

The Foundations of Cinema

Department: Fudan International Summer Session

Course Code	ECON170028		
Course Title	The Foundations of Cinema		
Credit	2	Credit Hours	36 + 3 tutorial hours (one credit hour is 45 minutes)
Course Nature	<input type="checkbox"/> Specific General Education Courses <input type="checkbox"/> Core Courses <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Education Elective Courses <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Courses in General Discipline <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Compulsory Courses <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Elective Courses <input type="checkbox"/> Others		
Course Objectives	The material in this course will enable students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expand their understanding of global film history • assess the unique visions of individual filmmakers • develop their descriptive and analytical skills • practice fundamental filmmaking techniques 		
Course Description	<p>This course offers a comparative introduction to film form and aesthetics through an exploration of films from around the world spanning a range of eras. Students will learn how to identify and describe the key formal elements of a film, including plot structure, narration, cinematography, mise-en-scène, editing, and sound. Emphasis will be placed on discerning the functions of formal elements and how they shape the viewing experience. The course will also highlight Shanghai's pivotal role in China's rich film history, including a field trip to the Shanghai Film Museum.</p> <p>Assignments ask students to apply the concepts and skills that have been introduced through readings and lectures. Assignments include: in-class written and practical exercises; two 3-page analytical papers, one focusing on narrative and the other on style; and a group presentation focusing on authorship and formal analysis.</p>		
<p>Course Requirements:</p> <p>All course readings and film screenings are required and should be completed before class. Students are expected to take notes during the screenings and to be prepared to discuss the films in detail during class.</p> <p>Students must attend all classes and are expected to participate actively in class discussions and in-class exercises. Our time together in class is an opportunity to create a communal learning experience. The more engaged we are during our time together, the greater the possibilities for discovery.</p>			

Teaching Methods:

Classes will integrate lecture, discussion, and creative exercises designed to provide students with the opportunity to both analyze and experiment with the formal elements of film.

Instructor's Academic Background:

Prof. Lisa Dombrowski obtained her PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2002. Her research concerns the art and business of filmmaking, with an emphasis on American independent cinema, international art cinema, and East Asian cinema. She is the author of *The Films of Samuel Fuller: If You Die, I'll Kill You!* (2008), the editor of *Kazan Revisited* (2011), and the co-editor of *Autumnal Altman: On the Later Works and Legacy of Robert Altman* (2020). She has contributed book chapters to *Classical Film Studies in the 21st Century* (2020); *United Artists: Hollywood Centenary* (2019); *Independent Female Filmmakers: A Chronicle Through Interviews, Profiles, and Manifestos* (2018); *Silent Features: The Development of Silent Feature Films, 1914-1934* (2018); *Behind the Silver Screen: Cinematography* (2014); and *Widescreen Worldwide* (2010). Her articles have also appeared in *Film History*, *Film Quarterly*, *Film Comment*, and Criterion Collection publications, among others.

Course Schedule:Unit 1: Introduction to Film Analysis and Narrative

- Self-introductions
- Introduce ways of engaging with art: description, evaluation, analysis, interpretation—note that we will be focusing in class on description and analysis
- Introduce the concept of film analysis
- Introduce the concepts of story and plot
- Introduce the characteristics of causally driven plots
- Discuss examples of causally driven plots, including: act structure and turning points; protagonist traits and goals; causal forces; dangling hooks; obstacles and delays; the climax and epilogue
- Films screened in class, or scene clips used in class, taken from the following list:
 - o *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) *A great white shark terrorizes a small beach community.*
 - o *Wasp* (Andrea Arnold, 2003) *A young single mother struggles to balance the demands of her children with her desire for a social life.*

Unit 2: Episodic Plots

- **Read before class:** *Film Art*, Chapter 2: The Significance of Film Form
- Introduce the characteristics of episodic plots
- Discuss the films as examples of episodic plots, including: protagonist traits and goals; causal forces and coincidences; digressive episodes; motifs and parallels; repetition and variation; open endings
- Small group in-class exercise: create two versions of the same story, one as a causally driven plot, and the other as an episodic plot
- Films watched outside of class, as well as scene clips used in class, taken from the following list:
 - o *The Bicycle Thief* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948) *A father and his son scour the streets of Rome for the stolen bicycle necessary to their economic survival.*

- o *Dust in the Wind* (Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1986) A young man comes of age in early 1970s Taiwan.
- o *Mystery Train* (Jim Jarmusch, 1989) Three sets of strangers converge on a hotel in Memphis, Tennessee.
- o *Chungking Express* (Wong Kar-wai, 1994) Two police officers randomly meet and fall in love with two women.
- o *The Apple* (Samira Makhmalbaf, 1998) Two young sisters who have been raised without leaving the house explore their neighborhood for the first time.
- o *Lake Tahoe* (Fernando Eimbcke, 2008) A young man solicits assistance in fixing his car while avoiding a trauma at home.

Unit 3: Narration

- **Read before class:** *Film Art*, Chapter 3: Narrative Form
- Introduce the concept of narration
- Introduce the characteristics of range of narration (restricted and unrestricted) and depth of narration (objective and subjective)
- Discuss the films in relation to range and depth of narration
- Small group in-class exercise: using storyboards, create three versions of a scene, one with restricted range and subjective depth of narration; one with unrestricted range and objective depth of narration; and one with a mix of restricted/unrestricted range and objective/subjective depth of narration. Then watch the same scene as crafted by Hitchcock.
- Films watched outside of class, as well as scene clips used in class, taken from the following list:
 - o *The Goddess* (Wu Yonggang, 1934) A woman struggles to provide her son with a better life.
 - o *The Birds* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963) A large flock of birds inexplicably attacks a small town.
 - o *Black Girl* (Ousmane Sembène, 1965) A Senegalese maid rebels against her French employers.
 - o *A Short Film About Love* (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1988) A young man inserts himself into the life of an older woman, only to have her turn the tables on him.
 - o *Through the Olive Trees* (Abbas Kiarostami, 1994) A director mediates between two actors ensnared in a personal conflict.
 - o *Rosetta* (Luc & Jean-Pierre Dardenne, France, 1999) A young woman desperately tries to hold onto her job.

Units 4-5: Cinematography

- **Read before class:** *Film Art*, Chapter 5: The Shot: Cinematography; *Film Art*, Chapter 8: Style and Film Form, Part I
- Introduce key concepts in cinematography, including the photographic qualities of a shot, how a shot is framed, camera movement, and the long take
- Discuss the films in relation to their cinematographic qualities, focusing both on large scale patterning across the films and on in-depth scene analysis
- Small group in-class exercises: using your phones, create a series of compositions and camera movements that illustrate key cinematographic concepts
- Films watched outside of class, as well as scene clips used in class, taken from the following list:

- o *The Grand Illusion* (Jean Renoir, 1937) French soldiers of various backgrounds attempt to escape from a German prisoner-of-war camp.
- o *Spring in a Small Town* (Fei Mu, 1948) A married woman's childhood friend visits, rekindling old emotions.
- o *East of Eden* (Elia Kazan, 1955) Two brothers compete for their father's affection and the love of the same girl.
- o *Yojimbo* (Akira Kurosawa, 1961) A masterless samurai pits rival factions against each other in a feudal Japanese village.
- o *Raise the Red Lantern* (Zhang Yimou, 1991) A young woman becomes the third concubine of a wealthy man in 1920s China.
- o *The Mission* (Johnnie To, 1999) A group of gangsters form a professional unit while protecting their boss from assassins.
- o *Songs from the Second Floor* (Roy Andersson, 2000) A series of one-shot vignettes depicting everyday life in the midst of unexplained phenomena.
- o *Springtime in a Small Town* (Tian Zhuangzhuang, 2002) A married woman's childhood friend visits, rekindling old emotions.

Units 6-7: Mise-en-scène

- **Read before class:** *Film Art*, Chapter 4: The Shot: Mise-en-scène
- Introduce key concepts in mise-en-scène, including sets and props; costuming and makeup; lighting; and figure movement and performance
- Discuss the films in relation to their use of elements of mise-en-scène, focusing both on large scale patterning across the films and on in-depth scene analysis
- Small group in-class exercises: using your phones, create a series of compositions that illustrate how elements of mise-en-scène focus our attention; reveal and conceal information; and shape mood
- Films watched outside of class, as well as scene clips used in class, taken from the following list:
 - o *The Life of Oharu* (Kenji Mizoguchi, 1952) A woman in feudal Japan fights for her dignity after falling in class status.
 - o *High and Low* (Akira Kurosawa, 1963) A shoe company executive faces a moral dilemma when his driver's son is kidnapped.
 - o *Tokyo Drifter* (Seijun Suzuki, 1966) A yakuza hitman is trapped between rival gangs.
 - o *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989) Tensions simmer in a Brooklyn neighborhood on a hot summer day.
 - o *Edward Scissorhands* (Tim Burton, 1990) An odd young man attempts to assimilate into suburban life.
 - o *Maborosi* (Hirokazu Kore-eda, 1995) A woman struggles to overcome her grief following the loss of her husband.
 - o *Beau Travail* (Claire Denis, 1999) A lieutenant in the French Foreign Legion resents a popular soldier.
 - o *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (Wes Anderson, 2014) A lobby boy at a 1930s hotel becomes involved in a whimsical adventure.

Units 8-9: Editing

- **Read before class:** *Film Art*, Chapter 6: The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing
- Introduce key concepts in editing, including continuity editing rules, analytical and constructive editing, and discontinuity editing
- Discuss the films in relation to their approaches to editing, focusing both on large scale patterning across the films and on in-depth scene analysis
- Small group in-class exercises: using your phones, create two edited scenes in camera that illustrate continuity editing and analytical editing
- Films watched outside of class, as well as scene clips used in class, taken from the following list:
 - o *Street Without End* (Mikio Naruse, 1934) *A café waitresses navigates courtship and marriage in interwar Japan.*
 - o *Strangers on a Train* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1951) *Two strangers meet on a train and discuss who they would like to murder.*
 - o *Ohayo* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1959) *Two boys stage a silent protest until their parents buy them a television set.*
 - o *Underworld U.S.A.* (Sam Fuller, 1961) *A safecracker seeks revenge on the men who killed his father.*
 - o *The Big City* (Satyajit Ray, 1963) *A woman seeks work as a salesperson in defiance of her family.*
 - o *Sonatine* (Takeshi Kitano, 1993) *A yakuza lieutenant and his gang are hunted by an assassin.*
 - o *Fong Sai-yuk* (Yuen Kwei, 1993) *The legendary martial artist falls in love and assists his parents.*
 - o *The Host* (Bong Joon-ho, 2006) *A young girl's family hunts for her after she is kidnapped by a rampaging creature.*

Unit 10: Sound

- **Read before class:** *Film Art*, Chapter 7: Sound in the Cinema
- Introduce key concepts in sound, including rhythm, fidelity, and spatial and temporal characteristics
- Discuss the films in relation to their use of sound, focusing both on large scale patterning across the films and on in-depth scene analysis
- Small group in-class exercise: using your phones, create a series of shots and edited sequences that illustrate key concepts in sound, including varied use of rhythm and fidelity; diegetic and nondiegetic sound; onscreen and offscreen sound; internal and external sound; and simultaneous and non-simultaneous sound
- Films watched outside of class, as well as scene clips used in class, taken from the following list:
 - o *A Man Escaped* (Robert Bresson, 1957) *A man hatches a plan to escape from prison.*
 - o *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974) *A surveillance expert becomes obsessed with the subject of a recording.*
 - o *Raging Bull* (Martin Scorsese, 1980) *The rise and fall of the boxer Jake LaMotta.*
 - o *The Hole* (Tsai Ming-liang, 1998) *A hole between their apartments brings two strangers together.*

- o *The Limey* (Steven Soderbergh, 1999) *A cockney ex-convict travels to Los Angeles to uncover the mystery behind his daughter's death.*
- o *In the Mood for Love* (Wong Kar-wai, 2000) *The paths of two neighbors cross when their spouses begin an affair.*

Units 11-12: Presentations and Wrap-up

- Films watched outside of class, as well as scene clips used in class, taken from the following list:
 - o *And Life Goes On* (Abbas Kiarostami, 1992) *A father and his son search for two boys amidst the destruction from an earthquake.*
 - o *Ratcatcher* (Lynne Ramsay, 1999) *A young, working class boy finds comfort and despair in 1970s Glasgow.*
 - o *The Power of Kangwon Province* (Hong Sang-soo, 1998) *Former lovers repeatedly miss running into each other at a mountain resort.*
 - o *The Return* (Andrey Zvyagintsev, 2003) *A long-absent father returns to take his sons on a trip.*
 - o *Nobody Knows* (Hirokazu Kore-eda, 2007) *Four siblings struggle to survive after being abandoned by their mother.*
 - o *Window Horses* (Ann Marie Fleming, 2016) *A young woman discovers the truth about her father while visiting Iran for a poetry festival.*
 - o *Faces Places* (Agnès Varda, 2017) *The veteran filmmaker collaborates with the photographer JR.*
 - o *The Crossing* (Bai Xue, 2018) *A Shenzhen schoolgirl tries to make enough money to travel with a friend.*

Grading & Evaluation:

- Course assessment is equally weighted (25% each) across the participation grade, two papers, and group presentation.
- Participation: includes on-time attendance, participation in class discussions, in-class exercises, and anonymous feedback on a group presentation.
- Paper #1: Please write a three-page (double-spaced) analysis of how up to three aspects of plot structure function in the film and shape the viewing experience. Film options for the paper taken from the following list:
 - o *The 400 Blows* (Francois Truffaut, 1959) *A young boy runs away from home.*
 - o *The White Balloon* (Jafar Panahi, 1995) *A young girl goes on a quest to buy a goldfish on New Year's Eve.*
 - o *Beijing Bicycle* (Wang Xiaoshuai, 2001) *Two boys in Beijing claim ownership of the same bicycle.*
 - o *The Maid* (Sebastián Silva, 2009) *A live-in maid comes to resent her new colleague.*
 - o *Like Father, Like Son* (Hirokazu Kore-eda, 2013) *Two families discover their sons were switched at birth.*
 - o *Graduation* (Cristian Mungiu, 2016) *A doctor seeks to increase his daughter's chances of college admission.*

- Paper #2: Please write a three-page (double-spaced) scene analysis in which you discuss how up to three aspects of film style function in relation to narrative in this sequence. Why construct the scene in this particular manner? What are the effects of the key stylistic choices you select? Film options for the paper taken from the following list:
 - o *The Cranes Are Flying* (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1957) *Two young lovers are separated by World War II.*
 - o *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958) *A drug enforcement agent finds trouble at the U.S.-Mexico border.*
 - o *Cleo From 5 to 7* (Agnès Varda, 1962) *A woman questions her life choices while waiting to hear if she has cancer.*
 - o *Blood Simple* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 1984) *A man hires a private detective to kill his wife and her lover.*
 - o *Toto le héros* (Jaco Van Dormael, 1991) *A man believes a former neighbor has stolen his life.*
 - o *A Scene at the Sea* (Takeshi Kitano, 1992) *A deaf garbage man takes up surfing.*

- Group Presentation: As a group, please offer a unified argument concerning the film's salient formal patterns and how they shape the viewing experience. To illustrate your primary argument, review the dominant narrative and stylistic strategies utilized in the film and provide an in-depth shot analysis of 1-2 scenes from the film, highlighting the functions and effects of formal decision making. Each group presentation should last 30 minutes with clips, and will be followed by discussion.

Teaching Materials & References:

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art*, 12th edition, McGraw-Hill, 2019.