EGL 121.01 (Global Film Traditions: Realism, Postcolonialism, and Dystopia in World Films)
Professor J. Santa Ana
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Office: 1094 Humanities
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00am – 11:00am, 1:30pm – 2:00pm, and by appointment on Wednesdays.
The class meets in 2030 Humanities at 11:30am – 1:20pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Course description:
Thematic terms: realism, postcolonialism, apocalyptic, dystopia

Dystopia: 1) An imagined place or state in which everything is unpleasant or bad, typically a totalitarian or environmentally degraded one. 2) A futuristic, imagined place or state in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control. Dystopia, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, makes a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system.

—Oxford English Dictionary

This class is an introductory film course with a focus on the cross-cultural study of films from multiple world traditions. Students will learn the basics of film analysis and terminology. They will also develop a familiarity with film traditions within and outside the United States, including (but not necessarily limited to) parts of Europe (England and France), Africa (Mauritania and South Africa), Asia (India and the Philippines), the Middle East (Iran), Mexico and South America (Brazil), and Australia. Films will be studied in relation to larger issues addressed in the humanities, using a thematic approach. Of particular interest will be the question of the relationship between the representational politics of international cinema and how each of the films we see and discuss represent dystopias (i.e., societies characterized by dehumanizing poverty, totalitarian governments, ecological crisis, or other characteristics associated with a decline in the social order and the struggle against repression).

This class is discussion focused. Although I will provide some brief lectures, our course will operate as a discussion class in which you listen to others’ perspectives, ask productive questions, and articulate ideas with nuance and clarity. You must come to class prepared to discuss all the films, readings, and assignments on the days they are listed in the class schedule.

THIS COURSE SATISFIES TWO STONY BROOK CURRICULUM (SBC) REQUIREMENTS:
GLO (GLOBAL STUDIES): 1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the interconnectedness of the world, past and present; 2. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a society or culture outside of the United States.

HUM (HUMANITIES): 1. Understand the major principles and concepts that form the basis of knowledge in the humanities; 2. Understand the theoretical concepts that undergird one or more of the humanities; 3. Develop an awareness of some of the key historical themes of one or more of the humanities; 4. Develop an awareness of the multi- or interdisciplinary nature of issues within the humanities; 5. Develop an awareness of the contexts (historical, social, geographical, moral) in which these issues emerged; 6. Develop the verbal and written skills to articulate valid arguments on these issues.
Note on subject matter:
This course centers on subject matter of current and controversial interest, and a primary objective is to have a classroom atmosphere that promotes full and free discussion, the aim of which is to provoke healthy intellectual discomfort and the critical inquiry that ought to be its consequence. The aim of the course is consistent with the Undergraduate Bulletin. By enrolling in this course, you therefore understand and accept its requirements. You must submit every piece of written work in order to be eligible to pass the course. Moreover, academic policy and regulation at the university prohibits making any “special” arrangements with individual students who have problems with course materials (with the exception of a documented physical or learning disability). If any student in the course has a problem with any text or other course material, the student needs to drop the class before Sept. 4, 2015, the last day to drop classes without a “W” (withdraw) on student records.

12 Required Films (arranged by thematic unit).
Note: All of the films are on reserve for our course at Melville Library.

Realism and Dystopia
Central Station (South America: Brazil, 1998, 1 hr. 46 min., dir. Walter Salles)
Pan’s Labyrinth (Spain and Mexico, 2006, 1 hr. 59 min., dir. Guillermo del Toro)
A Separation (Middle East: Iran, 2011, 2 hrs. 3 min., dir. Asghar Farhadi)
Two Days, One Night (Europe: France, 2014, 1 hr. 35 min., dir. Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne)

Postcolonialism and Dystopia
Salaam Bombay (Asia: India, 1988 1 hr. 54 min., dir. Mira Nair)
Himala (Philippines, 1982, 2hrs. 4 min., dir. Ishmael Bernal)
Amores Perros (Mexico, 2000, 2hrs. 35 min., dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu)
District 9 (Africa: South Africa, 2009, 1 hr. 52 min., dir. Neill Blomkamp)
Timbuktu (Africa: Mauritania, 2014, 1 hr. 40 min., dir. Abderrahmane Sissako)

Apocalypse and Dystopia
Children of Men (Europe: England, 2006, 1 hr. 54 min, dir. Alfonso Cuarón)
Take Shelter (North America: USA, 2011, 2 hr., 1 min., Jeff Nichols)
Wild Tales (South America: Argentina, 2014, 2 hrs. 2 min., dir. Damian Szifron)

Required books:
A Short Guide to Writing about Film (Ninth Edition), Timothy Corrigan

Course website in Blackboard:
I will post the syllabus and reading materials (articles, essays, and book chapters) in our course website on Blackboard.

Work requirements:
In this course, you will undertake a range of assignments that take several forms to bring course materials, media depictions, and everyday life into the classroom. The class provides you with a range of learning tools—through critically engaging with films, reading written texts and reviews about films, and working on your own oral presentation due at the end of the semester.
Note about final course grades: *all course grades are final.* After I have determined and submitted your final course grade, you cannot request a grade change. Absolutely no exceptions will be made. The grade you receive will be based on the effort you put into all of the work requirements for the course.

**Regular attendance and active participation in class: 20%**

As mentioned above, this class will mainly engage in vigorous class discussion. Your daily preparation and willingness to actively participate in discussion are central to the quality of the course. Come prepared to talk about the films and readings covered that day. If you are a shy or reserved person who does not speak in class, I may on occasion call on you to contribute to discussion. Class attendance is mandatory. Class attendance and posting analytical questions in Blackboard are mandatory (see below). More than four absences will lower your participation grade; more than five will lower your overall course grade. Coming late to class repeatedly or leaving early will count toward absences. Getting up to leave while class is in session (including when we watch films) is prohibited and will count toward absences. You may get up to leave while class is in session only if it’s an emergency or only if you’ve arranged it ahead of time with me. Attendance is required during all oral presentations.

**Posting an analytical question (AQ) in Blackboard**

Our discussion of the films that we see in class will be primarily based on questions that all class members post in our course website in Blackboard. After we view all or most of a film in class (Tuesdays usually), all class members will look up “Top Critic” reviews of the film in rottentomatoes.com, and then, based on one selected review of the film, go to our course website in Blackboard and write one analytical question about a particular scene in the film by 5pm the day before (Wednesdays usually) we meet to discuss the film (Thursdays usually). We will use the analytical questions to initiate and lead discussion. More specifically, here is what you need to do: After watching the film in class on Tuesday, go to rottentomatoes.com and select one “Top Critic” review of the film. Read the review by clicking on “Full Review” and then in Blackboard write a brief paragraph (3-4 sentences) that concludes with an analytical question (AQ) about a particular scene or sequence of scenes in the film mentioned in the “Top Critic” review. As Timothy Corrigan explains, an analytical question identifies “key moments, patterns, or images within the film—even during a second or third viewing” (*A Short Guide* 25). It also addresses your personal response or reaction to a particular moment or element in the film. Again, Corrigan explains:

> Part of the excitement in viewing or reading a challenging work comes from the questions it provokes. Thomas De Quincey’s “On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*” originates in a specific question that De Quincey asked himself after seeing a production of the play: “From my boyish days I had always felt a great perplexity on one point in *Macbeth*. It was this: The knocking at the gate which succeeds to the murder of Duncan produced to my feeling an effect for which I never could account” (389). What, he asked himself, produced that effect? From that very specific question and personal uncertainty came one of the best essays ever written on Shakespeare. (25)

Hence your analytical question should express your strong personal response to a particular scene or sequence of scenes in the film. Your question can also be in agreement or disagreement with the “Top Critic” review, but make it clear in your question what you specifically agree or disagree with in the review. Note: Roger Ebert usually has the most perceptive reviews in rottentomatoes. *Himala* is the only film that does not have “Top Critic” reviews. Therefore, read the review in *The Asian Cinema Blog*, which is available as a PDF in Blackboard.

I will screen some of the questions in class for our discussion of the film. If your question is selected I will ask you to present it. Everyone in class will have the opportunity to present questions. I will take into account the effort you put into your analytical questions when factoring your participation grade.
Quizzes: 10%
Occasionally I will give a quiz based on the reading assigned for class that day. These quizzes are to make sure that everyone is keeping up with scheduled readings. They will include basic questions about the film terms and concepts in film criticism that Timothy Corrigan mentions in *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (Ninth edition). Quizzes may also include questions about assigned secondary readings (articles and essays) available in Blackboard. There will be four quizzes. I will drop your lowest quiz grade when I calculate your average. I will not give make-ups for quizzes; you need to be in class to take them.

One 3-4 page scene analysis paper (and peer-editing of scene analysis paper): 20%
Write an analysis of one particular scene or sequence of scenes in any one film of your choice prior to the date the paper is due in class (*Central Station*, *Pan’s Labyrinth*, *A Separation*, or *Two Days, One Night*). Essentially the paper consists of two parts. In the first part you want to (1) describe as clearly as possible what is happening in the scenes or sequence of scenes; (2) observe as many relevant details as you possibly can, retaining for your paper the ones that are most relevant to the second part of the paper. Such details can relate to anything in the frame (*mise en scène*) as well as any technical aspect of the framing itself. In the second part of the paper you will want to (1) speculate on the meaning of your observed details, noting how they contribute to, or reinforce, or undermine overarching themes, plots, and perspectives, and (2) connect those details to other moments in the film to demonstrate either continuity or discontinuity.

Try to use some of the critical film vocabulary as introduced to you in Corrigan’s *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, esp. pp. 38-85 and the glossary on p. 180. Here is how Corrigan describes this exercise: “Choose a single short sequence [from 30 seconds to about 5 minutes] from a film and annotate it as precisely as you can. Describe those annotations in clear, precise prose. Are there any conclusions you can draw or interpretations you would make about the sequence?” (37).

You may refer to the analytical questions in Blackboard for help to come up with conclusions or interpretations of the film. I am glad to meet with you individually in my office hours to discuss your paper. I will not discuss your paper via email. You must schedule an appointment ahead of time to discuss your paper with me in person. Send me an email to schedule an appointment.

Paper format. Your paper must be typed and double-spaced on an 8-1/2” x 11” paper. **Number your pages** and use 12-point Times New Roman font. Collate and staple your paper.

Late paper policy. The analytical paper must be turned in by the due date. I’ll make exceptions in cases of medical or family emergency, but in general I’m holding fast to this rule. If you anticipate a problem, I need to hear about potential lateness before the due date.

Oral presentation (and write-up of your presentation/scene analysis): 20%
In one of the last 3 class meetings of the semester, you will present for 10 minutes a scene or sequence of scenes from one film of your choice and also give an analysis of the scene. I will pass around a sign-up sheet for you to choose a time slot for your presentation. You will have access to the Internet and computer screening projection for your presentation. After you give your presentation, you must submit a write-up of it (3 pages). The write-up is a scene analysis paper and it must be on a film in our class that is different from your first paper.
Note: since you only have 10 minutes to give your presentation, you’ll want to leave yourself enough time to give your analysis of the scene or sequence of scenes. Therefore, your scene should not take more than 2-4 minutes to screen for the class. There will be available a DVD copy of each film on the presentation days.

**Take-home final exam (8-9 pages typed): 30%**
The take-home final will consist of two parts. In part one, you will be asked to identify films viewed in our class based on a photo still/screen shot of each film, and you will write a brief analysis (3 sentences) of the photo/shot. In part two, you will write a brief critical essay of not more than 4-5 pages about some of the films.

The take-home final exam is due on Tuesday, 12/8. It must be typed and pages numbered. Follow the same format for the scene analysis paper.

**Academic integrity:**
Plagiarism on one assignment may result in an F for the entire course. University guidelines on dealing with plagiarism will be followed. Although I encourage you to read websites, articles, and books about the course material, you must be careful to avoid plagiarism in your papers. Plagiarism is using others’ ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. Plagiarism, intentional or unintentional, is considered academic dishonesty and all instances will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use another person’s idea, opinion, or theory; any facts or any other pieces of information that are not common knowledge; quotations of another person’s actual spoken or written words; or paraphrase of another person’s spoken or written words. Citing all sources and putting direct quotations in quotation marks are required. For further information on the policies regarding academic dishonesty see http://ws.cc.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/

**DSS assistance:**
If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services at (631) 632-6748 or http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: http://www.sunysb.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities.shtml

**Course etiquette:**
The use of laptop computers and cell phones are prohibited during class meetings. However, you may bring your laptop computer to class only if you are using it for class assignments and/or to read the course materials in electronic form. If you violate this rule, you will be asked to leave the class. Inattentiveness during class discussions will negatively affect your grade. If you use your cell phone during class, you will be told to leave and your grade will be lowered. This includes class meetings when we view films.
Tentative class schedule:

Be ready to discuss all assigned films and readings on the days they are listed below. I may change some of these assignments in case of time constraints. I will inform the class of these changes in advance.

AQ: Analytical questions due for discussion in class. Be sure to post your AQ in Blackboard by 5pm the day before (Wednesdays usually) our class meets for discussion of the film (Thursdays usually).

* This reading is available in PDF format in Blackboard under Articles and Book Chapters.

Week 1:
Introduction: How to watch a film for a film class

Tu, 8/25 Course mechanics, syllabus
Discussion of Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (pp. 1-7): the mise-en-scène
Screening (film clips only): *Avatar* (North America: USA, 2009, 2 hr. 42 min., dir. James Cameron)

Th, 8/27 Discussion and brief writing assignment (write one paragraph either criticizing *Avatar* or defending it. In either case, focus on a single scene to make your point. You can select your own scene or focus on one of the scenes shown in class.)
Reading: Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, Chapter 1 (Writing about the Movies).

Have watched in YouTube: James Cameron interview (6:48)

Week 2:
Unit 1. Realism and Dystopia

Tu, 9/1 Screening: *Central Station*

Th, 9/3 Discussion and AQ: *Central Station*
Reading: Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, Chapter 2 and pp. 51-60
(*Mise-en-scène* and Realism)

Screening: *Pan's Labyrinth* (begin watching film in class)

Week 3:
Tu, 9/8 Labor Day holiday

Th, 9/10 Screening: *Pan's Labyrinth* (finish watching film in class)

Discussion and AQ: *Pan's Labyrinth*
Have watched in YouTube: Guillermo Del Toro talks "Pan's Labyrinth" (7:08)

Week 4:
Tu, 9/15 Screening: *A Separation*

Th, 9/17 Discussion and AQ: *A Separation*
Reading: Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, Chapter 3

Have watched in YouTube: Rajeev Masand interview with Asghar Farhadi (Part 1 of 2) (12:12)
Week 5:
Tu, 9/22  Screening: Two Days, One Night

Th, 9/24  Discussion: In-Class Scene Analysis 1 Work on Two Days, One Night
Reading: Corrigan, A Short Guide to Writing about Film, Chapter 4

Week 6:
Unit 2. Postcolonialism and Dystopia

Tu, 9/29  Scene analysis paper (3-4 pages) due. Bring 3 copies of your paper to class.
Screening: Salaam Bombay

Th, 10/1  Return peer-edited papers to one another in class.
Discussion and AQ: Salaam Bombay
Reading: Have watched in YouTube: Mira Nair Interview at BFI London (HD) (9:58)

Week 7:
Tu, 10/6  Screening: Himala
Reading: Corrigan, A Short Guide to Writing about Film, Chapter 5

Th, 10/8  Scene analysis paper (revised) due in class
Discussion and AQ: Himala
Reading: Himala review, The Asian Cinema Blog*
Have watched in YouTube: CNN Screening Room's Feature on Himala (6:46)

Week 8:
Tu, 10/13  Screening: Amores Perros

Th, 10/15  Discussion and AQ: Amores Perros
Reading: Corrigan, A Short Guide to Writing about Film, Chapter 6
Have watched in YouTube: Interview - Alejandro González Iñárritu (AMORES PERROS, 2000) (5:32)

Week 9:
Tu, 10/20  Screening: District 9

Th, 10/22  Discussion: In-Class Scene Analysis 2 Work on District 9

Week 10:
Tu, 10/27  Screening: Timbuktu

Th, 10/29  Discussion and AQ: Timbuktu
Reading: Corrigan, A Short Guide to Writing about Film, Chapter 7
Have watched in YouTube: Director Abderrahmane Sissako (Timbuktu) in conversation | BFI #LFF (6:51)
### Week 11:

**Unit 3. Apocalypse and Dystopia**

**Tu, 11/3**  
**Screening:** *Children of Men*

**Th, 11/5**  
**Discussion and AQ:** *Children of Men*  
**Reading:** Greg Garrard, “Apocalypse” in *Ecocriticism* *

### Week 12:

**Tu, 11/10**  
**Screening:** *Take Shelter*

**Th, 11/12**  
**Discussion and AQ:** *Take Shelter*  
**Reading:** Interview, “*Take Shelter* Director Jeff Nichols Clears the Air” *

### Week 13:

**Tu, 11/17**  
**Screening:** *Wild Tales*

**Th, 11/19**  
**Discussion and AQ:** *Wild Tales*  
**Reading:** Interview, “Writer/Director Damián Szifron Talks Oscar Nominee *Wild Tales***

### Week 14:

**Tu, 11/24**  
**Oral Presentations (1-9)**

**Th, 11/26**  
**Thanksgiving holiday**

### Week 15:

**Tu, 12/1**  
**Oral Presentations (10-17)**

**Th, 12/3**  
**Oral Presentations (18-25)**

**Tu, 12/8**  
**Take-home final exam due by 5pm; email it to me as a PDF:**  
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