



**THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**  
**INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL (JULY SESSION)**  
**28 JUNE – 1 AUGUST 2022**

**COMM2930 UNDERSTANDING MOVIES**

**No. of Credits:** 3

**Time:** Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 16:30 – 19:15 (GMT +8)

**Location:** Online (Zoom)

**Instructor:** Dr. Sean M. Tierney

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course helps students develop a critical, analytical eye for watching and understanding films. Students will learn about basic cinematic techniques and structures, including mise-en-scene and montage, use of cinematic time and space, soundtrack, and script through viewing local and international films. Students will also become familiar with theoretical perspectives encompassing culture, ethnicity, gender and ideology, through which they can understand the political, economic and socio-cultural implications of movies. Equipped with these analytical tools, students will be more capable of understanding and analyzing both current domestic films as well as those from different times and places.

**Remark**

Not for students who have taking UGEC2643

**LEARNING APPROACH**

The course will combine different study methods in the communication disciplines. First of all, students are able to experience the cinema aesthetics through films preview. The assigned readings will facilitate them acquire concepts and analyze the text in a more in-depth manner. Through presentation and discussion in tutorials, they are expected to understand theories and cinema texts from different perspectives. The lectures will consolidate what they have learned from all of the above.

**PREREQUISITE**

You don't need to have any background knowledge related to cinema study before taking this course. Preferably, you are interested in watching both mainstream and non-mainstream movies and you are willing to learn how to appreciate and understand international cinema.

**COURSE CONTENT**

This course equips students to better understand, appreciate, and criticize films and film industries. Students will learn about how films are written, produced, shot, edited and distributed. They will also come to understand film form, aesthetics, and film language. Students will also understand many of the implications and consequences of film in such areas as race, gender, sexual orientation and political positioning. All of these concepts affect what kinds of films are produced and, just as importantly, are not produced. Ultimately, the course will equip students with an enhanced ability to frame films and film industries within several important contexts, including social, cultural, and political.

Key concepts will be introduced so that students can apply them in formulating their film analyses. The sequence of these issues implies a progression of knowledge from film studies specifically to an interdisciplinary approach; from film appreciation to critical evaluation.

## EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOME

- 1) Students will be able to develop film literacy and analyze movies through the comprehension of film language.
- 2) Students will be able to place films within the broader contexts of production and consumption and in so doing understand the role of cultural diversity.
- 3) Students will be able to critically reflect upon ideologies underlying film texts.
- 4) Students are expected to enhance their intercultural sensitivity through exposure to a variety of films from different places.
- 5) Students will be able to produce a critical film analysis that reflects upon political, social and cultural issues embedded in film texts.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

	Lecture	Self-directed Study
Time/week	2.75 hours	6 hours per week
Time	16:30-19:15	--
Venue	ZOOM	Out of class
Weeks	5	--
Teacher	Lecturer	Students

The following learning activities will be adopted in this course:

### I. Interactive lectures

- Present an overview of key analytical concepts, terminologies, theories and explanations of films and the industry that makes them

### II. Film Viewing

- Students will view films of their own choosing before the lectures and be prepared to discuss them when asked.
- During the lectures, the instructor will apply different concepts to discuss film. Only relevant film clips or footage will be screened in class.

### III. Self-directed study

- Encourage students to prepare for the lectures/papers/exams by reading the assigned readings and other related materials.

## ASSESSMENT SCHEME

Assessment	Description	Weight
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will attend class and participate.</li></ul>	10%
Paper #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A film review of 600 words (600-660) that will examine a single film from the student's perspective, which will be part of the review.</li></ul>	10%
Mid-term Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will answer questions related to the assigned films and readings.</li><li>• The tested areas will be the major concepts and arguments related to movie production and distribution.</li></ul>	20%
Paper #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An analysis of 600 words (600-660) that will focus on a single technical aspect of a single film such as lighting, cameras, or set design .</li></ul>	10%
Paper #3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An analysis of 600 words (600-660) that will focus on a single theme or issue (race, gender, orientation, class) as represented, positively or negatively, in a single film.</li></ul>	25%
Final Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will answer questions related to the assigned reading, viewing, and lectures that have been covered in class. The tested areas will be the major concepts and arguments related to contextualizing film within issues such as race, gender, and politics.</li></ul>	25%

## GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Grade	Overall Course
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

\*Sub-division (i.e. B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+) can still be used, if needed.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

Information regarding the academic honesty and plagiarism policy in the University is located at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

All assignments should be submitted through Veriguide. Any assignment (i.e., project, paper or essay) that shows evidence of plagiarism will be marked down severely. In simple terms, plagiarism is copying passages and/or ideas from other sources without referencing those sources. It is the writer's responsibility to cite the ideas and work of other correctly and properly in your paper or essays. Please visit the above websites for details and to avoid plagiarism.

## FEEDBACK FOR EVALUATION

Students are welcome to give comments and feedback at any time during the class. Stop by to talk to the instructor or teaching assistants. You can also send us emails.

## TEXTBOOK

Louis Giannetti's *Understanding Movies*, 11th edition, with Spider Man on the cover.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
1	1 <i>Tue, June 28</i>	Introductions & Expectations	Syllabus & Writing Guide	
	2 <i>Wed, June 29</i>	Film Criticism	Ch. 11	
	3 <i>Thu, June 30</i>	Realism, Formalism	Ch. 1	
2	4 <i>Tue, July 5</i>	Mise en Scène	Ch. 2, Ch. 7 pp. 337-352	
	5 <i>Wed, July 6</i>	The Moving Camera	Ch. 3	Paper #1
	6 <i>Thu, July 7</i>	Editing and Continuity	Ch. 4	
3	7 <i>Tue, July 12</i>	Midterm Exam	N/A	
	8 <i>Wed, July 13</i>	Music and Sound	Ch. 5	
	9 <i>Thu, July 14</i>	Acting	Ch. 6	Paper #2
4	10 <i>Tue, July 19</i>	Drama and Directing	Ch. 7	
	11 <i>Wed, July 20</i>	Story & Writing	Ch. 8, 9	
	12	Ideology	Ch. 10	Paper #3

	<i>Thu, July 21</i>			
5	13 <i>Tue, July 26</i>	Globalization	Readings	
	14 <i>Wed, July 27</i>	Media Literacy	TBA	
	15 <i>Thu, July 28</i>	Final Exam		

**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS AND FOLLOW THEM**

**Movie Review Instructions:**

Your review will not have a synopsis. Do not tell me the story of the film. It is used in popular media reviews, but for this paper I am more interested in the other parts of your outline; what you saw and how you interpreted it.

In academic writing we avoid the first-person. "I think" can be replaced by "it appears," or "it may be." That way you're avoiding first-person and also emphasizing that you're focusing on your perception of the movie and not claiming to know what the movie is, says, or does.

Be mindful of subjective language; don't say something is funny or not funny; other people may feel differently.

Do not use hyperbolic (i.e. great/est, wonderful, excellent) language. It's florid, you can't prove it, and it's not useful for academic writing.

You can say a film didn't convince or entertain you, but you can't say the film is unconvincing or unentertaining. Like I've said, I've sat in a cinema with people who were very entertained by a movie I thought was not entertaining at all.

**Mandatory Writing Guidelines**

You are responsible for reading this entire set of instructions and you will be held to these standards. There may be a quiz on the first day of class.

**They will be used to grade your papers. Not following these guidelines will cost you points and/or significant grades. These are not suggestions, they are mandatory. Read this entire guide and stick to it. EACH INFRACTION OF THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY BE A 5 POINT PENALTY.**

**When I say your topic must be approved, you *must* get approval for your topic from me before writing anything. Approval is not granted after submission. If you don't follow this guideline, I can give you a 0.**

**Re-stating an assignment does not count as a title for your paper. Don't do it.**

**All your papers will include your name, the class, and the assignment in the upper left corner of the first page:**

**Charles Wilson  
COMM2930  
Movie Review**

**Follow the directions/assignment.** Make sure you understand the assignment. If you don't, **ask questions.**

**For word count, follow these three rules:**

Your paper **must meet the minimum; "600 words" means *at least* 600 words.**

Your paper **must not exceed the assignment by more than 10%:** if the assignment is 600 words, 660 words is okay, but 960 *isn't*.

**Only the text of your paper counts toward the word count.** References, the title, your name, or the class heading do not.

**Papers will have introduction and conclusion paragraphs.** Without them, your paper just ends, and it tells the teacher "Oh, I made it to the word-count goal, so no need to finish the paper." There is more information on introductions below.

Organize your paper and **stick to the organization.**

**You will use the 5-paragraph format:**

Introduction

Main Point 1

Main Point 2

Main Point 3 (most important point)

Conclusion

**The first sentence of your paper *must* be your thesis statement.** Don't talk about the history of cinema for 200 words and then say "This paper is about Wong Jing movies." Say that *first*. You also don't need to tell me about cinema history.

In the introductory paragraph, tell the reader what your paper is about.

Tell them the 3 things you will discuss:

*Patrick Kong's films are problematic in several ways. His films are unfunny and his jokes are unoriginal. His stories are also unrealistic and contrived. Most importantly, his writing is lazy and shows a lack of thought. These are three reasons why Patrick Kong should not be allowed to continue making movies.*

After your Introductory paragraph, discuss the 3 Main Points, with each point getting its own paragraph (of three or more sentences):

1 Mr. Kong's films are unfunny

a) Reason/example

b) Reason/example

c) Reason/example

2 Mr. Kong's stories are unrealistic

a) Reason/example

b) Reason/example

c) Reason/example

3 Mr. Kong's writing is lazy

a) Reason/example

b) Reason/example

c) Reason/example

**In the conclusion, repeat the introduction, but using the past tense:** "I have discussed the reasons why Patrick Kong's film are problematic. It has been shown that his films are..."

**Do not** introduce a new idea at the end of your paper. **Don't do it.**

**Your papers will not have cover pages, titles, subheadings ("The Plot of the Film") or numbered sections (III./3.).** They are unnecessary and you will not use them.

**Don't repeat words in one sentence or two consecutive sentences:**

Why is [Title] my favourite movie of all the movies I have seen? [Title] is my favourite movie of all the movies I

have seen because this movie..." That's **28 words**.

"[Title] is my favourite movie because..." is **six** words. It tells just as much information and leaves you twenty-two extra words to write something new, useful, and interesting.

**Movie titles are *italicised* and each major word gets capitalised:**

*Titanic, Lord of the Rings* (not *Lord Of The Rings*), *Tiny Times 8*.

**Spellchecking is free and easy.** Not spellchecking tells the teacher you were lazy or you did not spend enough time and attention on your paper.

**Grammar check is also free and easy**, but I realize it can be confusing if English isn't your first language. One way to avoid grammar problems is to write shorter, simpler sentences. There is more information on run-on sentences below.

**Do not start sentences with 'And.'**

**A paragraph must be at least three sentences.** A one-sentence paragraph is a *sentence*. It's not a paragraph.

**Do not cite Wikipedia.** Anyone can say anything on Wikipedia. **Do not cite Wikipedia. Or the references in it.**

*They're easy to find for you and I.*

**DO NOT copy and paste.** English is your second language. **You cannot understand how obvious it is when you copy a native English speaker's writing.** But it is very obvious. I can give you *a lot* of examples.

### Capitalisation

It is important to use capital letters correctly, because not doing it can imply a lack of respect.

**Asia, China, Hong Kong, and other place names are always capitalised.**

**People's names are always capitalised.**

**The first-person 'I' is always capitalised.**

**East, Eastern, West, Western, and Westerner are always capitalised when used as parts of names.**

They are not capitalised when indicating a *direction*:

"They sailed south for three days. They reached South America on the fourth day."

**Unless you're talking about rugs, do not use the word *Oriental*.** It's offensive.

**Do not use the word *Asian*.** There are 48 countries in Asia. There is no such thing as 'Asian' values.

**Beware of run-on sentences.** A 'run-on' sentence is a sentence that is too long and stops making grammatical sense. The simplest formula is this: 1 idea/statement = 1 sentence.

Run-on sentence: *I really enjoyed this movie, it had many things I enjoy in movies, such as the lighting was quite interesting in this movie, and the acting made me feel very emotional, and the music was very effective in this movie because I felt as though I could understand what the characters were experiencing at this point of the movie in this movie.*

Better expression of the same ideas: I enjoyed *The Last Mechanic* for many different reasons. The lighting was very interesting. The acting made me respond emotionally. The music helped me feel what the characters were experiencing. All of these things made me understand and appreciate the story very much.

Those sentences are simple, direct, and grammatically correct. I would much rather read short, correct sentences than long, incorrect ones. The rest of your teachers will too. Here are good ways to avoid run-on sentences:

**Do not use more than one comma in a sentence.**

**Do not use 'and' more than once in a sentence.**

**Do not use semicolons.** Those are for graduate students.

### Attention to detail

*Always* check your numbers/facts and make sure they are correct. Avoid these mistakes (from my own experience):

"English is the most widely spoken language among the 7.6 billion people on Earth." It's 7.6 *billion*.

"The Japanese AV industry makes 8 trillion US dollars per year." The GDP of *the entire Japanese economy* that year was 4.6 trillion USD.

"North Korea has become very famous for their special effects work in movies from around the world." South Korea. *Big* difference.

"Unlike *Infernal Affairs*, *The Departed* has no religious content. The title refers only to the character leaving the police." The word 'departed' is in the Catholic funeral mass. The title of *The Departed* is a religious reference, but you have to be Catholic to know that.

**Avoid making large Truth Claims. Anything you say in a paper must be supported by evidence or a reference to existing scholarship.** I also encourage you to avoid culturally or politically loaded concepts, because these often cannot be proven.

Here are some basic guidelines for **correct citations**.

If you paraphrase (意譯), **you must still indicate the author and year**. Here is an example:

*Culture defines communication, and culture produces ideology. Therefore, communication must have an ideological component (Hall, 1980).*

If you quote verbatim (逐字), **you must use quotation marks on the entire quote**. You must also indicate the author's name, year of publication, and page number. An example is below:

*Movies always mean something, and meaning is culturally dependent: "Culture is the struggle over meaning" (Grossberg, 1997, p. 181). Movies most often reflect the values of the country that produces them.*

If you Google "Culture is the struggle over meaning" (with quotation marks), you can find that exact phrase and where it comes from.

Since many of you are not native speakers of English, when you suddenly use a very fluid, native-sounding sentence, I often Google it to make sure you have not copied it. Frequently, students have copied it but not used a citation. **That's plagiarism, and I can fail you for it, so make sure you use proper citations.**

If/when you cite a book or article, you *must* list it at the end of your paper, like this:

Tierney, S. M. (2006) Themes of Whiteness in *Bulletproof Monk*, *Kill Bill*, and *The Last Samurai*. *Journal of Communication* 56 (3), 607-624.

If you have questions about citations, **ask me**. I am always happy to help students avoid plagiarism.