Course Syllabus
ENG 1300 – Writing about Film
Fall 2014

COURSE TITLE
Writing about Film

COURSE NUMBER
ENG 1300  CRN 10852

PREREQUISITES

CREDIT HOURS
3.0

CONTACT HOURS
45

CLASS MEETING TIMES
3:00-5:50 Monday – Upper Keys Center

CLASS METHOD
This course is designed to meet face to face in the assigned location one day a week for 16 weeks. This is a technology-enhanced course which uses Desire2Learn (D2L), an online setting, as an instructional resource. Students will be required to use D2L to access instructional materials, submit essays online in the D2L Dropbox and post responses in the online Discussion Board.

In this class students use film as an object for cultural and critical analysis. Students produce a variety of writing assignments for professional, critical and academic purposes. We analyze and evaluate the process and products of filmmaking to better appreciate and express our understanding of movies and their cultural influence. Students participate orally and online in film viewing and critique. Major writing assignments include informal responses, reviews, critical essays and a final researched essay.

A student may access the online portion of the course: http://online.fkcc.edu. If the student has difficulty in logging in to the course or the student does not see the course listed, contact the Office of Distance Learning helpline at 305-809-3177 or e-mail D2lhelp@fkcc.edu for assistance. To meet with the instructor, see office and campus hours listed below; also use phone and email contact. Check the announcements page of the D2L course site regularly for instructor announcements. To access, click on "Announcements" under Course Tools.

INSTRUCTOR
Dr. Lois Wolfe Markham
lois.markham@fkcc.edu
Cell # 305.942.1357
Marathon office: 305.809.3145
Coral Shores office: 305.809.3146
Middle Keys Center: Tuesdays / Thursdays, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Upper Keys Center: 8:30 – 6 p.m. Monday; 8:30 - 4 p.m. Wednesday.
As needed by appointment: 305.942.1357 or email lois.markham@fkcc.edu.
Instructor is on campus and available to students during non-teaching times above. Students should feel free to call and email with questions or concerns at any time.

ENG 1300 is a basic course in film literacy, concentrating on the techniques, genres, history, theory and criticism of films. Students will view selected films, develop critical skills and evaluate, orally and in writing, the products of filmmaking. The course includes a 6,000 word (Gordon Rule) writing requirement.

Gordon Rule Writing Requirement:
This course satisfies the Gordon Rule writing requirement. Students must attain a final grade of “C” or higher.

- Identify and analyze the concepts of theme, focus and linear structure of film
- Understand and analyze the concepts of story and title as they apply to the medium
- Understand the vocabulary and jargon of the medium
- Understand the idea of genre as it applies to the medium (drama, action, Western, noir, horror, foreign, musical)
- Analyze the fictional and dramatic elements of film including symbolism, characterization, conflict, setting and irony
- Recognize how the visual composition heightens the viewer’s response and how the use of sound effects convey plot, transitions and mood
- Analyze a director’s style
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a film through its strengths and weaknesses
- Explain problems of adapting novels and plays to screen
- Discuss a film’s contribution to the development of motion pictures
- Understand the industry’s controversial issues such as censorship and presentation of cultural and subject matter

No textbook required; Web-based and instructor-generated materials

- Access to multiple films for out-of-class viewing. Students should use films and technology based in the home, FKCC library, Monroe County Public Library or public settings, as needed.
- Student will incur cost of admission to a local theater for viewing one or more films as part of class field trips.
PROPOSED COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note:

- The course schedule is subject to change to meet the needs of the course and its students. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to stay current.
- Major writing assignments such as essays are graded; other requirements, such as oral participation, online responses, class preparedness and meeting deadlines, receive participation points. See the Student Evaluation and Course Policies section of the syllabus below for point or percentage values of specific assignments.
- Please note that students can accrue participation points in each class meeting for performance in specific areas.

Proposed Course Schedule – ENG 1300

PART 1: INTRODUCING FILM, INFLUENCES AND EFFECTS

Class 1 – Monday, Aug. 25
- Welcome, introductions, review of syllabus, requirements and sequence of course activity.
- Attendance and sign-in
- Review of course objectives and student personal/professional goals
- Introduction to course site on D2L: accessing Content, Discussions and Dropbox; locating film resources
- Discuss purpose and audience in writing about film
- Introduction to film terminology; brief history of film; connections between photography, stage and film; approaches to analyzing film (formal, technical, genre, socio-historical)
- In-class writing: Write a brief, informal biographical sketch about yourself. Offer some insight into your academic, professional and/or artistic goals. Briefly discuss your preferences in film viewing and your perspective on contemporary films. Talk about a film that surprised you, and why.
- Handout: guidelines for writing a screening report, a movie review, a critical analysis essay, a researched essay or final project.
- Instructional reading:
  - Handouts: Elements of Film, Elements of Storytelling, Film Notes Worksheet
  - Sample movie review and screening report
- Craft Talk: emotional storytelling and melodrama
- Critical viewing:
  - Excerpt: The Kid (1921)
  - Excerpt, The Grapes of Wrath (1940)
  - Excerpt, E.T., the Extra-Terrestrial (1982)
- Film Notes

ONLINE IN D2L BY Friday, Aug. 29, 11:59 p.m.
- Research and respond: Resources About Film. Find a web site or blog that presents news or reviews about a movie. Write a paragraph about what the site offers and why it’s helpful. Identify characteristics of the audience the site might draw. Discuss the authority and credibility of the information on the site. Copy and paste the URL of the website in your paragraph so that your colleagues can access it. Post in D2L Discussion Board forum “Resources About Film” by 11:59 p.m.

Class 2 – Monday, Sept. 1 – NO CLASS MEETING – LABOR DAY
Movie Review Exercise: Write a positive, three-paragraph review of one of your favorite movies. Then write a negative, three-paragraph review of the same movie. Focus on detailed components, scenes or effects of the film to make your points. Please note: All writing for the Discussion Board should be well-organized and coherent with ideas that address the needs of the assignment and writing that is clear and professional. Remember that you are writing in a formal, public forum. Strong standards of English grammar and spelling must be met. Up to 100 participation points will be awarded for the assignment. Post in the D2L Discussion Board forum “Movie Review Exercise” by 11:59 p.m.

PART 2: ANALYZING FORMAL AND TECHNICAL ELEMENTS OF FILM

Class 3 - Monday, Sept. 8

- Writing due: Screening Report
  - Submit a screening report on a film of your choice. Length: two or more double-spaced pages. Submit to D2L Dropbox by 11:59 p.m.

- Instructional reading due:
  - “Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing,” posted in Content, D2L; read about technical elements including mise en scene, composition of shots, editing, sound. Read the sample analysis essay.

- Discussion: technical elements: composition; camera angle/distance/movement; lighting; sound; set dressing; editing; taking notes on film; noticing details; becoming aware of affects on perception and attention; star turns and staging.

- Critical viewing excerpts:
  - Casablanca, romantic/war drama (1942)
  - Key Largo, gangster drama / post-war (1948)
  - Inglourious Basterds, serio-comic drama (2009)
  - Pan’s Labyrinth, historical drama and fantasy (2006)

- Film Notes

- Critique of sample student essays and review of citation/documentation requirements.

- In class writing: Focus on one film that is memorable to you. Write three paragraphs on a single technical element associated with a particular scene. Introduce the element, make a point about how it is used, detail its use and discuss the effect on other parts of the film: theme, character, plot, narrative, setting, style or tone.

ONLINE IN D2L BY FRIDAY, Sept. 5, 11:59 P.M.

- Writing due: DRAFT Essay 1: Analysis of a Formal Element
  - Submit a complete draft of an essay that focuses on one or more formal elements in a film of your choice (examples: characterization, setting, plot, tone, symbolism, imagery, theme). Present a thesis statement, main points and supporting details. Requirements: MLA-style formatting in header, margins, page numbers, in-text citation and Work Cited; minimum three double-spaced pages in length. Submit to Dropbox in D2L by 11:59 p.m.

Class 4 - Monday, Sept. 15

- Feedback on Revised Critical Essay 1
- Discussion: heroes, villains, archetypes and stereotypes
- Craft talk: dialogue; shot, scene and sequence; plot and sequencing of narrative; details that suggest characterization and foreshadow plot.
- Critical viewing:
  - Black and white melodrama TBA
  - Clash of the Titans (2010); hero/patriarchal archetype in fantasy
  - To Kill a Mockingbird (1962); hero/patriarchal archetype in realism
  - Les Miserables, operatic musical (2012)
- Film Notes
- Small group discussion: develop a character study and predict the plot
- Critique a sample movie review
- Review of “Checklist for Writing an Effective Essay”

ONLINE IN D2L BY FRIDAY, SEPT. 19, 11:59 p.m.

- Writing due: REVISED Critical Essay 1
  - Submit the final revised version Essay 1. Remember to focus on one or more formal elements in a single film. Requirements: MLA-style formatting in header, margins, page numbers, in-text citation and Work Cited; minimum three double-spaced pages in length. Submit to Dropbox in D2L by 11:59 p.m.

Class 5 – Monday, Sept. 22
- Discussion: anti-heroes, their traits and developments
- Craft Talk: other approaches to writing about film, including film history; genres; auteurs; ideology and socio-political approaches
- Critical viewing:
  - Unforgiven, a Western (1992)
  - L.A. Confidential, modern noir (1997)
  - Three Kings (1999)
- Writers Workshop: Critique sample essays.
- Film Notes
- Group discussion: connection between entertainment value and box office revenue; the role of film genres in industry success (Western, musical, film noir, road movie, melodrama, sci-fi, romantic comedy, thriller, horror).

ONLINE IN D2L BY FRIDAY, SEPT. 26, 11:59 p.m.

Draft Critical Essay 2

- Writing due: DRAFT Essay 2: Analysis of a Hero, Villain or Archetype
  - Submit a complete draft of an essay that focuses on a heroic, villainous or archetypal character in a genre film. Present a thesis statement, main points and supporting details. Requirements: MLA-style formatting in header, margins, page numbers, in-text citation and Work Cited; minimum three double-spaced pages in length. Submit to Dropbox in D2L by 11:59 p.m.

Class 6 – Monday, Sept. 29
- Feedback on Draft of Critical Essay 2
- Discussion: realistic heroes and villains; the tension of character choices and how they fuel moral themes
- Critical viewing:
  - Silence of the Lambs (1991)
  - Saving Private Ryan (1998)
  - The Help (2011)
- Film Notes

ONLINE IN D2L BY FRIDAY, OCT. 3, 11:59 P.M.

- Writing due: REVISED Essay 2
  - Submit the final revised version Essay 2. Remember to focus on analysis of archetypal hero/villain/character in a single film or in a film series. Requirements: MLA-style formatting in header, margins, page numbers, in-text citation and Work Cited; minimum three double-spaced pages in length. Submit to Dropbox in D2L by 11:59 p.m.
PART 3: WRITING ABOUT GENRE, FILM HISTORY AND DIRECTOR STYLE

Class 7 – Monday, Oct. 6
- Discussion: the genre of comedy, its origins, types, components and patterns; critiquing social norms
- Craft Talk: comic stereotypes
- Critical viewing:
  - Bringing Up Baby, screwball comedy (1938)
  - Harvey, gentle satire (1950)
  - Kung Fu Panda, animated comedy (2008)
- Film Notes
- In class writing: discuss how animated protagonists and human dramatic heroes are the same or different in films.

ONLINE IN D2L BY FRIDAY, OCT. 10, 11:59 P.M.
- Writing due: Movie Review 1
  A review of a full-length film of your choice. Length: two or more double spaced pages. Submit to D2L Discussion forum “Movie Review 1” by 11:59 p.m.

Class 8 – Monday, Oct. 13 (or alternate date)

First Field Trip to the Movies / Meet at Tavernier Town Cinema / Details TBA

Class 9 – Monday, Oct. 20
- Discussion: history of Orson Welles as early auteur; director’s use of camera, lighting, sound, editing, mise en scene
- Craft Talk: film terms relevant to Citizen Kane
- Critical viewing:
  - Citizen Kane (1941)
- Instructional reading
  - Posted in Content, D2L
- Film Notes

Online in D2L Friday, Oct. 24, by 11:59 p.m.
- Writing due: Movie Review 2
  A review of a full-length film of your choice. Length: two or more double spaced pages. Submit to D2L Discussion forum “Movie Review 2” by 11:59 p.m.

Class 10 – Monday, Oct. 27
- Discussion: auteur directors, vision and contemporary innovations; James Cameron and Avatar
- Craft Talk: auteur style in theme and plot: man vs. society, man vs. machine, man vs. nature, man vs. self
- Critical viewing:
  - Avatar, science fiction/fantasy
- Critical reading:
  - “Don’t Make My Black Face Blue” by John G. Russell, essay of film analysis and cultural critique
- Film Notes
Online in D2L Friday, Oct. 31, 11:59 p.m.

- **Writing due: Draft Critical Essay 3**
  - Submit the draft version of Essay 3. Analyze a director’s style or a film’s portrayal of a socio-cultural issue. Use film terminology in analysis of specific shots/scenes/sequences that support your thesis. Requirements: MLA-style formatting in header, margins, page numbers, in-text citation and Work Cited; minimum **four** double-spaced pages in length. Submit to Dropbox in D2L by 11:59 p.m.

Class 11 – Monday, Nov. 3

- Feedback on Draft Essay 3
- Discussion: role of screenplays and screenwriters; art vs. business in filmmaking
- Instructional reading due:
  - Excerpt of screenplay: *Chinatown*
  - Excerpt of shooting script
- In-class writing: dialogue for a scene of conflict in a genre film. Post your dialogue in the D2L Discussion Board before the next class meeting.
- Cold readings of scripts for *The Orchid Thief* and *Chinatown*
- Critical viewing:
  - *The Orchid Thief*, adaptation of a novel
  - *Chinatown*, crime/mystery
  - Screenwriter interview
- Film Notes
- Review for Finals Test / Film Terminology

Online in D2L by Friday, Nov. 7

- **Writing due: Revised Critical Essay 3**
  - Submit the revised version of Essay 3. The essay analyzes a director’s style or a film’s portrayal of a socio-cultural issue. Use film terminology in analysis of specific shots/scenes/sequences that support your thesis. Requirements: MLA-style formatting in header, margins, page numbers, in-text citation and Work Cited; minimum **four** double-spaced pages in length. Submit to Dropbox in D2L by 11:59 p.m.

Class 12 – Monday, Nov. 10

- Discussion: international films and the American audience
- Craft Talk: reception and perception of foreign films
- Critical viewing:
- Film Notes
- Review for Finals Test / Film Terminology

Class 13 – Monday, Nov. 17

- **Finals Test/Part 1**: Film Terminology

Class 14 – Monday, Nov. 24 – ONLINE ASSIGNMENT – No formal class meeting

- **Online writing due: Reflective Response Paper / Irritation or Intrigue**
  Write a three-paragraph reflection on one of the films we’ve seen that intrigues or irritates you. Analyze why. Present a thesis and detail a specific scene as evidence of its power to compel or repel an audience’s interest. Use film terminology as appropriate as you analyze one scene that embodies your irritation or intrigue. Post in the Reflective Response Paper forum in the Discussions Board by 11:59 p.m.
Class 15 – Monday, Dec. 1

- **Class presentations**
  Prepare a five to seven minute presentation on a film that interests you and argue why your audience should appreciate the film. Discuss why you are drawn to the film, what strengths and weaknesses you find, what technical elements are notable, what dramatic elements are notable. Present and analyze an excerpt that illustrates something significant about the film. You will need to provide a DVD for class showing.

- Distribute guidelines for Final In-Class Essay Exam

Class 16 – Monday, Dec. 8 – LAST CLASS

- **Finals Test/Part 2: In-Class Final Essay Exam**: write a substantial reflective analysis of a film. Focus on a specific formal or technical element and show how the element relates to the broader message, effect or theme of the film.

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**STUDENT EVALUATION AND COURSE POLICIES**

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<tr>
<th>STUDENT GRADE DETERMINATION</th>
<th>FKCC GRADING SCALE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40% Three Graded Film Analysis Essays, averaged (max. 40 percentage pts.)</td>
<td>90-100% A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% Graded DRAFT Essays, averaged (max. 10 percentage points)</td>
<td>80-89% B</td>
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<tr>
<td>15% Two Graded Movie Reviews (max. 15 percentage points)</td>
<td>70-79% C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% Finals Test / Multiple Choice</td>
<td>60-69% D</td>
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<tr>
<td>15% Participation and Short Writing Grade (maximum 15 percentage points)</td>
<td>Below 60% F</td>
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<tr>
<td>10% Final In-Class Essay Exam (max. 10 percentage points)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total 100 %</strong></td>
<td>Final Grade (maximum 100 percentage points)</td>
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**Participation**

- Students earn points for each class they attend and participate in. Arriving late, leaving early, cell phone and non-class computer usage, as well as any other disruption of class, will result in loss of points.

- Students earn participation points for performance in each of the following 10 areas: attendance; preparedness; verbal participation in class; submission of draft writing; response papers and in-class writing; peer group collaboration and critique; Discussion Board postings; on-time submission of written work; professional attitude and presentation; good time management. Participation points are totaled at the end of the term; the second highest point total becomes the base of calculating the participation grade of all students in the course.

- Unexcused absences will result in a loss of participation points; excused absences (i.e., those with acceptable documentation of an emergency) will not result in point loss.

**Late Work**

- Any assignment not submitted by the date and time specified in the Course Schedule is considered late, unless you have contacted me and I have approved an extension. Late assignments (other than class participation) will be assessed a late penalty. The maximum penalty will be equal to 15% of the total point value of the assignment. Please note that there is a deadline each term beyond which I will not accept late work and the essay grade of zero cannot be changed.

**Revision Policy**

- I encourage revision of submitted work. Students may revise Essays 1, 2 and 3 for a better grade. Please note that revising involves substantial change and improvement. Minor editing and proofing do not constitute revision. Revisions must be submitted within two weeks of the date a graded essay is returned to the class. Attach the original graded essays to the revised work when you submit.
Students are expected to familiarize themselves with FKCC Policies, which can be found in the current Student Handbook

Guidelines for Writing Assignments

Writing assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and use 12 point Times New Roman font. Use MLA-style headers and manuscript format. Remember to save drafts, revisions and graded essays for teacher review and your portfolio.

Types of writing in this course include:

1. BASIC RESPONSE PAPER or INFORMAL ESSAY
   A basic response paper is:
   - an informal, exploratory approach to a topic
   - not as formal as a three paragraph essay but reflects an organized pattern of approach and thought.
   - one or more pages in length, double-spaced. Standard rules of good English usage and composition apply.
   - generally structured like this: 1) Introduce the topic and state your perspective; 2) elaborate on or describe aspects of the topic; 3) conclude the response.

2. FILM ANALYSIS ESSAY:
   Development and writing of film analysis essays follow general guidelines for effective expository writing (writing that is designed to explain, inform, clarify, define and/or persuade). However, an analytic essay focuses its argument and explanation on how particular components of a film affect other parts; how those parts affect the whole theme, message or meaning of the film; and what the film’s message, style or content contributes to broader understanding in our culture.
   An analytic essay with good structure and effective content offers:
   - an engaging introduction with a focused thesis;
   - main ideas supported by relevant detail, description and evidence;
   - insightful interpretation, analysis and elaboration;
   - selective use of references;
   - documentation of source material through proper attribution, in-text quotations and in-text citation;
   - a conclusion which states findings and their significance;
   - properly-formatted list of Work Cited.
   - an authoritative and professional tone that is indicative of college-level thinking and analysis while reflecting the individuality of the writer.
   Essays should be minimum of three double-spaced pages in length; feel free to write longer work depending on focus and scope of your topic.

3. RESEARCHED ESSAY:
   A researched essay is a longer form of academic expository writing. Like shorter essay assignments, a researched essay requires a clear thesis argument that focuses development of the writing, presentation of evidence and integration of research. A researched essay has more extended and developed supporting information and also more documentation. However, do not approach it as if it is a report on a topic. Gathering and reporting information about a subject is not adequate. The final researched essay will reflect a student’s in-depth study of a critical question that emerged in response to readings for this course. The researched essay process requires good time management by students in order to allow for topic development, research, draft, revision and final submission.
   The paper should: be at least eight pages in length; follow Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines for paper format, in-text citation, documentation and Work Cited references; and cite information from five or more sources.