RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ACADEMIC COURSE OUTLINE

FILM – 250H HOLLYWOOD RENAISSANCE: FILM AND
AMERICAN SOCIETY, 1967-1983

I. Basic Course Information

A. Course Number and Title: FILM-250 H

B. Date of Proposal: September 25, 2003

C. Sponsoring Department: Communication and Languages

D. Semester Credit Hours: 3

E. Weekly Contact Hours: 3
   Lecture: 3
   Laboratory: 0

F. Prerequisites: “A” or “B+” in a Film Studies course or permission of the
   instructor

G. Laboratory Fees: None

II. Catalog Description

Prerequisite: “A” or “B+” in a Film Studies course or permission of instructor

“Hollywood Renaissance: Film and American Society, 1967-1983” is an Honors
course in Film Studies. The Hollywood Renaissance in the 1970’s was an
explosion of creativity in a decade of turmoil. In the shadow of Vietnam and
Watergate, the directors and films of this period offered conflicting visions about
the nature and prospects of American society. In a seminar setting this course will
explore themes such as the Vietnam War, the sexual revolution, the status of
teenagers, African-American culture, and the women’s movement. Students will
research and analyze key films and directors of the 1970’s, such as Kubrick,
Coppola, Penn, Altman, etc.

III. Statement of Course Need

- To provide a Film Studies Honors course as a Humanities general elective
- To provide an Honors course in Film Studies to add to the Honors program
- To provide an additional course for Communication students pursuing a
  concentration in Film Studies
• To provide a challenging course where students can develop their analytical, research, and writing skills

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

• Elective
• General Education elective in Humanities
• Elective in Communication Studies
• Honors elective in Humanities

This course transfers as a film studies course.

V. Outline of Course Content

Introduction: A Decade of Change in the Hollywood Film Industry

• Hollywood conglomeration and agent packaging
• High concept art
• Ancillary markets / cross-production
• Blockbuster / event film
• Special effects / technical advances
• End of the sixties: financial crisis 1967-71

The Cinema of Sensation

• Legacy of Psycho and Last Tango in Paris
• MPAA rating system / censorship
• The “graphic imperative”
• The sex-and-violence debate

Films and the Counterculture

• College film audience demographic
• Civil rights, anti-war, sexual freedom, women’s movement, lifestyle, drug culture
• Hippie generation, protests, Easy Rider, etc.
• The Draft, Kent State, campus demonstrations
• Revisionist genres, i.e. Westerns

Politics and Social Change

• Polarization: silent majority vs. counterculture
• Vietnam and Cambodia: the Communist expansion
• The Cold War
• Watergate
• Civil rights and women’s rights

Study Cluster Model I (see cluster list)
“Demonstration and the Vietnam War”

• U.S.-Vietnam history: excerpt from Hearts and Minds (documentary)
• Political protest: Coming Home / Born on the Fourth of July
• Inside the war: excerpts from Platoon, Deer Hunter, Apocalypse Now
• Television war: impact at home
• The anti-war film: contemporary portrayal of violence vs. old Hollywood war film genre

Study Cluster Model II (see cluster list)
“Sexual Freedom and the Pill”

• Gender roles in transition
• Pornography: cable and video
• European “art” film imports
• Sexual revolution
• MPAA rating system and censorship
• Last Tango in Paris controversy

Introduction to Study Cluster Projects
(Choose one for your research paper)

• See all relevant films and analyze them
• Study the genre
• Research filmmaker / auteur
• Research contemporary reviews and articles
• Apply relevant film theories
• Research societal issues
• Work with partner on class reports
• Show excerpts to class and put in contexts
• Write research paper in three stages

Film Theory Survey: Comparative Strengths and Weaknesses

• Realist models: Andre Bazin’s theory – Ordinary People
• Expressionalistic models: The Shining
• Auteurist models: case study Bonnie and Clyde
• Psychoanalytic models: case study Psycho
• Ideological models: The Green Berets
• Feminist models: “slasher” films
• Cognitive models: “Perceptual and Audience Reception”
Cluster Projects: see attached list for films (22 clusters)

1. End of the sixties: lost illusions
2. The hippie generation
3A. The Vietnam film
3B. Revisionist Westerns and genocide
4. Feminism: women’s movement and gender in film
5. Violence debate: the “graphic imperative”
6. Cops and vigilantes: reactionary violence
7. Watergate, assassination and conspiracy film
8. Disaster films
9. Futurism: Sci Fi and dystopia
10. The new horror film: slasher sub genre
11. The teen flick: exploitation and new markets
12. The new documentary film: Cinema Verite
13. African-Americans in films: racist stereotypes
14. Experimental film: American avant-garde
15. Pornography and politics
16. European New Wave influences
17. Blockbuster phenomenon: the event film
18. Media satire film
19. Sex comedy: sexual revolution
20. Hollywood auteurs: new directors, new films
21. Hollywood business and industry
22. Social history: the 1970’s

VI. Educational Goals and Learning Outcomes

Educational Goals

Students will:
- To develop a broad understanding of the films and issues of the 1970’s (G.E. 5, 6)
- To research in depth and write about one thematic/genre cluster (see outline) (G.E. 1, 2, 3)
- To develop an understanding of how American films shaped or are shaped by society (G.E. 5, 6)
- To develop an aesthetic awareness of auteur film styles
- To develop an understanding of film theory and its applications

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:
- Compile and organize original research in Film Studies
- Deliver an oral presentation in a seminar setting
- Analyze films and film segments critically
- Explain connections between social themes and specific films
Explain how films influence various social and political groups (i.e., explain how “reception theory” works)
Research and write an effective 16-page analytical Film Studies research paper

VII. Modes of Teaching and Learning

• Lecture/discussion
• Small group work (study clusters)
• Guest speakers
• Student oral presentations
• Student collaboration
• Independent study (research paper)
• Film screenings and analysis

VIII. Papers, Examinations, and other Assessment Instruments

• Research paper (min. 16 pp.)
• Analytical essay
• Journal writings on films
• Seminar participation
• Oral presentation
• Final essay exam

IX. Grade Determinants

Research paper, the analytical essay, oral presentation, seminar discussions, and final exam will assess the following outcomes:

• The student will be able to analyze and synthesize information about films, directors, and social issues.
• The student will be able to write clearly, accurately, and fluently with focus and continuity in standard American English.
• The student will be able to select and describe broad themes and ideas that characterize films of the 1970’s.
• The student will be able to compile complex material from varied information sources for a research project, organize and present it effectively in an oral presentation and in a critical research paper.
• The student will be able to parse a film for key cinematic and thematic elements and present them in class.
• The student will be able to explain and compare/contrast complex cinematic theories and concepts in seminar discussions and in the research paper.

X. Texts and Materials

Texts:
Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam 1970-79,  
David Cook

History of the American Cinema, Volume 9,  
University of California Press: 2002

American Films of the 70’s: Conflicting Visions,  
Peter Lev  University of Texas Press:  2002

Primary sources:

DVD’s, films, and some videos: teacher’s private collection of films from the 70’s. They will be put on reserve for the students in the class.

Contemporary film reviews (in print and online)

Occasional articles provided by instructor on Library reserve

Pertinent handouts

WEB sources for original, individual research, CD ROM’S on period

Journals: Students keep detailed film journals on screenings in and out of class

Bibliographies at back of textbooks for research

Other books on reserve:

The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics,  
Bruce Shulman, DeCapo Press: 2001

A Cinema of Loneliness 3rd edition,  
Robert Kilker, Oxford University Press:  2001

Hollywood Films of the Seventies,  
Seth Cagin & Philip Dray (out of print)  Harper and Row

Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex – Drugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll Generation Saved Hollywood,  
Peter Biskind, Simon & Schuster: 1998

XI. Resources

CATT Room / Projector
Library Resources
DVD’s on reserve in the Learning Center

XII. Honors Courses

1. Definition: This course conforms with the definition of an Honors course because it “enriches and challenges students” beyond the “regular scope and curriculum” of a Film Studies course and because it “will offer a sophisticated use of research, introduce intellectually stimulating readings and critical perspectives” (both in the area of film theory and in the area of American social and political theory), “promote a higher level of critical discussion and written work” (particularly in the preparation and writing of a 16-page research paper), “and encourage independent study projects.”

2. Educational Goals and Objectives: (outlined in section VI above)

3. Course content: (outlined in section V above)

The following characteristics of this newly-designed Honors course distinguish it as an Honors course:

• Seminar setting
• Extensive research paper (min. 16 pages)
• Extensive reading (see texts)
• Extensive and detailed film analysis in film journals and an oral presentation
• Discussion of complex film theories and concepts and 1970’s social and political culture
• Student collaboration on research clusters (see section V above)