

COMM 321: Communication and Film

Summer 2019, Luxembourg



Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Billinson
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Required Materials

Corrigan, T. (2012). A short guide to writing about film. Boston: Pearson.
Flashdrive

Films (provided by instructor):

Toni Erdmann
Baby (A)Lone
Last Tango in Paris
Morgenrot

Catalog Description

One of the most powerful influences on the conduct of our everyday social lives is popular culture, particularly the feature film. It serves as reflectors of our society and social prescriptions for what is “normal” in various contexts. This course will utilize feature film, scholarly readings, discussion, and writing to allow us to better understand how film both reflects and affects how we think about communication in various contexts. Course materials will vary based on the interests and expertise of the instructor, may focus on family dynamics, friendship, science, health, science fiction, and religious rhetoric. May be repeated once for credit with written permission. Partially satisfies the writing intensive requirement.

This course will focus on issues of “deviance” in film, and how Luxembourg (and surrounding countries-Germany and France) express cultural values both through production and regulation of issues surrounding sex, violence, and other controversial subject matters.

Course Goal

To make connections between film and other areas of culture to illuminate how culture is communicated and produced through film.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Students will acquire the basic terminology necessary for writing about film.
2. Students will describe how aspects of culture are communicated through film.

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3. Students will explore visual storytelling by creating a photographic or film essay about a cultural phenomenon.

EVALUATION

Grade calculations for this course will be as follows:

Assignment	Page Count	Percent of Grade
Screening Reports	2 @ 1-2 pages; 2-4 pages total	15% each; 30% of grade
Critical Essay	5-8 pages	30%
Film Scene Assignment	5 minutes	20%
Reflection Papers	5-10 pages	10%
Preparation & Participation		10%
Total	12-22 pages	100%

ASSIGNMENTS

Reflection Papers

The goal of these brief, in-class writing assignments is for students to synthesize their lived experiences and excursions in and around Luxembourg with mediated images from films. Prompts will be given by the instructor in class. These reflection papers may include the following excursions:

(TBD by Goen and Billinson)

Screening Report

The goal of this assignment is to prepare for class discussions and examinations of a film. This short piece of writing is primarily descriptive and focused on two to four points related to topics of the course or to specific questions provided by the instructor. Students will complete a total of three screening reports, two of which will be graded.

Critical Essay

The goal of this second writing assignment is to build on the ideas presented in the screening report and to reveal subtleties and complexities that emerge from a second (or third) viewing of the film. The essay will focus on a specific aspect of the film and will be limited to the information available within the text (film).

Film Scene

The goals for this project are to increase awareness about elements of culture (rituals, behaviors, practices), and to explore how visual storytelling can bring new understanding to cultural activities. This assignment is designed to explore visual storytelling by creating a short film scene about a cultural ritual or practice. Remember: Show, don't tell. This assignment may be completed individually, in a group of two or three. The length of the scene should not exceed 5 minutes.

Preparation & Participation

Because this is an upper-division communication course, there is an expectation that students will participate in class discussions, in-class writing activities, excursions, and other experiential learning opportunities. We will spend a great deal of time talking and writing about film and how images and ideas in film communicate culture.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

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Given this is an upper-division course that partially fulfills the writing requirement; there is an expectation you will not miss class meetings. My observation is that students who choose not to attend my classes do not perform as well as students who do attend. If you miss a class you need to obtain notes from a classmate rather than the instructor. Tardiness and leaving class early are unacceptable. Excused absences outside of university policy are solely at the discretion of the instructor. SPECIAL NOTE: I am aware that this is a study abroad course and know that the laws in Europe (i.e., drinking age) are different from the United States. However, I will not alter the nature of assignments or the mode of delivery simply because we are studying abroad. I expect you to be in class and to complete coursework on time. While we may be in Europe, this is still an educational exercise with specific university requirements. Any student who misses more than TWO class periods (equivalent to two weeks of a regular semester) will receive a letter grade deduction per additional absence. Given the number of students, the familiarity we will acquire, and the compressed nature of the course, everyone will know if you are absent.

Deadlines & Expectations

The standard expectation for collegiate level work is that students will spend 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour in class. I expect students to read assigned materials prior to attending class. You fully expect me to prepare for each class. I expect the same of you. I am here to facilitate your education, but I am not responsible for your education (only you can be). Students are responsible for all of the reading material – whether covered in class or not. Further, I expect you to complete all assignments in a timely fashion. Late work is unacceptable. While I want you to enjoy our time in Europe, we are still engaged in an academic endeavor. Just as with any other summer course, you will devote a significant amount of your day to academic pursuits if you wish to be successful in this course.

Reading Policy

It is often difficult to participate in class discussion and to fully comprehend the material if you come to class unprepared. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and view the assigned films before attending class. I assume you completed and understood the readings and you watched the films. I will use the class period to expand on the material and/or present new material. Some material in the reading(s) will not be covered expressly in class as it provides the background to understand the material discussed in class. If it becomes apparent that the majority of the class did not read the material for an assigned class period, I will dismiss class as continuing is a waste of time. My role as instructor is to assist you in understanding this material – it is not to spoon-feed you. You are responsible for all the material covered in this class and assigned in the readings. Further, you have a responsibility to yourself, your classmates, and your instructor to contribute to this course—this is why 10% of your course grade falls under “Preparation & Participation”

Make-Up Work

Make up work is allowed only in the event of an excused absence. Excused absences constitute the following: 1) severe injury or illness; 2) death, serious illness, or emergency in student's immediate family; 3) participation in authorized University-sponsored activities; 4) religious observances; 5) participation in court-imposed legal proceedings; and 6) required participation in military obligations. Only students with an excused absence may make-up work in this course. In the event of an emergency (categories 1 & 2), students should notify their instructor as soon as physically possible (preferably prior to the class meeting). Advance notice (one week minimum) is required for all other excused absences (3 - 6). Documentation for excused absences is required. All make-up work is due the class period following the student's return to class.

Disabilities Statement

I will accommodate students with documented disabilities according to the guidelines provided to me by the Dean of Students. If you have a documented disability, I highly recommend you meet with the Dean of Students to discuss accommodation(s). Please do not hesitate to contact me at any point during the semester to discuss your performance and/or accommodations. Any student with a documented disability should consult with Student Disability Services and the instructor prior to departure.

Requirements for Written Work

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Unless the assignment provides alternate instructions, all written work must be typed, double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font with one-inch margins and no extra space between paragraphs. These requirements are not the default settings for Microsoft Word. References and citations should conform to the guidelines specified in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) 6th Edition. Written work should be free of spelling and grammatical errors. Unless the instructions indicate otherwise, you will submit your work through Scholar. I do not accept work submitted via e-mail. Failure to meet these requirements will result in a grade of zero. The corporate and professional world demands excellence in written work. This requires you to conform to specific standards and conventions associated with the field/company that employs you. Thus, my expectations for written work submitted in this course are high. Double-check to ensure your work conforms to the requirements specified in the assignment handout. I highly recommend students make use of peer-review opportunities.

Academic Integrity

As a member of this academic community, you accepted the following pledge:

On my honor, I will maintain the highest possible standards of honesty, integrity and personal responsibility. That means I will not lie, cheat, or steal and as a member of this academic community, I am committed to creating an environment of respect and mutual trust.

This pledge should govern all behavior and work associated with this course. Students engaging in behaviors or submitting work inconsistent with this pledge will face sanctions. Academic dishonesty is detrimental to the educational process. Please note the following:

1. I have a responsibility to report individuals who violate the academic integrity policy.
2. I have read the university's academic integrity policy, and I understand it.

To be clear, plagiarism is the stealing or passing off as your own the writings or ideas of someone else. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing ideas without giving credit to their source, submitting as your own work that has been copied or purchased from another student or other source, and permitting someone else to revise or edit a paper to the extent that it is no longer your own work. Plagiarism in essays cannot be allowed and will result in a zero for that assignment and may result in an F for the course. To avoid plagiarism, cite all sources using current and appropriate APA format. It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. I take academic integrity very seriously. In addition, the Department Communication and Christopher Newport University take academic dishonesty very seriously. You should take academic integrity seriously, too. The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty in this class is a zero on the assignment. Ignorance is not a defense. When in doubt, ask!

24-Hour Rule

Experience indicates that careful consideration and reflection of one's graded work facilitates meaningful discussion. Thus, I require that students wait 24 hours after receipt of the graded assignment before contacting me with questions concerning a grade. This gives students time to think through their questions and increases students' objectivity. Incompletes A grade of incomplete will be given only when a student who is passing the course has a "relatively small" remainder of the semester's work to complete and is unable to complete the work due to a significant life event. I adhere strictly to this policy. I will assign a grade of incomplete ONLY in accordance with university policy.

Electronic Devices

We live in a digital age. Our educational system predates this. Please use electronic devices in ways that support our learning environment. This course will often run as a writing workshop. You will be writing about film during class. So it is entirely plausible that you will be working on your laptop for the majority of some classes. Noise from electronic devices is distracting and rude, so please figure out a way to silence them. Laptops, tablets and iPads are great for taking notes and for doing spontaneous research during class discussions to support ideas, verify points, refer to reading materials and so forth. Anyone wishing to surf the Internet, browse Facebook, e-mail, shop online, chat, send text messages, etc. can find someplace other than this classroom to do it (and be much more comfortable). Such behavior is distracting to other students and will not be tolerated. I think some self-reflection is in order if you are unable to control these behaviors for the duration of a class period.

Syllabus as Contract

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This syllabus constitutes a social contract between the instructor and all of the students enrolled in this class. This document, assignment sheets, and other course handouts/documents explain the policies and procedures for this course. Please read all of these documents carefully. Your continued enrollment in this course indicates your understanding of the policies and procedures for this course and your agreement to adhere to said policies and procedures. If you have any questions regarding the course policies and procedures at any point during the semester, please ask your instructor immediately.

UNIVERSITY MANDATED STATEMENTS

Disabilities: In order for a student to receive an accommodation for a disability, that disability must be on record in the Dean of Students' Office, 3rd Floor, David Student Union (DSU). If you believe that you have a disability, please contact Dr. Kevin Hughes, Dean of Students (757-594-7160) to discuss your needs. Dean Hughes will provide you with the necessary documentation to give to your professors. Students with documented disabilities are required to notify the instructor no later than the first day on which they require an accommodation (the first day of class is recommended), in private, if accommodation is needed. The instructor will provide students with disabilities with all reasonable accommodations, but students are not exempted from fulfilling the normal requirements of the course. Work completed before the student notifies the instructor of his/her disability may be counted toward the final grade at the sole discretion of the instructor.

Success: I want you to succeed in this course and at CNU. I encourage you to come see me during office hours or to schedule an appointment with questions or concerns about the course and material. If I become concerned about your course performance, attendance, engagement, or well-being, I will speak with you first. I may also submit an Institutional Referral Form that will be received by the Center for Academic Success. Depending upon the nature of my concern it also may be received by Counseling Services. If you are an athlete then your referral will be routed to the Athletic Academic Support Coordinator. Someone will contact you to help determine what will help you succeed. Please remember that this is a means for me to support you and help foster your success at CNU.

Academic Support: The Center for Academic Success offers free tutoring assistance for CNU students in math, science, and languages, as well as other subjects. The center also offers individual assistance and/or workshops on various study strategies that can assist you at performing your best in your courses. The center also houses the Alice F. Randall Writing Center. Writing consultants can help you at any stage of the writing process, from invention, to development of ideas, to polishing a final draft. The Center is not a proofreading service, but consultants can help you to recognize and find grammar and punctuation errors in your work as well as provide assistance with global tasks. Go as early in the writing process as you can, and go often! You may drop by the Center for Academic Success to request a tutor, meet with a writing consultant, pick up a schedule of workshops, or make an appointment to talk one-on-one with a University Fellow for Student Success. The Center is located in the Tribble Library, second floor, room 240. If you are still reading the syllabus at this point you might wonder about the relevance of including this information when you will be in the Hague and the Center for Academic Success is in the United States of America. Maybe you can Skype (taking the time difference into account) with the Center for Academic Success since "dropping by" is not an option.

Tentative Schedule

The professor reserves the right to change the schedule as needed

Class 1: Prior to departure, screening of "Inside Deep Throat" accompanied by lecture on US film industry, norms, and censorship

(In country)

WEEK 1: Sex Onscreen; Film Censorship as Social Control

Class 2: Course intro; best practices for film viewing/writing; terms and topics

Conveying culture and norms through film; media effects

READINGS: Corrigan Ch. 1, 2

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Class 3: Cultural norms and laws regarding depictions of sexuality in films: Luxemburg vs. Germany vs. France. Case study: "Last Tango in Paris"

READINGS: see Scholar

Class 4: Class discussion, "Toni Erdmann," Germany, 2016

DUE: "Toni Erdmann" screening report, due on Scholar by 11 am

WEEK 2: Depictions of Violence and Deviance; Film Censorship as Public Health

Class 5: Conceptualizing "violence." Cultural norms and laws regarding depictions of violence in films: Luxemburg vs. Germany vs. France

READINGS: see Scholar

Class 6: Film and memory; isolating themes onscreen

READINGS: Corrigan, Ch. 3

WEEK 3: Nazis and Propaganda; Film Censorship as Political Control

Class 7: Discussion, "Baby (A) Lone," Luxembourg, 2016

DUE: BAL screening report

Class 8: "Forbidden Films." History of filmmaking in Nazi Germany; framing

READINGS: Corrigan, Ch. 4 and 5

WEEK 4: Presentations and course wrap-up

Class 9: Case Study: Luxembourg and "Morgenrot"

READING: see Scholar

DUE: "Forbidden Films" screening report

Class 10: Current issues in film regulation in Luxembourg, Germany, and France vs. U.S.

READING: see Scholar

Class 11: Writing Workshop

Class 12: DUE-bring flash drive with completed film assignment to class. Screening of projects.