

The University of Iowa
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Department of Cinematic Arts

**Cinema and the City
CINE 3195 / Fall 2015**

Instructor: Nathan Holmes
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Office Hours: Tues. 1:00-4:00 PM

Class Meetings: Monday & Wednesday 3:30 – 4:45pm, AJB E220
Screenings: Monday 5:30 – 8:00pm, BCSB 201

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the late 19th century, cinema both emerged out of modern urban life and provided spectators with new ways to see and reflect on urban experience. This class investigates the interaction between cinema and the city by probing the way that film imaginatively engaged with urbanity as both an evolving physical and technological environment and a way of life. Moving from the era of early to the present, we will examine how urban representation has been sustained and transformed within particular international film genres and modes, including the city symphony, slapstick, noir and detective thrillers, the musical, and science fiction. We will also study how the changing form of the city itself gives rise to new modes of representation.

Required Texts: There is no textbook for this class. All readings will be posted on ICON.

GRADING

Participation	20%
Response Questions [due throughout semester]	10%
Mid-term Paper [due October 12]	15%
Presentation [date chosen in class]	25%
Final Paper [due date during exam week TBD]	30%

Grading Scale (letter grade, percentile, grade point)

A+ = 97-100 = 4.33	A = 93-96 = 4	A- = 90- 92 = 3.67
B+ = 87-89 = 3.33	B = 83-86 = 3.00	B- = 80-82 = 2.67
C+ = 77-79 = 2.33	C = 73-76 = 2.00	C- = 70-72 = 1.67
D+ = 67-69 = 1.33	D = 63-66 = 1.00	D- = 60-62 = 0.67
F = 0-59 = 0.0		

COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT 1 – The World of Urban Modernity

1.1 – Introduction

- 8/24 - Introductions
- Screening: Early shorts from Unseen Cinema, *Musketeers of Pig Alley* (D.W. Griffith, 1912, 17m), *The Crowd* (King Vidor, 1928, 1h38m)
- 8/26 James Donald, “Imagining the Modern City: Light in Dark Spaces” (323-329), Georg Simmel “The Metropolis and Mental Life”

1.2 – Shock & Sensation

- 8/31 Ben Singer “The Meanings of Modernity,” (pp17-35), “Sensationalism and the World of Urban Modernity” (pp 59-99)
- Screening: *Fantomas: À l'ombre de la guillotine* (Louis Feuillade 1913, 54m), *Spione* (Fritz Lang, 1928, 90m)
- 9/2 Library research workshop with librarian Janalyn Moss.
Class will meet in the Main Library, room 1015A

1.3 – Observation and Circulation

- 9/7 – Labor Day - no class, no screening.
- 9/9 – Edgar Allan Poe “Man of the Crowd,” Tom Gunning “Kaleidoscope and X-Ray”

1.4 – Modernism and Montage

- 9/14 David Harvey “Modernism and Modernity” (pp10-38)
- Screening: *Manhatta* (Charles Sheeler, Paul Strand, 1921, 11m), *Bridges-Go-Round* (Shirley Clarke, 1958, 4m), *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (Walter Ruttmann, 1927, 65m), *The City* (Ralph Steiner, Willard Van Dyke, 1939, 43m), Siegfried Kracauer “Inherent Affinities” (pp60-74)
- 9/16 Le Corbusier, “The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning”

1.5 – Bodies, Machines, and Motion

- 9/21 Kracauer “The Mass Ornament” (pp. 75-86), Charles Wolfe “California Slapstick Revisited,”
- Screening: *Cops* (Buster Keaton, 1922, 22m) *Liberty* (Leo McCarey, 1929, 20m), *Gold Diggers of 1933* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1933, 97m)
- 9/23 Scott Bukatman “Syncopated Cities,” Miriam Hansen “Mass Production of the Senses: Hollywood Cinema as Vernacular Modernism”

Presenters: _____, _____, _____

1.6 – Modern Women

- 9/28 Wada-Marciao “Imaging Modern Girls in the Japanese Woman’s Film”
Screening: *Woman of Tokyo* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1933, 47m) *Babyface* (Alfred E. Green, 1933, 71m)
- 9/30 Merrill Schleier, “Icons of Exploitation”

Presenters: _____, _____, _____

UNIT 2 – Everyday, Ordinary, and Exhausted Cities

2.1 – Noir Cities

- 10/5 Edward Dimendberg “Naked Cities,” Foster Hirsch “Crazy Mirror”
Screening: *The Blue Dahlia* (George Marshall, 1946, 96m), *The Naked City* (Jules Dassin, 1948, 96m)
- 10/7 Vivian Sobchack “Lounge Time: Postwar Crises and the Chronotope of Film Noir”

Presenters: _____, _____, _____

2.2 – Privacy and Publicity *Mid-term paper due*

- 10/12 Jane Jacobs “The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety,” George Chauncey “Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public: Forging a Gay World on the Streets” Michel De Certeau, “The Practice of Everyday Life,”
- Screening: *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954, 112m)
- 10/21 Pamela Robertson-Wojcik “*Rear Window*: A Primer in Urbanism”

Presenters: _____, _____, _____

2.3 – Surfaces, Materials, and Stuff

- 10/19 Chris Otter “Locating Matter,” Karl Marx “The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret”
Screening: *Play Time* (Jacques Tati, 1967, 115m)
- 10/21 Joan Ockmann, “Architecture & Distraction”

Presenters: _____, _____, _____

2.4 – Division and Decay

- 10/26 Paula Massood “Cotton in the City,”
- Screening: *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song* (Melvin Van Peebles, 1971, 97m)
- 10/28 Peter Stanfield “Walking the Streets”

Presenters: _____, _____, _____

UNIT 3 – Over the Edge: Dematerializing and Rematerializing The Urban Environment

3.1 – Dispersal & Sprawl

- 11/2 – David Harvey “Postmodernism” (excerpts, pp39-42), “Postmodernism in the City: Architecture and Urban Design”
- Screening: *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (Thom Andersen, 2003, 169m) or *Safe* (Todd Haynes, 1995, 119m)
- 11/4 Mike Davis “Fortress LA”

Presenters: _____, _____, _____

3.2 – Dystopias

- 11/9 – Scott Bukatman, *Blade Runner* (excerpts), Giuliana Bruno, “Ramble City”
Screening: *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 198X, m)
- 11/11 – Max Page “Making a Mess: The Real and Imagined Destruction of New York,” Constance Penley “Time Travel, Primal Scene and the Critical Dystopia”

Presenters: _____, _____, _____

3.4 – Networks and Vectors

- 11/16 Bruno Latour “Paris: Ville Invisible”
Screening: *Elite Squad* (Jose Padhila, 2008) or *Elite Squad 2* (Jose Padhila, 2010)
 - 11/18 Erika Robb Larkins “Favela Inc.”
- Presenters: _____, _____, _____

THANKSGIVING BREAK

3.5 - Detroitism

- 11/30 – Sugrue “City of Ruins”
Screening: *Only Lovers Left Alive* (Jim Jarmusch, 2014)
 - 12/2 - John Patrick Leary “Detroitism”
- Presenters: _____, _____, _____

3.6 – Modern Sinophone Cities

- 12/7 Ling Zhang “Digitizing City Symphony”
Screening: *San Yuan Li* (Ou Ning, Cao Fei, 40m), ~~*Blackbat* (Michael Mann, 2015, 133m)~~
- 12/9 – Last class, no readings

ASSIGNMENTS

RESPONSE QUESTIONS

You are responsible for submitting response questions to readings and screenings throughout the semester (see submission breakdown by unit below). Your response questions should be well-crafted, logical, and demonstrate a thoughtful engagement with the topics, concepts, issues, or problems raised by the texts for that week. Response questions should be around 3-5 sentences in length and take up an idea raised by the author of a reading, OR an idea arising between the reading and the film. Response questions may not be solely about the film.

- Unit 1: 4 response questions / Unit 2: 3 response questions / Unit 3: 3 response questions
- Response questions must be submitted by Tuesday at 11:00PM via ICON (i.e. so that they can be taken up in Wednesday’s class).

MIDTERM PAPER

David Harvey and Ben Singer identify a number of characteristics that are associated with urban modernity. Discuss the ways that one (1) of these characteristics is expressively conveyed in a film that has been screened in class. For this assignment a list of characteristics and correspondent films will be circulated toward the end of September.

Deadline: October 12 at the beginning of class.

Midterm Paper cont'd

Paper format and submission guidelines

- 12pt font, 4-6 pages double-spaced, with page numbers
- You may use any citation/reference style you choose (MLA, Chicago, etc.) but it must be consistent.
- Hard copy only, electronic submissions are not accepted
- Papers must have a title

PRESENTATION / FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Presentation

Your presentation and final paper are two parts of a whole. For your final paper you will be asked to write about two films, one screened in class, and another film, either a film chosen from the class filmography, or of your own choosing.

Your presentation is a chance to discuss the films with the class in a comparative framework and put together your thoughts for the final paper. For the presentation you may choose one of the two approaches below:

1. Examine the different ways that two films address particular aspects of modern urban experience (e.g. crowds, circulation, mechanization) that have been outlined in the readings and discussed in class. Compare and contrast the ways these films make this experience visible and significant. You may want to select two films from the same period, or films from two different periods. One film must be a film already screened in class by the date of your presentation. The second film may be chosen from the class filmography, or be a film, contemporary or otherwise, of your own choosing.
2. Many of the films screened in class will present *actual* urban sites, objects, technologies, or phenomena that may be unfamiliar to us, or that have lost the novelty that they once had. Identify an urban artifact or phenomenon in two films and conduct some research in order to provide a sense of cultural and historical context. *For example:* a number of the early films feature scenes set in amusement parks. How did amusement parks fit into urban culture during the era in which these films were released? What techniques are used to represent the site of the amusement park?
3. Choose a city and discuss the ways that two films from set or shot in that city relate to one of the ideas or concepts considered in the readings (you may not choose films that are actually discussed in the reading you choose). You may, for example, want to look at two films set in Los Angeles during a particular time. Or, two films set in Los Angeles at different times. One film may be a film screened in class, the other may be selected from the filmography or of your own choosing. The readings you select to base your presentation on must be readings that have been taken up by the class on or by the date of your presentation.

You will be given time in class to research and brainstorm with the other presenters in your week. Please use this time to determine your respective topics and ensure that there is not too much overlap.

Things to keep in mind:

- Your presentation should be about 15 minutes long.
- Your presentation should be informative and engaging and will thus benefit from having a strong *visual component*. You are encouraged to use clips from the film and Powerpoint (or whatever presentation software you prefer).
- Your presentation is a chance to benefit from the hive mind of the class as you move toward writing your paper. To this end, a strong presentation will feature a lively discussion component where you ask questions and play with ideas.
- If you choose prompt 1, the class will likely have seen only the one film screened in class, not the additional film you choose, so you will need to tell them a little bit about it. You should introduce the film in a fairly economic way. A lengthy plot synopsis is *not* necessary. Avoid getting bogged down in reciting the details of the plot.
- Lack of preparation will be evident! Prepare your presentation ahead of time.
- Many of the films for this course you will be able to access via the reserve system in the Main Media Library. If you have other means of accessing the films, digitally, you are welcome to pursue this avenue. Be aware that playback via streaming sites is often tricky, and that it's best to rely on DVDs or Blu-rays for the presentation.

Evaluation: Your presentation will be evaluated on the level of your engagement with the materials, the demonstration of research and thought into the topic, the degree of focus you apply, and the ways that you engage your audience and generate class participation.

Dates: Presentation dates will be picked in the second week of class. Presentations will take place in Wednesday's classes, starting in the 5th week.

Final Paper

In your final paper you will refine the initial research/analyses you performed in your presentation into a thesis/argument. As in your presentation, you are expected to explore issues/topics/concepts from class readings, lectures, and discussion. For the paper you are expected to draw on scholarship that *has not* been covered in class, and so you must, if you haven't done so already in your presentation, conduct some library research. You are required to have at least two items in your bibliography that are *not* class readings.

It is acceptable, after you complete your presentation, to switch from prompt 1 to prompt 2 or vice versa, for your final paper. Please advise me if you would like to do this.

If you would like feedback on your thesis/argument, you may submit to me the first page of your paper (i.e. opening 1 or 2 paragraphs) via email in .doc or .docx form *up until* the week of the deadline. No feedback given after: December 11, 4:00 PM

Deadline: **December 15, 4:00 PM**

Final paper format and submission guidelines

- 12-15 pages, 12 pt font, double-spaced
- Pages MUST have page numbers
- You may use any citation/reference style you choose (MLA, Chicago, etc.) but it must be consistent.
- Paper must have a title will interest and entice your reader
- Papers must be submitted in hard copy on the due date. No late or electronic submissions will be accepted.
- Submit papers here: _____

CLASS POLICIES

- This class is classified as a seminar. As such, it requires your participation to function effectively and excitingly. Please come to class having completed the readings listed for the day and overflowing with comments and questions. You are encouraged to direct questions and comments not just at the professor, but toward each other.
- Attendance will be taken at lecture and at screenings. Missing more than two classes throughout the semester will effect your final grade.
- If you are unable to attend a screening you should view the film on your own time. Films shown each week are available on reserve in the Media Services area of the library. If you choose to find the film using a digital service (Netflix, Amazon) **you** are responsible for ensuring you are watching the same version of the film screened in class.
- Come to screenings prepared to take notes on the films. Like film critics, you will need to learn how to take notes in the dark. You are expected to be attentive and respectful during the screenings. (Policies regarding food and drink will be outlined in class.)
- The use of cellphones, headphones, and tablets is not permitted during lectures, screenings, and discussion sections. You may think that you are being super-duper stealthy and that we can't see you using your phone, but newsflash: you're not. We completely see you. Using cellphones during lecture will incur a verbal warning, which will be embarrassing. Repeated cell phone use will affect your participation grade. A cellphone ringing or making whistling noises during class is inevitable and forgivable (it will probably happen to me at least once) but please let's all try to avoid this.
- There is only ONE screen used during lecture and it is at the front of the room. The use of laptops is NOT permitted in lecture, NOR during screenings. The rationale for this rule is that computer and phone screens are inherently distracting to the user

and to the people surrounding the user. This also means that you must **print out all class readings**.

- If you have any questions about assignments, readings, screenings, or any other part of the class, please first CHECK THE SYLLABUS. If the syllabus cannot answer your question, raise it with your teaching assistant or by raising your hand in lecture. If all of these avenues are unsuitable to address your questions or concerns, you may contact me via email. If you do not feel comfortable discussing your issue over email, you may make an appointment to visit me during office hours.
- Writing assignments are not collaborative. All assignments are to be conceived and executed individually. To prevent the possibility of plagiarism, you are discouraged from sharing your writing assignments with other students outside of the class. It is fine to verbally discuss ideas with classmates, but putting things in writing (i.e. in email or messaging) is not advised.
- Lateness: assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Late assignments will be penalized 10%/one letter grade every 48 hours. Assignments more than 4 days late will not be accepted.
- The professor reserves the right to make changes to the readings or the films in the course schedule. If such changes are to be made, an announcement will be given well in advance in class and over email.

Additional Policies and Resources

Administrative Home

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>.

Electronic Communication

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (*Operations Manual*, III.15.2, k.11).

Accommodations for Disabilities

A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. See <http://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/> for more information.

Academic Honesty

All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's *Code of Academic Honesty*: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the *IOWA Challenge*. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (*CLAS Academic Policies Handbook*).

CLAS Final Examination Policies

The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS [Academic Policies Handbook](#)).

Cinematic Arts DEO: Kathleen Newman, E210 AJB, 335-2827, Kathleen-newman@uiowa.edu, office hours: Mon & Weds 1:30-3:00 pm

Understanding Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI [Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator](#) for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the [Department of Public Safety website](#).