

Course Syllabus - Honors Program - Uncommon Arts
Film Salon: Reframing the Doc
IDH 2952 - 20594 - Summer A 2024

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Office Hours: by appointment

Meeting time: Tuesdays, Period 4 (12:30 - 1:45), FAB 103

Required Text: All course materials will be made available electronically for free.

Course Description:

Rarely has reality needed so much to be re-imagined.

- True/False Film Festival, Columbia, Missouri

Perhaps no art form is as commonly shared across cultural, geographic, ethnic, and other boundary lines as film. In theaters, homes, and other public spaces people of all kinds gather in the dark to take in this consummately modern form of storytelling. Of course, there is high entertainment value in movie watching, but also films often involve rich stories that take our minds to places beyond the film itself. Indeed, the ideas conveyed through film frequently create an internal reflective mindset, sometimes resulting in casual conversations with others. And yet, rarely do we make room for a collective intentional conversation to discuss a movie we've just watched. This class seeks to do exactly that: to watch films together and then to talk about their relevance to our lived experience. Specifically, we will explore a reinvisioned version of documentary films called creative non-fiction. These films, based in reality, offer imaginative and creative crafting of compelling storytelling rooted in some vision of the real. Creative non-fiction films are centrally driven by the complex stories that lead to curious questions about life in the world, so they become opportunities for talking about subjects that are sometimes difficult, sometimes thorny, sometimes joyous, sometimes restorative, and often something else! This class will seek to do three main things: 1) teach students how to read a film, considering the technical structure, the story itself, and the story beyond the story in the mind of viewers 2) watch films in the creative non-fiction genre 3) discuss films in a context of community learning.

(Note about the inspiration for this class: True/False Film Festival)

Course Objectives:

1. Explore the genre of creative non-fiction film and what it uniquely has to offer in its storytelling.
2. Learn how to "read" a film through the resources offered in the class.

3. Watch select creative non-fiction films.
4. Engage in the experiential analysis of films through classroom discussion about the films, considering especially how the story of the film works and what it opens up for further consideration about shared human experience.

Class Structure and Flow:

What is a salon, anyway?

The class' structure will be quite simple: seminar style, watching films then having in-depth conversation. Our timing makes things a little tricky. We meet only once per week for six weeks, and each class session is 75 minutes, while most feature length films are around 90 minutes. So, each week, students will come to class either having viewed a film (partially), or ready to view a film partially, and then to discuss the film's structure, storyline, and story significance. Viewer response through in-class conversation will be crucial to the success of the class. Students should keep a journal of films, jotting down notes about their thoughts as soon after watching as possible. (possibly utilize Letterboxd)

A Word About Academic and Human Discourse: Going Beyond Civility

Fundamentally, this is a humanities class that looks to film to raise existential questions related to the human experience. It probes issues that are sometimes thorny, don't always have clear answers and includes ones in which people can have strong differences of opinion. One way to think of the class is to see it as a big conversation about big issues. Optimal participation comes from the ability to be fully engaged: observant, reflective, and imaginative as we enter into conversation. In order for us to have a successful class, we need to be able to talk to and with each other well. That involves a conversation in which members are humble, respectful, thoughtfully engaged, and still free to critique (offer friendly push-back). We want to see the articulation and discussion of individual perspectives, while leaving room for disagreement and friendly critique. All of us should respectfully listen to filmmakers' views as well as each other's, without becoming dismissive or defensive, a common default when disagreement is detected. After listening, we need to be able to converse about what we hear. As these ideals are upheld we hope to create an environment where we all sense that, fundamentally, we are in this together no matter our differences. (Please see article in Canvas: "Reading Charitably".)

Weekly Reflections

Students will write weekly brief reflections (100 words minimum, 250 words maximum) in response to the film discussion. Reflection assignment details will be posted in Canvas.

Attendance and Participation

Since this is a very short (6 week) class and is geared for 100% participation via presence and discussion, attendance is absolutely required. If you cannot attend all sessions, barring an emergency, you should rethink taking the course. Students will be permitted **no** absences over the course of the term, unless an emergency should occur.

In addition to attendance, each student is expected to contribute in very active ways to classroom discussions weekly.

Final Reflection Essay/Project

The final assignment will be a culmination of each student's engagement in the class. While it will take some effort, it should be enjoyable to do. 1000 words. Details given in class.

Assignments and Grades:

Attendance and Participation 50%

Weekly Reflections 25%

Final Film Analysis Project 25%

All assignments will be submitted through Canvas/e-learning as directed. Students will receive ½ credit for all late assignments up to one week from the due date. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted.

Grading Scale:

93-100 (A); 90-92 (A-); 87-89 (B+); 83-86 (B); 80-82 (B-); 77-79 (C+); 73-76 (C); 70-72 (C-); 67-69 (D+); 60-66 (D); 60-62 (D-); Below 59 (E)

UF Grading Policies: [link to the university grades and grading policies](#)

Classroom Decorum:

In a sense, the classroom culture we will work to cultivate is a form of public discourse that will take shared effort to make a pathway for healthy conversation. Specifically, we will need to work to overcome technological distraction. Your *full attention* is expected while in class. Please turn off and store out of sight all cell phones, laptops, tablets, and electronic devices prior to class. No electronic devices should be turned on in class, without consent of the instructor.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to act in accordance with the University of Florida policy on academic integrity. Cheating, lying, misrepresentation, or plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and inexcusable behavior. For more information, visit:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Click [here](#) for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals.

[Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.](#)

A brief note about reading (film-reading) in community:

Late Request

(try to substitute “film” for “book” each time you see it)

With love’s confidence I’m asking,
if you should offer this book (film)
to another, ask of him
as now I ask of you
to read slowly,
and thoroughly, tasting
each word’s (image’s) trouble.
Without doubt, certain passages (scenes)
should never stand alone,
but will require assistance
offered by others to further
endow their meaning. I fear
for the reader (viewer) who dabbles,
who gleans, who hurries to take
and flee, and who by doing so acquires
nothing but a novel form
of his current poverty and error.

—Anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*

Weekly Schedule - Film Salon - Summer A 2024
Check weekly for changes/updates

Date	Reading/Content	Assignment due
May 14	Cover syllabus, intro. class: "how to read a film" (Inception clips) Two short films: -Balloon Fest (6 minutes) -tba For next week: practice with I, Destiny Watch half of Film 1	Read syllabus
May 21	Full-length Film 1: Watch at least half in advance (partial)	film journal 1
May 28	Full-length Film 2: details tba	film journal 2
June 4	Full-length Film 3: details tba	film journal 3
June 11	NO CLASS: HOST YOUR OWN SALON FOR FINAL ASSIGNMENT (Film 4)	film journal 4
June 18	Film 5: details tba	FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE