



0501A200

Introduction to Film History

Instructor: TBA

E-mail: TBA

Time: May 18, 2026 - June 19, 2026

Office Hours: by appointment

Contact Hours: 60 (50 minutes each)

Credits: 4

Course Description

This course is an introductory survey of film history. During this course we will examine major developments in the industry's history, concepts, summarize debates in film studies, define technical terms in regard to aesthetics and techniques as well as describe major periods and movements. The emergence of new artistic media, subject matter, and strategies of making and viewing will also be discussed. Emphasis will be placed on the methods of interpreting the works, especially in relation to then-current social practices and cultural values.

Required Textbook (s)

A Short History of Film—2nd Edition by Wheeler Winston Dixon (Author), Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (Author) Rutgers University Press

Prerequisites

No prerequisites

Course Goals

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate the role of movies in evolving society, both reflecting and sometimes leading social change
2. The role of the aesthetic elements of a movie in creating its message and potential for audience engagement
3. Specifically, the students will be able to analyze and articulate the roles of directing, cinematography, audio, set design, acting and other variables that contribute to the movie experience

Course Schedule

Please note that the schedule is meant to give an overview of the major concepts on this course. Changes may occur in this calendar as needed to aid in the student's development.

Note that the viewing of the videos may not coincide with the readings. Also note that the content in the videos and PowerPoint does not necessarily follow the book.

You will receive a study guide informing you what from the text is subject to being part of an exam. **The study guide will NOT involve content from the videos or PowerPoint.**

Week I

1. Introduction.
2. Chap. 1: The Invention of the Movies
3. Chap. 2: The Birth of an American Industry
4. Chap. 3: World Cinema and the Silent Era

Week II

1. Chap. 4: The Hollywood Studio System in the 1930s and 1940s
2. American Cinema in the 1940s.

PROJECT 1 DUE WEDNESDAY OF WEEK 2

Late assignments not accepted. See project below

3. Chap. 5: International Cinema through WWII
4. First exam

Week III

1. Chap. 6: Postwar Challenges to the Movies
2. Chap. 7: World Cinema in the 1950s

FIRST EXAM WEDNESDAY OF WEEK 3 (exams are multiple choice)

3. Group meetings for presentations
4. Review/Second exam

Week IV

1. Chap. 8: The 1960s Explosion

PROJECT 2 DUE TUESDAY OF WEEK 4

Late assignments not accepted

2. Chap. 9: World Cinema 1970 to the Present
3. Chap. 10: The New Hollywood
4. Group meetings for presentation.

Week V

1. Documentary, a history and summary of techniques

FINAL EXAM FRIDAY OF WEEK 5 (the final exam is NOT cumulative)

NOTICE: In order to provide students with an interesting and enjoyable educational experience, this syllabus may be changed at the discretion of the instructor at any time with notification.

Project

Project 1:

View the Potempkin step sequence and the video offering analysis of it.

(Due Wednesday of second week)

Explain in an essay of 1-2 pages: Your answers will be your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers UNLESS your answers show you gave this little or no thought.
Answer each question separately and not as one long series of paragraphs.

1. Was the sequence effective at communicating a message? What was the message?
2. How did the sequence communicate its message? What did the actors, editing,

camera work, set design do to get its message across?

3. The video is very violent and disturbing for many. Was the level and amount of violence necessary to communicate the message?

4. There are many closeups of the people in the crowd, many of whom are shot.

Why weren't the faces of the soldiers shown?

Note to students: music was added well after the movie was released but is music specifically created for this sequence. This originally was a silent film.

Battleship Potempkin Odessa Step sequence:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ps-v-kZzfec&bpctr=1591570793>

Longer version with more context of what people are celebrating and viewing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giVMhYTXIXU>

Explanation of Potempkin step sequence (directed by Sergei Eisenstein):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5WbeoP_B8E&t=308s

Project 2:

Choose any director that you find interesting and talented and explain the following: (don't just choose a director because you liked the movie, but because the director does unique things to communicate his/her/their content.)

(Make sure you answer each question in order and let me know which question you are answering. Answer each question separately and not as one long series of paragraphs.)

(Due Tuesday of fourth week)

1. What type of movies does that director do, usually?
2. If not just one type of movie, what makes this director unique in terms of camera work, editing style, how characters are developed?
3. What makes this director unique?
4. Discuss one movie from this director and explain:
 - a. The plot in one paragraph
 - b. Why did you choose this movie?

Grading (by assignment)

Each exam is worth 30 points (2 exams X 30= 60 points)

Exams are multiple choice and the 2nd exam is not cumulative.

Each project is worth 20 points (2 projects X 20=40 points)

Total possible points = 100

Grading Scale

The instructor will use the grading system as applied by JNU:

Definition	Letter Grade	Score
Excellent	A	90~100
Good	B	80~89
Satisfactory	C	70~79
Poor	D	60~69
Failed	E	Below 60

Course Requirements

1. Students are expected to read the required readings prior to the class session in which they are discussed.
2. I will respond to emails in a timely manner. It is best to make an appointment or speak to me after lecture.
3. Please check your email regularly for instructions and readings.

Methods of Instruction

Lecture via video with PowerPoints distributed to students.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in the class. It would be recorded for each class and forms part of students' participation record. Students should inform the instructor at the earliest opportunity if they need to ask for a leave. All absences may have a negative effect on students' final grades. Any students with more than three unexcused absences will automatically fail the course.

Given the online nature of this course, attendance will be impossible to measure. Your

viewing of the videos and reading of the text will be verified by your work on exams. Your thought processes and attention to detail will be noted through the two written assignments outside exams.

Academic Integrity

As members of the Jinan University academic community, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic coursework and activities. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing, i.e., misrepresenting as one's own work any work done by another; submitting the same paper, or a substantially similar paper, to meet the requirements of more than one course without the approval and consent of the instructors concerned; or sabotaging other students' work within these general definitions. Instructors, however, determine what constitutes academic misconduct in the courses they teach. Students found guilty of academic misconduct in any portion of the academic work face penalties that range from the lowering of their course grade to receiving a failing grade for the entire course.