper)*

Instead of a formal paper, you will prepare for and execute an expert commentary track for a 30-minute segment of a film of your choosing. You will identify an area of cinematic expertise and then prepare to speak as an expert in that area. In addition to your commentary track video, you will also hand in a detailed outline, including specific details that you intend to discuss at certain points in the film.

**SJFC ADA Policy:** In compliance with St. John Fisher College policy and applicable laws, appropriate academic accommodations are available to students with disabilities. All requests for accommodations must be supported by appropriate documentation/diagnosis and determined reasonable by St. John Fisher College. Students with documented disabilities (physical, learning, psychological) who may need academic accommodations are advised to refer to the Student Accessibility Services Website (<https://www.sjfc.edu/student-life/student-accessibility-services/>). Questions should be directed to the Coordinator of Accessibility Services in the Accessibility Services Office and Test Center, Kearney 300 (585.385.5252). Late notification will delay requested accommodations.

**Statement on Academic Integrity:** All students, regardless of level or school, are responsible for following the St. John Fisher College Academic Integrity Policy in addition to any other individual school's or program's academic expectations and/or professional standards. Every student is expected to demonstrate academic integrity in all academic pursuits at all times. If a student suspects that another student has violated the Academic Integrity Policy, he or she should contact the instructor for that course and provide support for that suspicion. Any finding of responsibility and associated sanctions for a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy is retained per the College records policy. All students are expected to be familiar with the details of the Academic Integrity Policy (available via <https://www.sjfc.edu/policies/academic-integrity/>).

## Policies

### *Contacting Your Instructor*

I will be delighted to discuss your suggestions, ideas, and concerns about this course with you. You should feel free to drop by during my office hours. If those times are inconvenient, please e-mail me. I'm happy to make other arrangements. Please e-mail me in advance if you need to cancel an appointment.

The best way to contact me is via e-mail. However, I am not permanently attached to my computer (and I have a flip phone. Seriously). **I do not generally check my e-mail between 10 PM and 10 AM.**<sup>1</sup> Please plan your electronic communications accordingly.

### *Written Work*

All writing assignments should be typed and double spaced with one-inch margins. Please use 12-point Times New Roman font. All writing will be handed in electronically via email; **All assignments must be in .doc or .docx format, or I will not be able to open them.**

## Course Schedule

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- 1/15: Welcome, Syllabus, HOW to read film. Influencers (*MIB* and *Marvel*). *Citizen Kane*.
- 1/22: Rausch prefatory material and 1-3. Please watch *Citizen Kane* (on course website). In Class: *Taxi Driver*.  
Short Response Options: *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*
- 1/29: Rausch 4-6. Please watch *Metropolis* (on course website). In class: *Blade Runner*.  
Short Response Options: *Ex Machina* or *The Matrix*.
- 2/5: Rausch 7-9. Re-makes: Please watch *12 Angry Men* (on course website). In class: *Twelve*.  
Short Response Options: *Psycho* (original and re-make).
- 2/12: Rausch 10-12. Sequels: Please watch *The Godfather* (on course website). In class: *The Godfather Part 2*.  
Short Response Options: *Terminator* and *Terminator 2*.
- 2/19: Rausch 13-15. Women filmmakers: Please watch *The Bigamist* (on course website).  
In class: *The Hurt Locker*.  
Short Response Options: *A League of Their Own* or *Riding in Cars with Boys*.
- 2/26: Rausch 16-18. **Midterm Exam**
- 3/4: **NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK**

<sup>1</sup> This is a lie, but you shouldn't really expect a response that late at night. ☺

- 3/11: Rausch 19-21 Westerns: Please watch *Shane* (on course website). In class: *Unforgiven*.  
Short Response Options: *Logan*.
- 3/18: Rausch 22-24 Auteurs: Paul Verhoeven: Please watch *RoboCop* (on course website). In class: *Basic Instinct*.  
Short Response Options: *Starship Troopers* or *Shogun*.
- 3/25: Rausch 25-27 Arthouse films: Please watch *The Seventh Seal* (on course website). In class: *Memento*.  
Short Response Options: *Mulholland Drive*.
- 4/1: Rausch 28-29 Summer Blockbusters: Please watch *Jaws* (on course website). In class: *Star Wars*.  
Short Response Options: *Jurassic Park* or *Avengers: Endgame*.
- 4/8: **NO CLASS. EASTER BREAK**
- 4/15: **NO CLASS. SAA—I will upload a lecture on disaster films and *The Towering Inferno***
- 4/22: Mockumentaries: Please watch *This is Spinal Tap* (on course website). In class: *Waiting for Guffman*.  
Short Response Options: *Best in Show* or *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping*