

English 219: FILM As TEXT
Summer 2016@Fisk 204a {M-F 12:30-1:30/1:45-2:45 p.m.}

Associate Professor Joshua D. Gonsalves (Fisk 225): jodago@aub.edu.lb--Office Hours: T/W 3:00-4:00 pm

This course will ask a simple question: “*What do we need to learn to read films as texts?*”. The cinema is usually regarded as too commercial a medium in comparison with literature, yet this preconception is due to the fact that its logic, grammar or language has not been respectfully understood. In this course, we will develop a critical language that will enable us to read the various aspects that come together to create both a cinematic narrative and an aesthetic style: *mise-en-scène*, editing, cinematography, sound design, generic conventions, stars/actors/auteurs. Taking all these ‘disparate aspects’ together (after working through them one by one) we will attempt to determine what film form is and how *style & narrative* interact to produce the fascination of the *cinematic gaze* . . .



METHODS OF EVALUATION

The student will be evaluated based on his or her ability to learn the paradigms, techniques, and vocabulary of film analysis (i.e., how-to-use the formalist glossary in *Film Art*). Analysis will also be supplemented by an awareness of how formal systems relate to the production of thematic meanings: ideological, aesthetic, generic and narrational (i.e., how narrative manipulates, guides and patterns audience expectations via the manipulation of affect, feeling and knowledge). The student’s grade will reflect his or her capacity for combining formal analysis and thematic readings of specific film texts.

TEXTS

Bordwell, Thompson, etc.: *Film Art: An Introduction* (1st ed. McGraw-Hill; hereafter FT)

**Irritation of Life:
The Subversive Melodrama of Michael Haneke,
David Lynch and Lars von Trier (Loren/Metelmann; 2013; hereafter LM)**

Caché (Hidden): Catherine Wheatley (2012)

***Nosferatu: A Symphony of Terror* (F.W. Murnau 1922) * *Nosferatu: Phantom of the Night*
(W. Herzog 1979) * *Nightcrawler* (Dan Gilroy 2014) * *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch 2001) *
Caché (Hidden; Michael Haneke 2004)* *Melancholia* (Lars von Trier 2007)**

ITINERARY

SECTION 1: *Nosferatu & mise-en-scène* (FT 112-158, 451-466).

SECTION 2: *Nosferatu & Cinematography* (FT 159-215).

LA: Dream Factory

SECTION 3: *Nightcrawler*: Editing Story/Narrating Fantasy (FT 216-262, 326-349; LM 1-58).

SECTION 4: *Mulholland Drive*: Narrative & Non-Normative Form (FT 50-110, 467-492; LM 107-140).

Generic Tales of Sound and Fury: The Brutal Melodrama

SECTION 5: *Melancholia*: SOUND & NARRATIVE EXCESS (FT 303-324, 262-302; LM 141-172).

SECTION 6: *Caché*—Complicity and/in the Desire to See (read Wheatley; LM 59-106, 173-188)

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Test at end of Section 2 and at end of Section 6: Worth 20 % each.

Film analyses due at the end of Section 3 and at the end of semester: Worth 20 % each.

Attendance/Participation (incl. responses based on screen logs): 20 % of final grade.

Screen logs are notes (incl. drawings, doodles, diagrams, etc.) made in class during screenings of the film. The point of writing the log is to make film-watching an active and not a passive activity. Once we have covered the film in class, a 2-page, double spaced typed response based on these logs will be due. Logs may also be consulted by the professor to insure student participation in films, lectures and class discussion. Lastly, there will be drop-quizzes testing film criticism terminology and film watching skills...

Papers should be formatted according to the latest edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* and must be turned in during the class session on the due date, with no exceptions. Papers will be penalized 5 points a day (i.e., a deduction from 85% to 80%) starting immediately after the class session for which they are due. NO papers will be accepted by E-MAIL! Any plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment.