

Los Angeles Film Noir: 1940s-1960s

ENG 395 Sections Y and Y1

SYLLABUS

Instructor: Dr. Catherine Judd

Phone: 305-284-2182

Email: c.judd@miami.edu

Office Hours: 2-3pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays online via Blackboard

Or, by appointment via e-mail

COURSE INFORMATION

This course will give you a good understanding of the important film genre of “Film Noir” with a special focus on films noir set in Los Angeles and its suburbs.

In this course we will be looking at eight classic Los Angeles Noir films and one 1960s homage to L. A. Noir—Tony Richardson’s comic masterpiece The Loved One.

New York City and Los Angeles are the two most important locales in the American Film Noir tradition of the 1940s and 1950s, closely followed by San Francisco and Chicago, and each one of these four cities imparts a very different sensibility to the films shot in these distinct locations. Chicago and New York are more entirely urban and therefore generate a powerfully claustrophobic sense of a gritty “concrete jungle” with their uniform and seemingly endless sidewalks, straight, flat streets, iron bridges, elevated or submerged city trains, and towering skyscrapers (see, for example, Stanley Kubrick’s 1957 *Killer’s Kiss*).

The two California cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles are less insistently urban than their eastern counterparts as they integrate nature, suburbia, and urbanism. Los Angeles lacks San Francisco’s natural grandeur nor does it contain the huge iron bridges, elevated tracks, or skyscrapers that characterize New York and Chicago. It is more diffuse, sprawling, and non-descript in some ways and in other ways its very blandness makes it the most sinister noir city of them all.

Films we will be viewing during this course include Double Indemnity 1944; The Big Sleep 1946; White Heat 1949; Sunset Boulevard 1950; His Kind of Woman 1951; The Prowler 1951; Nightfall 1956; The Loved One 1964.

I look forward to our cinematic journey through the dark streets, hills, and nightclubs of the “City of Lost Angels.”

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

Learn to define and recognize film noir in general and the particularities of Los Angeles film noir

Gain deeper knowledge of Los Angeles and United States history of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s

Understand more about our seven directors (Howard Hawks, Billy Wilder, Raoul Walsh, John Farrow, Joseph Losey, Jacques Tourneur, and Tony Richardson) as well as many of our actors including Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Edward G. Robertson, Fred MacMurray, Barbara Stanwyck, Erich von Stroheim, Gloria Swanson, Robert Mitchum, Jane Russell, Vincent Price, Van Heflin, Evelyn Keyes, Aldo Ray, Anne Bancroft, Robert Morse, Jonathan Winters, Milton Berle, and Sir John Gielgud

Develop critical thinking and writing skills as students respond to the films as well as essays about the films and topics that our eight films evoke

FILMS AND TEXTBOOK

Students will need to purchase or rent copies of each of our eight films

We have one textbook that contains several of the essays we will be reading in conjunction with the films. It is:

Film Noir Reader 4: The Crucial Films and Themes Edited by Alain Silver and James Ursini.
Published by Amadeus Press/Limelight Editions ISBN #: 978-0-87910-305-7.

This textbook is available from Amazon.Com as are all eight of our films

COURSE MODULES AND SCHEDULE

Module 1: The Big Sleep 1946

Module 2: Double Indemnity 1944

Module 3: White Heat 1949

Module 4: Sunset Blvd. 1950

Module 5: His Kind of Woman 1951

Module 6: The Prowler 1951

Module 7: Nightfall 1956

Module 8: The Loved One 1965

Students are required to complete each module by the date posted, approximately every *** This will ensure uniform participation by students in the activities, discussion assignments and timely completion of all module assignments.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Discussions

Each module contains at least one discussion assignment. These class discussions are important for developing a social learning community and a successful online course. Student discussions in the course Blackboard space are moderated by the instructor. Also, the instructor may pose questions for your thoughtful discussion and response at different points during the semester. However, the primary purpose for these assignments is for students to initiate questions and carry on discussions with each other. Your active participation not only demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of the subject matter (or lack thereof), it also contributes immensely to the overall learning experience for all students in this course. Consequently, all students are expected to participate in a helpful and constructive manner in each module's discussion thread(s). All postings are expected to be professional and respectful in tone, clear, competently produced and delivered; and their content should reflect an understanding of the module content, activities and assigned readings. Discussion posts will be awarded points by the instructor based on a thoughtful demonstration that the students have reviewed all module content and activities relevant to that post. Failure to participate with requisite regularity and sagacity will result in a loss of points. Discussion assignments make up a total of 20% of your final grade. In addition to the discussion threads, students are expected to do the required course work on a weekly basis. Preparation and participation in discussion threads and activities will contribute materially to a good grade in this course. Module Exams At the end of each course module, there will be a required exam. These eight exams will comprise 80% of your final grade (10% for each exam). All module exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false and similarly styled questions. Students may be tested on anything covered in the online course, audio lectures, required readings, external website information or discussion posts created by the professor as part of that module. The exams will not cover previous modules. Please Note: Blackboard exams will close at the close of the module (dates and times above). They must be completed by then. Evaluation Your final grade points come from taking and completing discussion assignments and module exams. You should read the online course documents, including various web links, in a timely fashion and take the module exam as you finish each module. There are also required discussion assignments. Students are expected to engage with the course throughout the period in which each module is assigned. You will not perform well in this course if all coursework is left to the final hours before submission deadline. 80% of your final grade points will come from the total percentage of your eight module exam grades. 20% of your final grade will come from the total percentage of all your discussion assignments. Your final grade in letter form will be determined based on the following scale: A= 90 or greater B= 80 to 89 C= 70 to 79 D= 60 to 69 F= Lower than 60% This grading scale will be applied only at the end of the course, and does not apply to individual tests. The

instructor reserves the right to make fine adjustments on the grading scale at the end of the term.
University of Miami Honor Code You are required to follow the University of Miami Honor Code, established for students to protect the academic integrity of the University of Miami. Please review the Undergraduate Honor Code.

(http://umcontent.com/UM_HighEd_2013/AFS101/undergrad_honorcode.pdf)