



Fall 2008

**GEOG 477/677**  
*Geography & Film*  
Course Syllabus

Professors Gary J. Hausladen & Paul F. Starrs

MS 215  
Wednesday 4:00 – 6:45

Hausladen: MS 326; by appointment  
[hausl@unr.edu](mailto:hausl@unr.edu)  
Starrs: MS 115; by appointment  
784-6930; [starrs@unr.edu](mailto:starrs@unr.edu)

Course requirements:

Assignment # 1: Initial film review	10 %
Assignment # 2: Review of reviews	20
Assignment # 3: Midterm in-class film essay	20
Assignment # 4: Film project	20
Assignment # 5: Final in-class film essay	20
Participation	<u>10</u>
	100 %

In addition, for graduate credit (GEOG 677), students will complete an additional assignment, spelled out toward the end of the syllabus.

***Weekly Schedule of Events***

<b><u>Week</u></b>	<b><u>Topic</u></b>
<b>01:</b> Aug 27	<b><i>Introduction</i></b>
<b>02:</b> Sep 03	<b><i>Geography, Sense of Place, &amp; Film Criticism</i></b>
<b>03:</b> Sep 10	<b><i>Auteur and Genre: whose film is it?</i></b> <b>Assignment # 1 is due</b>
<b>04:</b> Sep 17	<b><i>Documentaries, Mockumentaries</i></b> <b>Instructors will stay after for discussion</b>
<b>05:</b> Sep 24	<b><i>Up the River, Down the River, in Search of the River</i></b>
<b>06:</b> Oct 01	<b><i>Colonialism/Imperialism</i></b> <b>Assignment # 2 is due</b>
<b>07:</b> Oct 08	<b><i>Westerns: the Myths</i></b>
<b>08:</b> Oct 15	<b>Assignment # 3: Midterm In-class Film Essay: <i>Lone Star</i></b>
<b>09:</b> Oct 22	<b><i>Cities in Film</i></b> <b>Instructors will stay after for discussion</b>
<b>10:</b> Oct 29	<b><i>Film Noir</i></b>
<b>11:</b> Nov 05	<b><i>Neo-Noir: the next generation</i></b>
<b>12:</b> Nov 12	<b><i>Techno Sschprockets: Future Landscapes and Visions of Alternality</i></b> <b>Instructors will stay after for discussion</b>
<b>13:</b> Nov 19	<b><i>Geographers &amp; Geography in Film</i></b> <b>Assignment # 4 is due</b>
<b><i>No class the week of Nov 26: Happy Thanksgiving</i></b>	
<b>14:</b> Dec 03	<b>Assignment # 5: Final In-class Film Essay: ???</b>

### Assignments:

For all writing assignments, please, double-space; one-inch margins, number your pages, 12-point type, and turn in a paper copy. We may also ask for electronic submission, but will let you know. We frequently use MS Word's "track changes" function for comment on papers, so you should know how to use (or access) that.

# 1. Initial film viewing & essay: Each student will be assigned a film in class; watch the film. Then carefully think about, try out, and finally, list and briefly discuss 8 – 10 geographic components that strongly suggest themselves to you in watching the film. These can be geographic "facts" about place; or they can employ a geographical technique; or these can be a framing of place, or a circumstance, that seems to you particularly geographical. You must *think* about what geography is, can be, or should be, in your mind.

*NOTE: For this assignment and all future assignments, we are not only expecting that you will have done the readings (which are on-line in the WebCampus system), but also that your writing and your work will SHOW us that you've done the readings. You don't have to quote from them at length, but you do have to make it clear that you've incorporated those readings into your understanding of film.*

Do not rest on your past prejudices or preconceptions; geography is a broad field of study; the assignment requires more than "seeing" a film, you will need to watch and think about it, about how it's constructed, about more than "story" and "plot." Reference to a specific scene or frame is also encouraged. A sentence or two should spell out and explain each of your "components." The discussion that follows each "component" should explain how and why you think it is "geographical." This assignment is due at the start of class for **Week 3 (September 10<sup>th</sup>)**, so start early; watch more than once, and take notes while you're viewing.

# 2. Essay analyzing film essay techniques: length, 4–6 pages of text, plus full citations on additional standalone page(s). NOTE: This is a research paper, by which we mean you cannot complete the assignment without using library (or on-line) resources. Therefore, you need to start early — Week 3 would be wise — to find appropriate sources. What is required? Read on: First, find seven to nine published essays on the film for which you've found "geographical components" in Assignment # 1. Cite each source accurately and completely (see attached guidelines), and include an abstract in your bibliography / literature-cited section, with a one- to three-sentence discussion of the main point each item raises. Then write a thoughtful essay on the various ways these writers have critiqued and analyzed the film. This part is not a list, and not a summary, and not particularly even about the film in question; it is your examination of what these other "experts" have done and how they've set about doing it. You are writing about **THEIR** techniques, perception, perspectives, and ideas about film as a source. Keep an eye out for their treatment of geographical phenomena — but some may not have any!

- Two MUST be from a scholarly journal; usual choices include *Film Quarterly*, *Cinema Journal*, *Journal of Popular Culture*, *French Colonial History*, *Geo-*

- graphical Review*, or such classics as *Cahiers du Cinema* — look selectively at the “Film Studies” heading in the Electronic Journals on the Library WWW-site for ideas; if the film is older, you may want to go right to the printed versions of these journals in the correct year range (many journals have full indexes for the year in the last issue of the calendar year).
- Two of your items can be from one of these newspaper sources (even if you locate the articles on-line); acceptable newspapers are the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, the *Village Voice* (esp. by Elliott Stein), the *Miami Herald*. Cite date & pages accurately and completely; if you use an electronic source, give the URL in addition to date and pages. In other words, we want to be able to find it ourselves, if we need to. For older films, you may wish to consult the *Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature* either on the library shelves, or in its on-line version. That will help you run things down.
  - Two MUST be book chapters — that is, chapters from published books of a scholarly nature — a book or collection of essays about a film director could be acceptable, as could be an extended discussion of a film in a book about the genre (western, horror, film noir, documentaries). Be judicious. This will require at least one library visit. A film review collected from newspaper sources (collections of Pauline Kael’s or Roger Ebert’s reviews, for example) will not be acceptable. Find chapters with the whole apparatus — source (end) notes, an index at the end on the book, full citations.
  - One review can be from a weekly publication, such as the *Chicago Reader* (Jonathan Rosenbaum), or from the *East Bay Express* (Kelly Vance), or from the *San Francisco Chronicle* (Mick LaSalle), or the *San Diego Reader* (Duncan Shepherd), or our own reviewers in the *Reno News & Review*. (These are a little trickier to find, but often worthwhile.) Items from something like David Bordwell’s blog site can also work; many active film critics have good supporting sites (so does Jonathan Rosenbaum). Sources such as “brightlightsfilm.com” will work, too.
  - If you want to have more, that’s fine, but we expect you to select essays that have meat to them, and which raise interesting questions that you then reflect on; you may not find it wise to settle for just the first seven you find. Pick good essays and chapters and MINE them. Go for more, and then winnow. We expect you to find serious sources; a quick grab from imdb.com or another Internet source will receive credit for what it is — a lowest common denominator effort. Be diligent, and find good material.

Prepare a 4–6 page discussion of how these essays analyze the film differently or similarly to your treatments; add in at the end the page(s) of bibliographic citations, with your own annotations/abstract for each. This is due **Week 6 (October 1<sup>st</sup>)**. (If you have questions, contact us well before Week 6!)

# 3. Midterm in-class essay of an entire film: *Lone Star*; **Week 8 (October 15<sup>th</sup>)**. Use the same techniques that you have perfected in Assignment #2 to search out and examine useful sources for the midterm examination. Bring TWO blank “blue books” (purchas-

able at the book store in The Joe; don't wait until the last minute to acquire these). Bring, to the midterm, a single sheet of paper, which you'll turn in, that includes all the citations (and nothing BUT the citations — no additional notes, please) — that you researched and read. You may use this sheet to help you cite sources during the midterm examination. We will provide you, at midterm examination time, with a sheet that gives the film's essential details, so you don't have to memorize or record those.

# 4. Due **Week 13 (November 19<sup>th</sup>)**: Your assignment is to select at least five films, and no more than eight (or nine ...), that have a significant geographical theme in common. If you're looking for a model, consider the sorts of themes that we pick for weekly lectures in this course, or "shared" themes in such literary documents as review essays in geographical, film, literary, or other journals and news magazines (the *TLS* or *New York Review of Books* or *The Nation* come to mind). The themes can be varied, and more specific than the fairly general themes that we pick for weekly display — depending on your interests!

Some examples: Films on rock 'n' roll (or punk, or jazz, or country, or reggae); films with a food theme; films about/set in The South — with a point to make about that; "The Five Best Brazilian Films"; "The Geek in Film, from *Napoleon Dynamite Backwards*," Deserts in Film Geography (or "Mountains," or "Alaska," or "Jungles"); Homeless People in Film (or "The Rich in Film," or "The Confidence Man in Film"); or Dance in Geography (or fencing and swordplay), or "Geography in the Slasher Flick"; or "Professors in Film," or ... you should have the idea. Your essay should begin not just with an introduction of your theme, it should also suggest, with at least a citation or two to academic / scholarly literature, why this is a theme of some larger interest.

What we want from you is a several-part document:

- 1) A title that is pungent and evocative and accurate, and below that . . .
- 2) A single paragraph "abstract" of 150-250 words that forges connections, and below that, a discussion that includes the following parts ...
- 3) ... a discussion that establishes the overall view of your topic, and which binds your theme to "geography," in ways that you set out, and explain. This section will eventually incorporate discussion of a list of 5-9 films that are linked by the above attributes and discussion. While a part of the film can be especially demonstrative of what you are interested in, we expect the film to be included because the theme is at least relatively frequently in evidence. In other words, something that appears in just a tiny part of a single scene will be less convincing than something that's an ongoing part of the film.
- 4) The links can be various — same auteur, same city, same landscape, same genre, same take in matters of race or gender or sexual identity, same music, same horse, same buggy, same actor/-tress, same cinematographer
- 5) Following upon the example of some of the sorts of review-essays and critical discussions of film that you will have encountered in completing Assignment #2, dive into a discussion of the links and why these count as something of geo-

graphical (and other) significance. Draw on your researches and readings and viewings and anything else, but please DO share the sources of your insight.

- 6) Finally, return to the 5-9 films, and one-by-one, list each, the scene that you have chosen as especially representative of your theme, and include exact timing (beginning to end) of the scene for each film. Indicate the usual relevant information, such as whether it's a DVD or a VHS version, whether it's a director's cut, or a widescreen, the full bibliographic citation of the film, and anything else your heart or head leads you to want to include. DISCUSS, after these rudimentary details, for at least a paragraph or two, why you believe this is an especially significant or worthy scene or excerpt from the film.

At this point, you should have produced a 5-9 page paper, and you need to make certain that your name, and other stuff is included. Turn in TWO copies: One we'll keep, the other we'll return.

# 5. Final in-class essay on an entire film shown in class; **Week 14 (December 3<sup>rd</sup>)**. This will be similar to the midterm, except that you will not know the film in advance. It will, however, be open notes, so bring with you all your notes that may be useful in writing the essay.

**Participation:** This is necessarily a judgment call on the part of the professors; it begins with attendance – because there is such a heavy emphasis on materials and film clips in class, attendance is mandatory; each absence, no matter how legitimate (one excuse is as legitimate as any other), will cost you one full grade in the participation part of the course; also taken into consideration is active involvement in class. Recognizing the different starting points of students in this course, we will try to do our even-handed best to credit you according to your involvement and effort. Some of you know a lot about geography, others a lot about film, others about writing or criticism, others have vast stores of knowledge about science or natural resources. An active effort at participation will be recognized for what it is. If you don't try, or don't contribute, or don't show up, we can't do much for you.

**Other Readings:** There are a number of “readings” for the course to be downloaded from the course WebCampus site; your various papers should refer to those readings that are applicable/appropriate to your paper. A word to the wise: We do understand which articles or chapters relate to which kind of film (though we are willing to be surprised by pleasantly inventive applications). We chose them, after all. And we also understand that if only the first reading of the semester is referred to in an essay written for the last week of the class, it's relatively likely that the more appropriate or significant readings weren't referred to because you never got to them. We expect you to successfully incorporate the readings into your own writing (citing them, too). Think about the readings, about what they tell you, and about how you COULD use them in the film(s) you are thinking and writing about.

**Grading Improvement:** Please see the attached materials on “how to improve your essay,” and the citation guidelines (taken from an established geographical journal; you can

match this without difficulty, but ask us if there are additional questions about citation form). Consult these often; they can measurably improve not just your writing, but also your grade for the course. We'd welcome that.

**Graduate (Geog 677) Component:** We will task you with larger responsibilities for “question-answering” and participation in the class, so plan on contributing some of your particular knowledge in the weekly meetings. Your other assignment is a short paper assignment, which we'd spell out as follows: By Week Seven of the semester, write a short abstract of an essay that you would like to write that links course material (film, geography) to some aspect of your graduate research topic. (If your topic is still resolving, then give it your best shot, and settle on the best-gelled theme you can come up with.) Discuss the uses of film (commercially, cinematographically, culturally, critically, what have you) in your graduate school project. Document and flesh out with appropriate sources, and a level of detail that should yield you a 10-15 page paper by the end of the semester (due at the Final Examination).

**AFTER-CLASS DISCUSSIONS:** We plan to hold one-hour discussions after class (after a short break, of course) on the following days – 17 September, 22 October, and 12 November. Come if you can — these are for those interested in an opportunity for more broadly-based discussion of course materials, or of film in general.

**DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS:** The Geography Department is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical disabilities or documented learning disabilities. University policy states that it is the responsibility of students with documented disabilities to contact instructors during the first week of each semester to discuss appropriate accommodations to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences, and outside assignments.

**FINAL NOTE:** *Plagiarism* is a serious offense. We reserve the option to require that you provide us with all the research materials that you used, and all drafts that you produced, in writing your papers and essays. These will show the evolution and development of your writing. Papers are also, as a matter of routine, checked against the usually purchasable and Internet-based sources. Plagiarizing from an outside source or from a fellow student will result in an automatic F *for the course*. We really really really hate to do this, but have done so in the past.

Fall 2008

### **Geography 477-677: Geography & Film**

Readings on WebCT Site (please read BEFORE each week's class, except for Week 1).

Note that there are also going to be some OPTIONAL readings (marked on the WebCT site as "OPT-"). You do not have to read these. And, in fact, if you are considering a choice between the REQUIRED readings (these below), and the optional readings, there is no choice: Do the required ones. But for some of you who have a little more time, or who are excited and extra-interested in some of these readings, you will find the OPT materials posted from time to time on the WebCT site. Read them if you want to; chances are, you won't regret it.

#### **Week 1:**

#01. Kennedy, Christina and Christopher Lukinbeal. 1997. Toward a Holistic Approach to Geographic Research on Film. *Progress in Human Geography* 21 (1): 33-50.

#02. Eberwein, Robert. 1979. *A Viewer's Guide to Film Theory and Criticism*, 101-102, 103-108, and 136-149. Methuen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.

#### **Week 2:**

#03. Murray, Edward. 1975. Pauline Kael, and Appendix: Film Makers on Film Critics. In *Nine American Film Critics*, 110-140, and 233-237. New York: Frederick Ungar.

#04. Farber, Manny. 1971. Introduction. *Negative Space*, 3-11. New York: Praeger.

#05. Godfrey, Brian. 1993. Regional Depiction in Contemporary Film. *Geographical Review* 83 (4): 428-40.

#### **Week 3:**

#06. Sayles, John. 1987. *Thinking in Pictures*, 3-11. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

#07. Giannetti, Louis. 1996. Synthesis: *Citizen Kane*. In *Understanding Movies*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., 467-503. New York: Simon & Schuster.

#### **Week 4:**

#08. Rosenbaum, Jonathan. 1997. Vietnam, The Theme Park. In Rosenbaum, *Movies as Politics*, 134-139. Berkeley: University of California Press.

#### **Week 5:**

#09. Krim, Arthur. 1994. Filming Route 66. In *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle*, edited by Stuart C. Aitken and Leo Zonn, 183-201. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

#10. Fitzgerald, Francis. 1995. *Apocalypse Now*. In *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, edited by Mark C. Carnes, 288-291. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

**Week 6:**

#11. Rogin, Michael. 1987. *Ronald Reagan, The Movie*. In *Ronald Reagan, The Movie*, 1-43, with notes, 301-306. Berkeley: University of California Press.

#12. Hausladen, Gary. 2003. *Where the Cowboy Rides Away: Mythic Places for Westerns*. In *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think about the West*, edited by Gary J. Hausladen, 296-318. Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press.

**Week 7:**

#13. Sherzer, Dina. 1996. Introduction. In *Cinema, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism*, edited by Dina Sherzer, 1-29. Austin: University of Texas Press.

#14. Macdonald, Gerald. 1994. *Third Cinema and the Third World*. In *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle*, edited by Stuart C. Aitken and Leo Zonn, 27-45. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

**Week 8: Midterm – in preparation**

#15. A selection of reviews from Pauline Kael (1994). In *For Keeps: 30 Years at the Movies*. New York: Dutton. These include, “Kagi,” pp. 27-29 “Yojimbo,” pp. 58-61, “La Chinoise,” pp. 176-181, “Fellini Satyricon,” pp. 352-357, “El Topo,” pp. 401-406, “Padre Padrone,” pp. 728-731, “Utu,” pp. 1025-1030, and “Jean de Florette,” pp. 1144-1146.

**Week 9:**

#16. Ford, Larry. 1994. *Sunshine and Shadow: Lighting and Color in the Depiction of Cities on Film*. In *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle*, edited by Stuart C. Aitken and Leo Zonn, 119-136. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

#17. Gold, John and Stephen Ward. 1997. *Of Plans and Planners: Documentary Film and the Challenge of the Urban Future, 1935-1952*. In *The Cinematic City*, edited by David Clarke, 59–82. New York: Routledge.

**Week 10:**

#18. Jameson, Frederic. 1970. *On Raymond Chandler*. *Southern Review* 6 (3): 624-650.

#19. Borde, Raymond and Etienne Chaumeton. 1996. *Toward a Definition of Film Noir*. In *Film Noir Reader*, edited by Alain Silver and James Ursini, 17–25. New York: Limelight Press.












#20. Hirsch, Foster. 1999. The Boys in the Back Room. *Detours and Lost Highways: A Map of Neo-Noir*, 109–143. New York: Limelight Editions.

***Week 11:***

#21 Starrs, Paul and Lynn Huntsinger. 1995. The Matrix, Cyberpunk Literature, and the Apocalyptic Landscapes of Information Technology. *Information Technologies and Libraries* 14 (4): 251–257.

## How to Make Your Assignments Better (Now, or Next Time . . .)

In the syllabus for the course, the details of the assignments are all laid out. From the beginning of the course, and surely beyond the first assignment, you should be contemplating your write-ups of the film essay assignments. Below are some important hints for making your work better. You ignore any of these at peril — we really want you to do well, but at this point we also want you to demonstrate your growing mastery of geography & film and review style. This is a capstone course, so a suitable level of writing competence needs to be demonstrated.

-  Proofread your paper. If you don't, you risk getting a failing grade. We mark down.
-  Do not include a long summary of the plot. Your descriptions of scenes in the movie are relevant **ONLY** if they illustrate specific points that you have singled out in the movie as having special significance (in framing, vision, geographical content, or as elements in the plot movement).
-  Vary your word choice — don't use the same word or phrase over and over and over and over. Starting five consecutive sentences with "The movie" is not only dull, it's poor writing.
-  Make your writing economical. Avoid wordiness and repetition — eliminate "throat clearing" of all varieties ("It could be argued that perhaps..." is a big waste of words). Make your writing clear, smooth flowing, interesting, and vivid.
-  Every film is a single item that is situated within a larger body of work — other film, other literature, other acting, other philosophy, other ideas — and you **MUST** make clear how you believe your film fits with other films.
-  Use **IMDB™** or other fact-based resources. Incidentally, movie titles are italicized (preferred) or underlined (definitely not both). Follow the citation instructions.
-  If you don't mention other films, directors, actors, scenes, screenwriting, genre, ideas, novels, or other comparisons and analogues as appropriate (but you won't want to include all of these), you'll be marked down.
-  The successful essay **WILL** refer to readings that have been posted on the WebCampus site, for use by students in this class. And those references will be not just to the first reading, or to a single one, but instead will integrate and bridge the knowledge that you have gained from doing that reading. This is as necessary for the final examination as it is for the group project papers.
-  Watch all composition elements — grammar, spelling, writing, style, word choice, clichés (avoid them). Clean up and refine your writing.
-  Explain what makes the film **WORK**, **WHY** that's the case, and what that **MEANS** about the film and the filmmaking process. Remember the **GEOGRAPHY**.
-  Read your work out loud to yourself or someone else. If it sounds bad, fix it.

## Citation System to Emulate in Your Essays . . .

### **Book by a single author (include the subtitle):**

Zelinsky, W. 2001. *The Enigma of Ethnicity: Another American Dilemma*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

### **Book by multiple authors (include every author, as well as the subtitle):**

Moore, A. M. T., G. C. Hillman, and A. J. Legge. 2000. *Village on the Euphrates: From Foraging to Farming at Abu Hureyra*. London and New York: Oxford University Press.

### **Edited book (include any post-colon subtitle):**

Nostrand, R. L., and L. E. Estaville, eds. 2001. *Homelands: A Geography of Culture and Place across America*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

### **Chapter in an edited book (always include the page numbers):**

Sheridan, T. E. 2000. Human Ecology of the Sonoran Desert. In *A Natural History of the Sonoran Desert*, edited by S. J. Phillips and P. W. Comus, 105–118. Tucson: Arizona–Sonora Desert Museum Press; Berkeley: University of California Press.

### **Translation:**

Nora, P., ed. 1996–1998. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*. Translated by A. Goldhammer, transl. edited by L. D. Kritzman. 3 vols. New York: Columbia University Press.

### **Journal article (include the issue number, if any):**

Frenkel, S., and J. Walton. 2000. Bavarian Leavenworth and the Symbolic Economy of a Theme Town. *Geographical Review* 90 (4): 559–584.

### **Newspaper article (if no author, cite the name of the newspaper; for example, The Economist):**

Thompson, G. 2001. An Exodus of Migrant Families Is Bleeding Mexico's Heartland. *New York Times*, 17 June, §1: 1, 8.

### **Film:**

Hanson, C., dir. 1997. The Victory Motel (DVD Chapter). *L.A. Confidential*. New York: Warner Brothers Entertainment, 137 minutes.

### **Dissertation or thesis:**

Skop, E. H. 2002. Saffron Suburbs: Indian Immigrant Community Formation in Phoenix. Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, Tempe.

### **Interview:**

Marsh Jr., S.C. B. 2001. Interview with Jennifer Evans-Cowley. Amarillo, Tex., 13 June.

### **Web page URL (do not force a break in the URL at the end of a line; and if you are citing a Web site that is continually updated, rather than a specific on-line article, put the date you accessed the site after the URL):**

PRC [People's Republic of China]. 2000. The Bai Ethnic Minority. Washington, D.C.: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China [<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/5255.html>] (accessed on 12 Dec 2006).