

THE GLOBAL CITY IN FILM (USP 314U/INTL 314U)
Spring 2024, Wednesdays, 2:00- 5:30 pm

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In this course, we critically examine – through readings, large and small group discussion, film viewing, and reflective writing exercises – social and physical representations of global cities (and suburbs) in popular feature films. In concert with other courses and literature on this subject, this class is intended to foster careful and critical observation and thinking, interpretation, and discussion of the diverse urban social, cultural, and political matrix of global cities – such as New York, London, Rio de Janeiro, Paris, and others – and how they’re portrayed on-screen.

Course outcomes. The course will help develop:

- (1) analytical skills in recognizing and critiquing diverse social, cultural, and political practices within global cities of the global north and global south, and a better understanding of the interconnections between the two worlds;
- (2) writing skills in the exercise of producing globally-informed, professional style abstracts and film reviews; and
- (3) an appreciation of the power of film media to construct popular understandings of class, racial, gender, and overall power dynamics and representations in the world’s urban power centers.

This course can be used to serve requirements in any of three different University Studies clusters: Popular Culture, Community Studies, and Global Perspectives.

Copies of this syllabus and assigned readings are posted on Canvas. Writing assignments (film reviews and abstracts of assigned articles) are to be completed with **strict deadlines as noted in the course schedule. No late papers are accepted. All writing assignments should be sent to Canvas (under “Assignments”).** They are **due by 5 pm on the Monday preceding (for articles) or following (for films) the class meeting** when they are discussed.

Film Reviews. You are required to write and submit to Canvas (“Assignments”) reviews of any five films exhibited in class. Observe standard formal writing rules and the required format (below). The review must be independently conceived and written, not taken from any other source. Avoid the use of quotes (e.g., from film dialogue). Harsh rules on plagiarism are enforced (see below).

There is a **specific format** the reviews and abstracts must follow (*see below*). Timely submission, receipt, and proper formatting of all submissions are entirely the responsibility of class members. **Save your written work and instructor feedback** until the end of the term. Technical problems should be address to the Office of Information Technology: 503.725.HELP.

The **deadline for film review submissions is the Monday, 5 pm, following the exhibition date.** For example, the film *City of Hope* will be viewed during Week 2, and the film review, if you choose this as 1 of the required 5, must be submitted by **Monday, Week 3, by 5 pm. No submissions will be accepted beyond that day/time. Do not procrastinate** in submitting reviews, as classwork tends to pile up near the end of the term.

Film Review Format. Pay careful attention to this. The focus of the film review must be on **urban representations** – how different aspects of urban (or suburban) life are portrayed. As an urban studies and global studies course, **the concern is less about the story line and the characters and more about the director’s depiction of good and bad qualities of life in a global city.** It is recommended that you to **take notes** as you watch the film, just as a professional film critic would do. **Indeed, you should write the review as if you were a professional film reviewer for a magazine called *The Global City in Film*. Focus your writing as if it’s targeted to readers of the journal.**

Follow very carefully: The film review should be a **full five-paragraph** (*4-6 sentences per paragraph*) essay. It should be no less than **600 words of main text.** **The organization of the review, which must be followed,** is as follows:

- 1. Identification information:** At the top of the page, put your name, date of submission, title of film (in *italics*), and name of the director. (You may have to google to learn the last item.)
- 2. Paragraph 1:** A *broad overview* (**no story details or analysis**, just a *general description* of what the film is about – setting, plot, the main characters; **essentially a synopsis of the film without details**). Stylize the writing as in a **professional film review**.
- 3. Paragraph 2:** Discuss the *basic story line* (the **narrative**) – **only the most important plot details** (and expressed in **your own words**).
- 4. Paragraphs 3 and 4 (these are the most important paragraphs):** Tell your readers *what the director is saying about the city and its inhabitants. What are the issues highlighted in terms of the representation of the city/town/suburb and its inhabitants?* In these two paragraphs, *move away from the story details and characters and discuss the background: the physical, social, cultural, political images of the city/location.*
- 5. Paragraph 5:** Give your assessment, *with reasons*, about *whether the director has successfully rendered their urban representation through the directorial techniques employed, and whether or not they succeeded* in creating a credible story **about the global city or suburb. Do not use the first person** (“I think,” “I feel,” etc.), clichés, and throwaway sentences (i.e., with no real substantive elements). Demonstrate your analytical skills in discussing the film.

Article Abstract Format: Follow carefully.

Six reading abstracts must be submitted. It’s best to start submitting early in the term in order to get feedback for later submissions. Submit to Assignments page in Canvas. The abstracts should be written in **3 full paragraphs**, each paragraph should be **4-6 sentences** using the **following organization:**

Start by noting the author and article or chapter (or film) you're reviewing.

Paragraph 1: A broad overview of the reading. What is it generally about, what does it cover? **No details or analysis** in this paragraph.

Paragraph 2: What is the author’s **central argument**? Spell out the author’s argument with her/his key points that back up the argument. What are the underlying **premises** behind the author’s argument?

Paragraph 3: Paragraph 3 is **your analysis & assessment** of the author's central claim/argument, not marginal points. Did the author(s) achieve their objective in the essay? How so? Be substantive in your assessment (without wasted sentences), and be fair to the arguments the author(s) are offering, not simply what they might have left out (unless it is critical to the argument). **Do not use quotes** (i.e., use your own language) **or the first person** (I think, I feel, etc.).

Discussion groups and discussion leaders. Discussion groups will meet at the top of the hour to share ideas about what the author(s) of the assigned reading for the week was communicating.

Discussion leaders, comprised of a different subgroup each week, are expected to identify and elaborate the *key points/arguments* in the assigned readings, answer the lead question in the syllabus for the week's reading, raise critical issues, and **provoke discussion** among members of the class. For some readings, you will have to access the PSU Library holdings using your PSU login information; other readings are accessed online through the link provided.

Plagiarism. A very serious violation of academic ethics, involving the intentional or inadvertent presentation of another author's work (ideas, research, expression, etc.) as one's own. Students are responsible for this understanding. See University Student Code of Conduct on penalties for plagiarism: Section V (9): <https://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct#AcademicDishonesty> Plagiarism normally involves an "F" and administrative (Dean of Students office) sanction. Papers produced by anyone or any system (e.g., ChatGPT or similar AI tools) that are not wholly the work of the student is cheating and will result in disciplinary action.

Disability accommodation. Any student with a documented disability can make arrangements with the Disability Resource Center at PSU for meeting any special needs. Both the instructor and DRC should be contacted at the beginning of the term. Their office is located at Smith Center, Room 116.

Study Support: The Undergraduate & Academic Support Center (UASC) in Smith Center offers assistance to newly enrolled students to aid in retention.

Improving Writing Skills: The Writing Center in Cramer Hall (503-725-3570) offers professional writing assistance.

Student Health & Counseling (SHAC) UCB Building offers medical, counseling, pharmacy & testing services, and complete dental aid for regularly enrolled students taking 9 or more credit hours or students taking 4-8 credits who elect to pay the health fee.

Title IX. PSU faculty are required to report any form of sexual violence or harassment to the Office of Equity and Compliance. Note the following: Sexual assault, sexual/gender-based harassment, : options for accessing support, both on and off campus. For an extended discussion of Title IX, see: <https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/faculty-staff-resources-responding-to-students-in-distress> or contact Julie Caron at: 503-725-4410 or via email at titleixcoordinator@pdx.edu

Office Hours. By appointment or by email. Also check your pdx email regularly for personal messages or those directed to the class. If you write, put INTL 314U or USP 314U in the subject line. I'll respond as quickly as possible, but not on weekends.

Performance Evaluation:

1. Film Reviews (5): 50%. See guidelines.
2. Article abstracts (6): 30%. See guidelines.
3. Class Participation: 20%. Regular attendance (one absence max.) and active participation, including discussion leader performance.

Schedule:

Week 1 (April 3): *Introduction to The Global City in Film Representations*

Film samples for discussion of global city representations and its inhabitants, along with discussion of class objectives and requirements.

Week 2 (April 10): *Urban Dystopia*

Question: How is the theme of a dysfunctional and repressive political order captured in the film?

Film: *City of Hope* (Library e-collection)

Read: Diane Crane (2014). "Cultural globalization and the dominance of the American film industry: cultural policies, national film industries, and transnational film." *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 365–382. **Use Library Electronic Catalogue.**

Week 3 (April 17): *Urban Youth, Urban Crime, Urban Violence*

Question: What is the relationship between drugs, violence, and politics in the city?

Film: *City of God* (Note that this film depicts graphic gun and other violence in numerous scenes)

Read: Henry Giroux, "Racism and the Aesthetic of Hyper-real Violence: *Pulp Fiction* and other Visual Tragedies." *Social Identities* Vol. 1, No.2. **Use Library Electronic Catalogue, Academic Search Primer.**

Week 4 (April 24): *Race, Ethnic Conflict, and Urban Dispossession*

Question: What are the issues and forms of alienation for marginalized residents of urban ethnic communities?

Film: *La Haine/Hate*

Read: Zak Keith, "Hollywood Asian Stereotypes." **Online at:**

<http://www.zakkeith.com/articles,blogs,forums/hollywood-asian-stereotypes.htm>

Week 5 (May 1): *Lost Community*

Question: What is the meaning of urban class structure?

Film: *High Rise*

Read Aaron Guthrie, (2015). "The representation of class in contemporary British Film and TV."

<https://aaronguthrie.medium.com/the-representation-of-class-in-contemporary-british-film-and-tv-afc5882dd7d3>.

Week 6 (May 8): *Land Development, Corruption, Resistance, Unsustainable Cities*

Question: How is the corruption of town and city life revealed in film?

Film: *Chinatown*

Read: N. Klein, "Staging Murders: The Social Imaginary, Film, and the City." *Wide Angle*, Vol. 20. No. 3 (1998). **Use Library Electronic Catalogue.**

Week 7 (May 15): *Critiques of Corporate Capitalism in Urban Life*

Question: In what ways is the corporation seen as an urban destroyer?

Film: *Roger and Me* (Note: one scene of animal slaughter)

Read: N. Freudenberg and S. Galea, "Cities of Consumption: The Impact of Corporate Practices on the Health of Urban Populations." **Online at:**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2443242/>

Week 8 (May 22): *Cities of Charm, Romance, and Mystique*

Question: Are cities spaces of alienation?

Film: *Run Lola Run*

Read: Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life." **Online at:**

https://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/bpl_images/content_store/sample_chapter/0631225137/bridge.pdf

Week 9 (May 29): *Environmental Disaster, Gender, and Resistance*

Question: In what ways is capitalism seen to be on a collision course with workers and the environment?

Film: *Norma Rae*

Read: Rachel Johnson, "A Plea For More Roseannes and Norma Raes: Addressing The Lack of Working-Class Female Characters on American Screens."

<http://www.btchflcks.com/2014/02/a-plea-for-more-roseannes-and-norma-raes-addressing-the-lack-of-working-class-female-characters-on-american-screens-2.html>

Week 10 (June 5): *Immigration and the Multi-Ethnic Working Class*

Question: How is the city treated in film as hostile to class, race, ethnicity, and national origins?

Film: *Dirty Pretty Things*

Read: A. Lykidis, "Minority and Immigrant Representation in Recent European Cinema."

Online at: <http://cinema.usc.edu/assets/096/15613.pdf>

Week 11 (Monday, June 10, 5 pm): Deadline for Week 10 film review