

SCREEN ARTISTS: ALFRED HITCHCOCK [J-Term, 2013]
FILM 3310

DR. RICK WORLAND

Daily, Jan 7-16. 9:00am-Noon; and 1:00-4:00pm.

Hours: No regular office hours for J-term; email or see me after class.

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Required Texts: Donald Spoto: The Art of Alfred Hitchcock (1992 ed.)

Francois Truffaut: Hitchcock/Truffaut (rev. ed., 1984)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course surveys the work of one of the most distinctive filmmakers in the history of the medium, British-born director Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980). Dubbed “The Master of Suspense”, Hitchcock worked with many top Hollywood stars to produce some of the most commercially successful and best-remembered films of his time. In the mid 1950s television made him a familiar icon through the droll, on-camera introductions he provided for *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, the mystery anthology program that bore his name. Yet Hitchcock enjoys the rare distinction of being regarded simultaneously as a popular entertainer as well as one of the cinema’s most significant individual artists.

There are **three objectives** of this course: First, to acquaint you with some of the most engaging movies of a master filmmaker; secondly to give you some concepts for critical analysis and technical language that you can apply to other directors and movies; and third to put the first two together in such a way that you will gain increased insight into the rich, complex, and even dangerous qualities of what one critic termed in an apt and funny phrase “Hitchcock’s perverse narratives”.

In relation to taking this course under the **Perspectives (Arts) category** of the General Education Curriculum: Students will be able to identify and explain fundamentals of the arts discipline through analysis, performance, or creation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: There will be a **MID-TERM** and a **FINAL EXAM**. Each will consist of objective and essay questions based on the readings, lectures, and films screened in class. Before each exam I will give you a study guide listing pertinent terms, concepts, etc. that will be covered. You will also **write a short paper** of about 5-6 pages on a Hitchcock film of your choice. (The assignment for the paper is included on the last page of this syllabus.) See below for the due date. The paper will be *marked down one letter grade for each day it is late*. Each assignment is worth 100 pts. Your grade will be calculated as a percentage of 300 total points. **The mid-term, paper, and final will each count for one-third of your grade.** Therefore, you are strongly urged to stay current with the reading and attend class regularly.

EXTRA CREDIT: There isn’t any. Don’t ask. If you need to do well in this class to get off probation, raise your g.p.a., graduate on time, etc., then take the course and the work seriously. This will be a difficult class, not a blow-off.

****MAKE-UP EXAMS:** Make-ups for the mid-term and final will be arranged for *medical emergencies only*. A verifiable letter from a doctor will be required for non-penalty make-ups. Under certain circumstances a make-up will be given for non-medical reasons. The results of such an exam will be marked down one letter grade. “Early” *exams cannot be given for any reason*.

***Disability Accommodations:** Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4557) to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4.) Students with *documented* learning disabilities should notify the professor on or before the second class meeting if special provisions are requested to accommodate the disability.

***Religious Observance:** Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

***Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities:** Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work.

****ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** This course is operated in accordance with the SMU HONOR CODE, violations of which may be *punished with a failing grade or expulsion from the university*. Academic dishonesty may be defined as a student's misrepresentation of his or her academic work or of the circumstances under which the work is done. This includes plagiarism in all papers, projects, take-home exams, or any other assignment in which the student represents work as being his or her own. Academic dishonesty also includes cheating on examinations, unauthorized access to test materials, and aiding another student to cheat or participate in an act of academic dishonesty. Failure to prevent cheating by another may be considered as participation in the dishonest act. See the 2012-2013 *Undergraduate Bulletin* for further details.

****COMPUTERS and cell phones must be put away during screenings. No exceptions.**

READING ASSIGNMENTS and SCREENING SCHEDULE. Please note that the list of films to be screened is tentative and subject to change due to any number of unforeseeable factors. Lectures are designed to both reinforce and supplement the assignments. (The first page numbers refer to Spoto; H&T is *Hitchcock/Truffaut*.)

Mon. Jan. 7-- Introduction to the Class. Hitchcock's Influences.

Read: p. xi; chapt. 1, p. 2-15. H&T: p. 11-20; 71-73

AM: 1920s German cinema: *The Last Laugh* (1924) F.W. Murnau; *Pandora's Box* (1929) G.W. Pabst.

Sabotage (Britain, 1936) [excerpts]

"Revenge" ("AH Presents", CBS, 10/2/'55) [25]

PM: **The 39 Steps** (Britain, 1935)

Read: chapt. 4 and H&T, p. 94-103; 110-113.

Tues. Jan. 8-- *39 Steps*, cont. Elements of film style.

Read: chapt. 6

AM: **Suspicion** (1941)

Read: chapt. 10; Chapt. 13; H&T, p. 139-43.

PM: **Shadow Of A Doubt** (1943)

Read: chapt. 15; H&T, p. 151-55

Wed. Jan. 9-- *Shadow of A Doubt*, cont.

AM: **"Breakdown"** ("AH Presents", CBS, 11/13/'55) [25]

PM: **Notorious** (1946)

Read: chapt. 18; H&T, p. 167-73.

****Thurs. Jan. 10-- *Notorious*, cont. Review for Midterm.**

AM: **Rope** (1948)

****PM-- MID-TERM EXAM.**

Fri. Jan. 11-- *Rope*, cont.

Read: chapt. 20; H&T, p. 179-84.

AM: **Strangers On A Train** (1951)

Read: chapt. 23; H&T, p. 193-99.

PM: **Rear Window** (1954)

Read: chapt. 26; H&T, p. 213-226.

****Mon. Jan. 14-- *Rear Window*, cont. *PAPER DUE TODAY!!! [AM session]***

AM: **“Lamb To The Slaughter”** (“AH Presents”, 4/13/’58) [25]

PM: **Vertigo** (1958)

Read: chapt. 31; H&T, p. 243-48.

****Tues. Jan. 15-- *Vertigo*, cont.**

The Exploitation Horror Genre, 1957-1967: *The House on Haunted Hill* (Columbia, 1959), *Horror of Dracula* (Hammer, 1958) [excerpts]

PM: **Psycho** (1960)

Read: chapt. 33; H&T, p. 259-83.

Wed. Jan. 16-- *Psycho*-analysis. Review for Final Exam.

PM: **FINAL EXAM.**

 PAPER ASSIGNMENT.

****“The dog/computer/internet ate my homework” will never be an acceptable excuse.**

****DO NOT** choose a film that we screened in class. There are about forty other Hitchcock films to draw on including the British work. Consult Spoto for the complete filmography. Feel free, however to *refer* in your analysis to other Hitchcock films we have seen if relevant.

It should be about 5-6 pages in length, one-inch margins. Your writing will be evaluated on how well you argue for your THESIS or central point, supporting it with specific examples and evidence from the film. The clarity and organization of your argument is important, too, as well as paying attention to the *mechanics* of good writing: spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.

The purpose of this assignment is to make a FORMAL ANALYSIS of at least **two** scenes or sequences from a Hitchcock film of your choice, and to relate these formal devices to larger THEMATIC concerns or meanings. A scene is generally defined as one that maintains the unity of space and time; e.g. when Guy and Bruno talk in the shadows outside Guy’s apartment. A sequence is identified by using various *cinematic devices* (cutting, dissolves, superimpositions, etc.) to bridge space and time artificially, chiefly through film editing; e.g., Guy trying to finish his tennis match intercut with Bruno’s attempts to retrieve

the incriminating lighter from the sewer. Don't worry about these definitions: the idea is to find a short segment of a film that contains enough information for a relevant analysis. About 5-10 minutes of screen time at most should give you ample material for discussion. This is to suggest a *pars pro toto* idea; that is, a small part can often illuminate an entire film. However, don't neglect the film as a whole; try to clearly establish how the segments you have analyzed contribute in theme, etc. to the film overall. **Don't** spend much time summarizing the plot (a paragraph at most should cover it) but be sure to *cite specific examples* from the film to support your argument.

SUGGESTED FORMAT: Introduction of film and statement of thesis; short description of the selected scene; main body: analysis of relevant visual issues [mise-en-scene, editing, composition, pov, etc.]; relation of style to themes in the film as a whole; conclusion.

*Also: If you write about the popular *North By Northwest*, I will be generally **uninterested** in papers that discuss "performance or theatricality" as themes; or *any* scenes set in cornfields.

THIS IS NOT A RESEARCH PAPER. I neither want nor expect you to do additional reading on Hitchcock and report what others have said. I'm interested in *your* remarks on the film. If you must quote somebody keep it brief and cite the source with appropriate footnote form. Be advised again that I do not take kindly to plagiarism. As Norman Bates said, "We all go a little mad sometimes", and this happens to me when I detect plagiarism.