

THE 403 – INDEPENDENT FILM
Summer 2018 – Session A
Course # 42255 (iCourse) / 43874 (ASU Online)

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**I will try to respond to all e-mails within 48 hours;
weekend responses may take longer.**

Office Hours: **By appointment; I am also happy to meet via phone
or video conference**

Office Location and Phone: Dixie Gammage Hall 219 / (480) 884-0056

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.

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	100 points
UNIT TWO QUIZ	100 points
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS	
Short Essays (2 @ 100 each)	200 points
Indie Market Report	100 points
FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL	50 points
FINAL PROJECT (Paper or Video)	300 points
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TOTAL	1000 points

GRADING SCALE:

A+	970-1000	B-	786-820
A	926-969	C+	761-785
A-	890-925	C	680-760
B+	861-889	D	600-679
B	821-860	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 will be granted at the instructor’s discretion, and may be subject to penalty.
- For discussion posts and written assignments: any assignment turned in with 48 hours of 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/incomplete-grade-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 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

Many suggested films are available via the streaming website Fandor. (www.fandor.com): many are also available elsewhere, though they might require pay-per-view. We also recommend the resource Kanopy, which is free with your ASU tuition. <http://asu.kanopystreaming.com/>

There are also several assignments where your instructor will ask you to find a film of your own to watch and review. Most films on Fandor or Kanopy will qualify for these assignments; 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

This course is divided into three units, with a quiz scheduled at the conclusion of units 1 and 2.

WEEK 1-2: 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?

Discussion Post: Introduction Assignment
DUE MONDAY MAY 21, 11:59 PM

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
700-900 word essay
DUE FRIDAY MAY 25, 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: WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 11:59 PM

Assignment: Essay #2 – Your selected film and narrative
700-900 word essay

*Note: Be sure you watch the supplemental “How to do Research”
lecture for guidance on how to complete this assignment.*

DUE WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 11:59 PM

WEEK 3-4: 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: Who Would You Want to Work With?
DUE FRIDAY, JUNE 1, 11:59 PM

Lesson Five: **New Definitions and Post-War Paradigms**

Video Lecture: Deregulation and the Indie Audience

Readings: Article by Kinkade and Katovich
Selections from AFI History of Amer. Cinema

Assignment: **FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL**
DUE MONDAY, JUNE 4, 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, JUNE 8, 11:59 PM**

Assignment: Indie Marketplace Assignment
Due MONDAY, JUNE 11, 11:59 PM

WEEK 5-6: 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.

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 "Pitch"
DUE BY FRIDAY, JUNE 15 – 11:59 PM

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 Paper or Video Project
1500-1750 word essay or 5-7 minute video
DUE BY FRIDAY, JUNE 22 – 11:59 PM

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY / PLAGIARISM

All students are expected to abide by the policies located on the ASU website at <https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity>. This policy lists 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 academic integrity policy.

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 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.

DRC ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student who requires special accommodations for quizzes, exams, assignment, or accessing course material must complete an evaluation and request through the Disabilities Resource Center. Further information is available at <https://eoss.asu.edu/drc>. DRC will work with the instructor to ensure that all students have appropriate access and resources to facilitate success in this class.