

## Film Studies Course Offerings Fall 2021

### UCOR 1100 On *The Wire*: Prestige Television, Drugs, and American Cities

Benedict Stork

TTH 3:45-5:50pm



*The Wire*, David Simon's and Edward Burns' HBO crime drama from 2002-2008, is often called the *best television show ever made*. Set in Baltimore, MD, we are immersed in a world of poverty and urban decay, cash strapped public services, overworked cops, and corrupt city leaders, and the desperate lives of the *humans* that populate this drama.

Focusing on the second season of the show, which deals with the intertwining of the Port of Baltimore, human and drug trafficking, urban policing, and

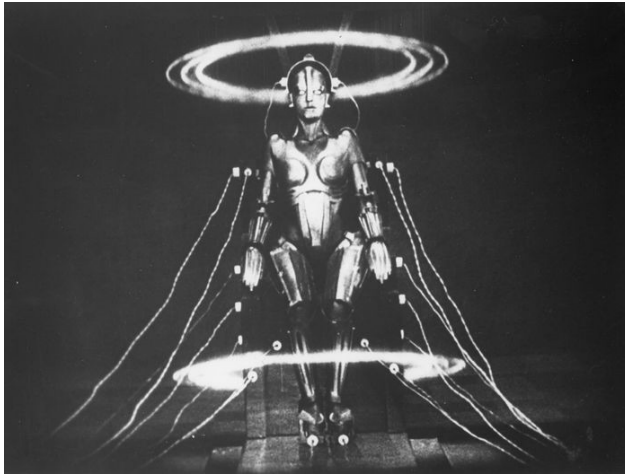
post-industrial labor, the show is a point of entry for exploring in writing issues of race, class, policing, law, and public policy. Much as the titular "wire" in the show leads investigators from the port to the street corners, brothels, union halls, row houses, and city offices that make up the show's complex portrait of a poor city, this class will let the show lead us from its fictions into various scholarly and journalistic ways of engaging with our world through writing. We will do this by watching, reading, and writing a variety of different but interconnected materials ranging from academic television criticism, popular journalism, and studies of the logistics industry and contemporary capitalism. This reading and writing will help you develop the argumentation skills and voice to understand and contribute to these essential conversations, and many more, through the craft of writing.

Workload: Students should expect to watch one to two one-hour episodes of *The Wire*, read approximately twenty pages, and write between one and five pages per week. In addition, students will complete a research session with a librarian, workshop writing with both peers and the instructor, and revise two pieces of writing over the course of the quarter.

## **UCOR 1300-01 Visual Storytelling**

**Justine Barda**

**TTh 1:30-3:35**



This course will explore a topic that has inspired filmmakers from the dawn of the medium to the present day, and that has particular resonance now, both in the film world and beyond: artificial intelligence. The concept of artificial intelligence has given rise to both our direst fears and most extravagant hopes for the future of humanity, all the while precipitating philosophical inquiry into what it means to be human. Over the course of the quarter, we will watch five iconic films about artificial intelligence that span the

history of filmmaking as well as the evolution of AI technology and our thinking about it. Approaching this topic from both an academic and a creative perspective, students will learn the fundamentals of film analysis, which will inform their own creative projects later in the quarter.

## **UCOR 1300-02 Visual Storytelling: VR**

**Josefina Valenzuela Cerda**

**TTh 3:45-5:50**



This course aims to introduce students into the immersive and interactive world of Extended Reality from a filmmaker's point of view, challenge them to think analytically and creatively about its impact, and invite

them to create a project for Virtual Reality that addresses a particular need for the world they know today. From the beginning, students will be exposed to VR by watching experiences using

dedicated headsets and their cellphones. Through discussions during lecture and their own involvement with the technology, students will learn the similarities and drastic differences between VR and traditional film; they will discover how camera position and spatial audio create a sense of reality and embodiment, and how the audience's point of view within the story generates a particular connection and emotion. We will investigate this technology's history and the many ways that virtual reality is being used today, as well as its future applications analyzing its positive and negative impact in our communities. During the course, students will have analytical and creative assignments. Analytical assignments consist of weekly readings of texts and watching experiences for VR followed by a short essay. Creative assignments consist of individual or group exercises that aim to explore and practice three major elements: immersive video, spatial audio, and interactivity; where one includes using a 360 camera and ambisonic microphone for filming. For their final project, students will be challenged to design and pitch in groups an idea for an experience for VR, thinking critically and artistically how they can push the technology while addressing an issue that interests them. Overall, this course aims to instill the idea that Virtual Reality is still a relatively fresh concept and therefore gives creators a platform to explore and even invent, but it also challenges us to set the standards and think responsibly about what we want to give to the world, and what the future of storytelling will be.

## **UCOR 1300-03 Visual Storytelling**

**Benedict Stork**

**TTh 1:30-3:35**



The combination and recombination of images, as much as or more than the direct capturing of images, is fundamental to moving image storytelling both as art and culture; the use of found and appropriated images, those images made not by

the “filmmaker” but by someone else and for another purpose, makes this forcefully apparent. Though the fact of combining images is present from the start of the cinema, contemporary technology and the proliferation of lens-based images make this centrality ever more important. Indeed, digital video and non-linear editing software make image combination and recombination an increasingly available means of expression as we can see in the numerous

video remixes available on websites like YouTube and Vimeo. In this course we will explore both the historical and contemporary use of found and appropriated images as a practice of visual storytelling, with students learning from past examples, reading critical commentary on the practice, and by producing their own experiments in image recombination. Work for the course will consist of ~20pgs of reading a week, two short analytic papers (300-750 words), four creative group exercises, and a final project with a creative and analytic option (as well as individual and group options). Please feel free to contact the instructor with any questions via email at [storkb@seattleu.edu](mailto:storkb@seattleu.edu).

## UCOR 1400-08 Social Justice

**John Trafton**

**TTh 3:45-5:50**



We know that the cinema can work towards producing social change, but to what ends? D.W. Griffith's fictionalized portrayal of the post-Civil War American south in *Birth of a Nation* (1915) singlehandedly brought about the second rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States. It was a wildly popular film that established the now-familiar trend of the

Hollywood blockbuster. Leni Riefenstahl's depiction of the 1933 Nuremberg Rally in *Triumph of the Will* (1935) worked towards unifying the German people under the banner of National Socialism. Riefenstahl's filmmaking innovations continue to inform how films are made today.

By contrast, Errol Morris' *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) successfully overturned one convicted man's prison sentence. The success of Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) led to the creation of the USC Shoah Foundation, an institute that holds over 52,000 interviews and testimonies from survivors of the Holocaust. There are many other examples in the long history of the cinema, where a movie had an immediate and measurable effect on the historical world. But does the cinema of social justice make the claim that it can change the world? If so, what examples can we turn to where the cinema has quantitatively improved the situation of oppressed or marginalized people? What are the problems and possibilities of social justice filmmaking? Does social justice cinema even exist, and if it does, what are the stakes of this kind of filmmaking? And given the advancements of media in the 21st century, what might the social justice cinema of the future look like? We will spend the duration of this course exploring these questions. By closely examining the formal qualities and ideological effects of various "social justice" oriented films, and by placing these films within a broader social and historical context, we will attempt to address these questions in meaningful ways.

## UCOR 1400-09 Americans Abroad

Justine Barda

TTh 10:15-12:20



America is at a point in its history where its role in the world is in flux, from the recent “America First” approach to foreign policy to the challenges to American dominance posed by rising global military and economic powers. These changes have raised profound questions about how we, as Americans, view ourselves, as well as how we are viewed by others. These questions are at the heart of the films we will watch in this class, representing a century of

American history, from the 1920’s to the present. From the individual journeys of tourists, adventurers, exiles, and expatriates, to large-scale military expeditions, we will explore the many and varied motivations that have prompted Americans to leave their country. And we will consider, as these they considered, what it means to be an American outside America.

## FILM 3000-01 Intro to Film Analysis

John Trafton

TTh 6:00-8:05pm



This foundation course in film studies is a requirement for all film majors and minors and is recommended as your first film class for all subsequent film electives. It introduces you to the formal building blocks of films: narrative, mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and sound. We study the operations of each of these

formal parts in detail and then consider how they work together. The course will train you in the specific critical methods necessary to describe, analyze, and appreciate the film text.

\* Required class for all majors.

## FILM 3220-01 Film Noir

Kirsten Thompson

TTh 1:30-3:35



Image: Alan Ladd as The Raven in *This Gun for Hire*

"A Dame with a rod is like a Guy with a Knitting Needle" *Out of the Past*

Desperate men and treacherous women. Neon lights pulsing outside smoky jazz bars, betting joints and flophouses in seedy parts of town. These are some of the iconic images, sounds and spaces that Film Noir has given us. But what exactly was film noir or "dark film"? Made between the forties and mid-late fifties these crime films had a distinctive visual style with stylized lighting and dramatic contrasts between light and shadow. The films often shared complex narrative structures, deeply pessimistic themes and oneiric or dreamlike sequences. From the police procedural (*He Walked By Night*) to the melodrama (*Mildred*

*Pierce, Gilda*), heist film (*Asphalt Jungle, Rififi*), and even the Western (*Johnny Guitar*), and enriched by the stories of writers like Raymond Chandler (*The Big Sleep, Farewell my Lovely*) and James M Cain (*Double Indemnity, The Postman Always Rings Twice*), this influential group of films shaped a later cycle of 'neo-noir' films, from *Taxi Driver* to *Chinatown* and *Bladerunner*, leaving their mark on contemporary filmmakers' work like Christopher Nolan (*Memento, Inception*). This class focuses largely on Classic Noir, exploring how its visual style, themes and narrative and generic forms expressed social changes in wartime and postwar America, but we will end with neo noir and the Coen Bros (*No Country for Old Men*). We'll take a close look at the femme fatale and homme fatale and consider how Noir depicted gender in unconventional ways. We'll also explore the connections between Noir and other art forms, like painting, jazz, abstract art and architecture. Titles may include screenings or selections from *The Maltese Falcon, Gilda, Out of the Past, The Strange Love of Martha Ivers, Double Indemnity, Kiss of Death, Murder My Sweet, Rififi, Raw Deal, T Men, The Big Heat, The Killers, The Hitchhiker, Naked City, The Big Clock, Elevator to the Gallows, Mildred Pierce, Asphalt Jungle*, some of which you will be required to watch on your own for assignments.

# FILM 3350-01 Screenwriting I

Josefina Valenzuela Cerda

TTh 6:00-8:05pm



This course serves as an introduction to the art and craft of screenwriting with a hands-on content creation approach. Students will learn the basic concepts of storytelling for

the screen by reading/discussing scripts and writing their own with an emphasis on how the core elements of character, conflict and dramatic structure can be used to tell universal stories as well as express one's personal voice and vision. Classes will be spent with lecture days and workshop days. During lecture days, students will learn the core concepts used in screenwriting today by discussing the examples given during class through screenings and before class through the scripts and book pages assigned to read. During workshop days, students will practice the concepts learned during lecture by writing their own scripts before class and reading them out loud during class performed by their peers. Each student is expected to give feedback following the guidelines so that every script receives notes to take to revision. During this course, students will be learning and applying professional practices, from understanding how to use industry standard software to express audio-visual and express their voice; to developing a writing process; to also learning the importance of giving thoughtful, respectful, and useful feedback and understanding how to take notes and apply them to their scripts during revision. At the end of the quarter, students will have read at least one produced script weekly, and written multiple loglines and synopses, as well as one wordless 5-minute screenplay and a 10-minute short film that collectively demonstrate a working knowledge and practical application of the central topics of this class.

## FILM 3400-01 Filmmaking I



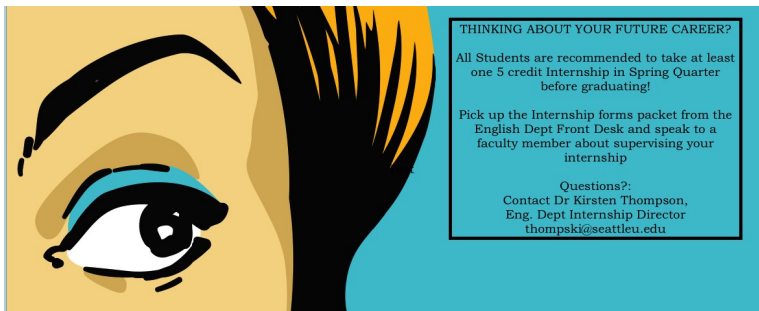
**Craig Downing**

**8:00-10:05am**

In this introductory course, we will explore the foundational elements of film form including cinematography, editing, lighting and sound and develop technical proficiency to put these elements into practice. Through a range of assignments emphasizing imaginative problem solving, collaboration, visualization, and critical media literacy, we

will explore the primary modes of filmmaking: experimental, documentary, and narrative. We will explore the formal approaches that have historically defined these modes, put our findings into direct practice through a series of audio-visual projects, and engage in regular critiques of student work.

## FILM 4950 INTERNSHIP: 1-5 credits (flexible)



Internships are opportunities for Film majors to network and gain valuable professional experience. According to a recent study from Michigan State University, employers go on to offer 50 % of their interns fulltime jobs! Film Internships count towards your

major. All internships are pass/fail. 5 credits requires 15 employer hours a week and some academic requirements, but there is flexibility for less than this, depending on individual needs. Register on Handshake and find an internship there with the assistance of the Career Engagement Office and then see Dr Thompson, the department internship director for paperwork and instructions on how to register for Winter quarter.