THE 403 – INDEPENDENT FILM
Fall 2017
Course # 72044 (iCourse)
Instructor: Gene Ganssle
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I will try to respond to all e-mails within 24 hours; weekend responses may take longer.
Office Hours: Wed. 11-1 or by appointment;
I am also happy to meet via phone or videoconference.
Office Location and Phone: Dixie Gammage Hall #248 / 602-791-3521

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course examines the history of independent filmmaking, with a specific focus on the American independent filmmaking traditions and how those traditions are influenced by and in turn influence other filmmaking practices (including Hollywood studio filmmaking, foreign films, avant-garde films, etc.) This is an ONLINE course, with material divided between online lectures, required readings and both required and suggested viewings. Students will be evaluated through quizzes, participation and contribution to online discussions, and written assignments designed to meet and reflect course objectives. There is also a group film project for which a full-length paper may substitute.

Because this course is entirely delivered via the Internet, you are responsible for making sure that the computer you use to access all course materials meets or exceeds the specified computer minimum qualifications as listed on the course web site. In general, a computer purchased and in the last 3-5 years and continuously updated via updates from the operating system (Mac, Windows) vendor will suffice. Also, due to the high media content of this course, you will be required to set up and configure a media player that will consistently play the media files delivered via the course web site. Please note: You are highly encouraged not to enroll, or to drop immediately, if you do not have computer experience, or if you are not willing or prepared to assume the added responsibility of a computer-based course. Necessary required skills include downloading mp3s, surfing the net, conferring via email, and other intermediate computer knowledge.

HIGH-SPEED CONNECTION NOTE: A high-speed connection to the Internet (cable, ISDN, fiber optic, etc.) is strongly advised. It may be possible to complete this course on slower connections, however Herberger Online will not be able to offer support should your connection be too slow to receive the course materials. Due to the nature of the course, the site is very media intensive. All exams and virtually all lessons include several media elements that may be slow or virtually impossible to download on a slower connection. In addition to exams, each lesson contains one or more media components. These require the ability to download or stream and listen to modern audio file types on your computer (mp3, mp4, m4a). You are required to have the Flash plug-in installed on your browser. Most browsers come with a Flash plug-in pre installed, however if your browser does not have it, you will need to download and install it on your system. You can download the Flash plug-in for your browser at: https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer

The computer help FAQ document linked on the course website is required reading for this course. Read this document for additional technical information.
TECHNICAL SUPPORT:

Please do not contact your instructor with technical questions. Herberger Online handles all technical questions and issues that may arise in this course.

Please contact the support team immediately if you encounter technical issues while completing an assignment and you are unable to resolve the problem and reset your work.

The Herberger Online support team is available to assist you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You may reach them anytime at:

- holsupport@asu.edu
- https://courses.hol.asu.edu/help/
- 1-888-298-4117
- 480-965-3057 (International)

When contacting support, please provide:

- The full name of this course (ABC 123: Long Name)
- The title(s) of any assignment(s) you’re having trouble with
- A brief description of the problem
- Detailed, step-by-step instructions to reproduce the problem

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Analyze independent filmmaking aesthetics in relation to conventional film aesthetics
- Evaluate independent film as a professional practice in relation to the mainstream American film industry
- Compare both the personal and political elements of independent film in relation to contemporary cultural studies and practices
- Apply advanced academic research to analyze independent filmmaking practices, theory, and independent film criticism

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon successfully completing this course, the student will:

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the individuals, institutions, and innovative practices that significantly impacted the history of independent film.
- Understand current industrial practice where independently made films intersect with popular film/media productions in a variety of media marketplaces.

Demonstrate an appreciation for the ways in which independent film represents the distinct and unique perspective of both individuals and groups that are not typically expressed or represented in contemporary culture.
GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:

- DISCUSSION POSTS (3 @ 50 each) 150 points
- UNIT ONE QUIZ (Sept. 23rd) 100 points
- UNIT TWO QUIZ (Nov. 4th) 100 points

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

- Essay 1 and Essay 3 (@75 each) 150 points
- Essay 2 and Market Report (@100 ea.) 200 points
- FINAL PAPER / PROJECT 300 points

TOTAL 1000 points

GRADING SCALE:

A+ 970-1000
A 926-969
A- 890-925
B+ 861-889
B 821-860
B- 786-820
C+ 761-785
C 680-760
C- 600-679
D 600-679
E or other failing mark – 0-599

QUIZ MAKEUP / LATENESS POLICY:

• If you are unable to take the scheduled quiz and know in advance, please let the instructor know so an alternate time can be arranged AT LEAST 48 hours in advance.

• If you have a “last-minute” request to postpone or reschedule the quiz, such a request may be granted at the instructor’s discretion and subject to penalty.

• For discussion posts and written assignments: any assignment turned in within 48 hours after the deadline will be subject to a penalty of up to 20%. No assignment will be accepted more than 48 hours late without prior permission.

• An “Incomplete” must be requested before the course ends. Students must submit the form at https://students.asu.edu/forms/incompletegrade-request. Note that: The grade of “I” (Incomplete) can only be given by an instructor when a student, who is doing otherwise acceptable work, is unable to complete a course (e.g., final exam or term paper) because of illness or other conditions beyond the student’s control.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL:

Video Lectures
The primary “text” of this course are the video lectures that are delivered by Professor Jason Scott and produced by Herberger Online. These lectures vary in length up to about 40 minutes; be sure that you schedule your time appropriately.

Films
All of the required films are available via the streaming website Fandor. (www.fandor.com). We also recommend the resource Kanopy, which is free with your ASU tuition. http://asu.kanopystreaming.com/

If you want to watch a film available elsewhere (such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, etc.) then be sure to check with your instructor.

Readings
The course website will have a “Readings” section that will contain links to articles and other materials that are entirely accessible online. Some material will require you to log in with your ASU ID and password so that you may access the e-books available through the ASU library.
STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS:
I strongly suggest making a schedule for yourself week-by-week, so you can set aside time to watch lectures, do readings/research, watch appropriate films, and complete assignments and quizzes on time. Whether it is 60 minutes a day, or two or three days where you can devote a couple of hours, try to pace yourself and not fall behind. What follows is a suggested “order” to approach all of the course material on a unit-by-unit basis.

Another tip is to watch movies and lectures uninterrupted and without distraction. Shut off your phones and close the other tabs on your web browser; consider taking notes that recall key points from lecture. Finally, check in before assignments are due and watch my “Video Notes” as they are posted. They will clarify and expand on what Professor Scott presents in the lecture.

COURSE SCHEDULE:
This course is divided into three units, with a quiz scheduled at the conclusion of units 1 and 2 and a final project due at the end of the semester.

WEEK 1-5: UNIT ONE – INDIE FORM AND TECHNIQUE
Objectives for this unit:
• Describe how independent films use specific formal techniques that differ from conventional filmmaking.
• Explain the relationship between independent film techniques and non-cinematic forms, including visual art, music, literature, and performance.

Lesson One: Introduction
Video Lecture: What is an Indie Film?
Declarations of Independence Doing Effective Research
Readings: Syllabus Writing Guidelines
Discussion Post: Introduction Assignment
DUE FRIDAY, AUG 25th, 12 NOON

Lesson Two: Formal Techniques
Video Lectures: Part One: Indie Film History
Part Two: Basic Film Form and Conventions
Part Three: A History of Avant-Garde Films
Readings: Articles by Rabinowitz and Metz
Reviews of “Shadows”
“Shadows” website
Watch: “Shadows” http://asu.kanopystreaming.com/video/shadows-0

Assignment: Essay #1 – “Shadows” and Formal Technique
600-750 word essay
DUE MONDAY, SEPT 11th, 11:59 PM
Lesson Three: Indie Films and Narrative

Video Lectures: Narrative and Storytelling
Readings: Articles about “Slacker”
Watch: “Slacker” on Fandor
https://www.fandor.com/films/slacker

Watch an ADDITIONAL film from list provided
or suggest one via e-mail or discussion post

END OF UNIT QUIZ: FRIDAY, SEPT 22nd

Assignment: Essay #2 – Your selected film and narrative
800-1000 word essay

Note: Be sure you watch the supplemental “How to do Research”
lecture for guidance on how to complete this assignment.
DUE MONDAY, SEPT 25th, 11:59 PM

WEEK 6-11: UNIT TWO - INDIE BUSINESS

Objectives for this unit:
• Explain how “independent” has been historically defined in comparison to
conventional filmmaking financing, production, and distribution.
• Identify the ways in which specific terms relate to the production and distribution
of independent film as defined by various film communities.
• Determine how current independent films and their position and place affect
today’s film/media marketplace.

Lesson Four: Understanding Studio and Indie Filmmaking Practices Video

Lecture: Early Indie Pioneers and the Studio System
Readings: Articles about Oscar Micheaux
          Articles about Alice Guy-Blache
Watch: Short films on Fandor
        “The Immigrant”
        “The Playhouse”
        “The Life and Death of 9413”
        “Mystery of the Leaping Fish”
        “The Musketeers of Pig Alley”

Discussion Post: Whom Would You Want to Work
With?

DUE FRIDAY, OCT 6th, 12 NOON

Lesson Five: New Definitions & Post-War Paradigms Video

Lecture: Deregulation and the Indie Audience
Readings: Article by Kinkade and Katovich
          Selections from AFI History of Amer. Cinema
Watch: An Independent Film of your choice in a movie theater.
Assignment: Essay #3 – Evaluating a contemporary Indie Film
600-750 word essay
DUE MONDAY OCT 16th, 11:59 PM
Lesson Six: Indie Practices Today Video
Lecture: The Festival Era
Readings: Selections from AFI History of Amer. Cinema
END OF UNIT QUIZ: FRIDAY, NOV 3rd
Assignment: Evaluate A Current Indie Marketplace
DUE MONDAY, NOV 6th, 11:59 PM

WEEK 12-15: UNIT THREE - INDIE SPIRIT
Objectives for this unit:
• Explain how independent films can be understood and examined in relation to a specific filmmaker’s cultural identity and personal/political beliefs.
• Analyze how independent films represent specific identities and practices from underrepresented groups including consideration of gender, race, region, religion, sexual identity, class, etc.

Note: Before you begin this unit, be sure you watch the supplemental “Choose Your Own Path” lecture, so you understand how to approach the material to best support your final assignment.

Lesson Seven: Understanding Independent Films
Video Lectures: Part One: Indie Film and Race/Ethnicity
Part Two: Queer Identity and Politics
Part Three: Regional Film
Part Four: Technology and Indie Film
Discussion Post: Post your Final Project Topic/Outline/Thesis
DUE BY MONDAY, NOV 13th – 12 NOON

Lesson Eight: Understanding Independent Filmmakers
Video Lectures: Part One: Indie and the Auteur Filmmaker
Part Two: Case Study – Linklater
Part Three: Final Remarks
Readings: As required for your project (research)
Assignment: Final Assignment
1500-1750 word essay OR 5 min. group video project
DUE BY FRIDAY, DEC 1st – 12 NOON

And that’s a wrap!
COURSE ASSESSMENTS:

DISSCUSIONBOARD POSTINGS
The discussion area of the course is the online equivalent of discussions that would typically occur in a face-to-face. There are several discussion topics throughout the duration of this course that are related to the unit and lesson material currently being covered. The discussions are designed to promote original thought, sharing of ideas and viewpoints, and critical dialogue. In order to receive full credit for each discussion assignment you must post an original response to the instructor’s prompt of at least 200 words, and reply to three other student’s posts in at least 100 words.

QUIZZES AND UNIT EXAMS
You need to have reliable access to the Internet on the assigned day of the quiz. Quizzes/Exams can only be done online. Submission of quizzes via email or in printed form will not be accepted. No exceptions. The use of smart phones for taking a quiz is forbidden. No other Web pages or tabs can be open while taking a quiz. The system logs all browser activity. Opening a new browsers or new browser tabs can invalidate your testing session. Do not give your unique course password to another person or allow another person to access the course to take the test in your name.

SUBMITTING ONLINE QUIZZES/EXAMS
Online quizzes that have been submitted CANNOT be reset (see below). IF you experience computer or technical problems during an online quiz/exam DO NOT SUBMIT the quiz. For instance, if images fail to load, or the quiz itself seems incomplete. If you suspect technical error, exit the browser immediately and address the problem by trying to take the quiz again on a different computer, or by contacting technical support at HOLSupport@asu.edu. Do not contact the instructor. Submitted quizzes cannot be retaken. No exceptions.

RESETS FOR ONLINE QUIZZES/EXAMS
A reset for an online quiz is an action usually taken by a student prior to contacting technical support. IF you experience a glitch during an online quiz, close your browser. When you attempt to restart the online quiz, the system will ask you to confirm the reset. Some important facts about resets:
• Only one online reset is allowed per each online quiz.
• In total, only two online resets on online quizzes are allowed in any given semester.
WRITTEN EXAMS
The final project will be an analysis of a filmmaker from the point of view of their contribution to Independent Film. This assignment may take the form of a 1500 to 1750 word essay or a 5-6 minute group film project. The choice is yours. There is a discussion (Final Group Proposal) that will open soon and allow you to propose subjects and form groups. There will also be a credited proposal due online so that we do not have duplication. You will submit your group names, if applicable, and YOUR description of the project. Each student will follow the instructions and, as listed above in Lesson Seven, will submit by Nov. 13th.
A more specific rubric will follow for guidance on this project.

All written assignments are described in an Assignments document on the home page of the site, along with guidelines for analysis and papers. Make sure you turn in your paper by the due date indicated on the course website. If you miss the deadline your grade will be lowered. Do not e-mail me your papers. A digital copy of your paper needs to be submitted to the course website.
Be sure to pay close attention to deadlines—there will be no make-up assignments or quizzes, or late work accepted without a serious and compelling reason and instructor approval.

VIEWING GRADES IN HOLMS
Points you receive for graded activities will be posted to the HOLMS Grade Book. Click on the My Grades link on the left navigation to view your points.

Your instructor will update the online grades each time a grading session has been complete—typically 7-10 days following the completion of an activity. You will see a visual indication of new grades posted on your HOLMS home page under the link to this course.

COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS
All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through HOLMS unless otherwise instructed. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline or special permission must be requested from instructor before the due date. Extensions will not be given beyond the next assignment except under extreme circumstances.

All discussion assignments must be completed by the assignment due date and time. Late or missing discussion assignments will affect the student’s grade.

POLICY INFORMATION FOR THIS ASU CLASS

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY / PLAGIARISM
All necessary and appropriate sanctions will be issued to all parties involved with plagiarizing any and all course work. Plagiarism and any other form of academic dishonesty that is in violation with the Student Code of Conduct will not be tolerated. For more information, please see the ASU Student Academic Integrity Policy: https://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity
https://provost.asu.edu/sites/default/files/AcademicIntegrityPolicyPDF.pdf
http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/studentlife/judicial/academic_integrity.html
These policies list violations in detail that include but are not limited to:
1. Cheating on an academic evaluation or assignment.
2. Plagiarizing.
3. Academic deceit, such as fabricating data or information.
4. Aiding academic integrity policy violations and inappropriately collaborating.
5. Falsifying academic records.

Many students receive conflicting information on what is or is not considered a violation of the academic integrity policy: if you have a question, please ask the instructor for clarification. Students who violate these policies will be subject to penalty at the discretion of the instructor, who may issue a penalty related to the assignment or the final grade, as appropriate, and according to the procedures detailed in the policy. The instructor may also choose to report the violation to University administration and/or administer a grade of “XE” for violations of the policy.

Do not share your course ID and password with anyone. Log out of the course website when you are finished with it. Do not allow another student to use the course website under your password, even if s/he is also in the course. Each student is fully responsible for all activity that takes place on the course website under his/her user ID.

POLICY REGARDING THREATENING BEHAVIOR

Even though this is an online course, all students are expected to behave and communicate in accordance with the ASU Student Code of Conduct (https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/srr/codeofconduct). Any discussion posts, e-mails, or other forms of communication that include threatening, demeaning, or deliberately inflammatory language will be subject to discipline under this policy and may result in discipline, including a reduced grade, removal from the class, and/or reporting to ASU administration.

NOTICE ABOUT MATERIAL

Some of the material that students will watch or that is referred to in the lectures might be considered unusual, challenging, or unappealing to certain viewers. Viewers with particular sensitivities might want to communicate with the instructor before class starts about any concerns.

A.S.U. FILM ASSIGNMENTS

While this class encourages a filmmaking component for its final assignment, no student is required to work on a film assignment. That said, each group formed in this class to make a film, will be expected to finish the assignment. The SoFDT has policies regarding submitting a safety form and following proper procedures for any shoot. Failure to follow these policies may result in a zero grade being entered for the assignment and further possible administrative action.
DRC ACCOMMODATIONS
To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the ASU Disability Resource Center (www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc/#); Phone: (480) 965-1234; TDD: (480) 965-9000). This is a very important step as accommodations may be difficult to make retroactively. If you have a letter from their office indicating that you have a disability which requires academic accommodations, in order to assure that you receive your accommodations in a timely manner, please present this documentation to me no later than the end of the first week of the semester so that your needs can be addressed effectively.

COURSE WITHDRAWAL
If you wish to withdraw from this course, it is your responsibility to do so by November 1st, 2017.
Course registration changes are processed through My ASU: http://my.asu.edu.

CHANGES TO THE SYLLABUS
The syllabus is an implied contract between the instructor and the student. Consequently, it will not change in any significant way over the duration of the course. However, there are times when minor modifications need to be made. This being the case, the instructor will do everything in his power to keep changes to a minimum. If and when there are changes, students will be advised by email. It is the student’s responsibility to check HOLMS for corrections or updates to the syllabus. Any changes will be posted in HOLMS.