

FMP 403 – INDEPENDENT FILM
Summer 2021 – Session B - June 30th - August 10th
44111 / 44112 (ASU Online)

Instructor: Nita Blum / Nita.Blum@asu.edu

**I will try to respond to all e-mails within 48 -72 hours;
weekend responses may take longer.**

Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom – e-mail.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the history of independent filmmaking, with a specific focus on the American independent filmmaking traditions and how those traditions are influenced by and in turn influence other filmmaking practices (including Hollywood studio filmmaking, foreign films, avant-garde films, etc.)

This is an ONLINE course, with material divided between online lectures, required readings, and both required and suggested viewings. Students will be evaluated through quizzes, participation and contribution to online discussions, and written assignments designed to meet and reflect course objectives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Analyze independent filmmaking aesthetics in relation to conventional film aesthetics
- Evaluate independent film as a professional practice in relation to the mainstream American film industry
- Compare both the personal and political elements of independent film in relation to contemporary cultural studies and practices
- Apply advanced academic research to analyze independent filmmaking practices, theory, and independent film criticism

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon successfully completing this course, the student will:

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the individuals, institutions, and innovative practices that significantly impacted the history of independent film
- Understand current industrial practice where independently made films intersect with popular film/media productions in a variety of media marketplaces

- Demonstrate an appreciation for the ways in which independent film represents the distinct and unique perspective of both individuals and groups that are not typically expressed or represented in contemporary culture

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:

DISCUSSION POSTS (3 @ 50 each)	150 points
UNIT ONE QUIZ	100 points
UNIT TWO QUIZ	100 points
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS	
Short Essays (2 @ 100 each)	200 points
72-Hour Review	100 points
FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL	50 points
FINAL PROJECT (Paper or Video)	300 points
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TOTAL	1000 points

GRADING SCALE:

A+	970-1000	B-	786-820
A	926-969	C+	761-785
A-	890-925	C	680-760
B+	861-889	D	600-679
B	821-860	E or other failing mark	– 0-599

QUIZ MAKEUP / LATENESS POLICY:

- If you are unable to take the scheduled quiz and know in advance, please let the instructor know so an alternate time can be arranged AT LEAST 48 hours in advance.
- If you have a “last-minute” request to postpone or reschedule the quiz, such a request will be granted at the instructor’s discretion, and may be subject to penalty.
- For discussion posts and written assignments: any assignment turned in with 48 hours of the deadline will be subject to a penalty of up to 20%. No assignment will be accepted more than 48 hours late without prior permission.
- **An “Incomplete” must be requested before the course ends. Students must submit the form at <https://students.asu.edu/forms/incomplete-grade-request>. Note that: The grade of “I” (Incomplete) can only be given by an instructor when a student, who is doing otherwise acceptable work, is unable to complete a course (e.g., final exam or**

term paper) because of illness or other conditions beyond the student's control.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL:

Video Lectures

The primary “text” of this course are the video lectures that are delivered by Professor Scott and produced by Herberger Online. These lectures vary in length up to about 40 minutes; be sure that you schedule your time appropriately.

Films

Many suggested films are available via free streaming websites or on YouTube or Archive.org: many are also available elsewhere, though they might require pay-per-view. We also recommend the resource Kanopy, which is free with your ASU tuition. <http://asu.kanopystreaming.com/>

There are also several assignments where your instructor will ask you to find a film of your own to watch and review. Many films on Kanopy will qualify for these assignments; if you want to watch a film available elsewhere (such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, etc.) then be sure to check with your instructor.

Readings

The course website will have a “Readings” section that will contain links to articles and other materials that are entirely accessible online. Some material will require you to log in with your ASU ID and password so that you may access the e-books available through the ASU library.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

I strongly suggest making a schedule for yourself week-by-week, so you can set aside time to watch lectures, do readings/research, watch appropriate films, and complete assignments and quizzes on time. Whether it is 60 minutes a day, or two or three days where you can devote a couple of hours, try to pace yourself and not fall behind. What follows is a suggested “order” to approach all of the course material on a unit-by-unit basis.

Another tip is to watch movies and lectures uninterrupted and without distraction. Shut off your phones and close the other tabs on your web browser; consider taking notes that recall key points from lecture.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

This course is divided into three units, with a quiz scheduled at the conclusion of units 1 and 2.

WEEK 1-2: UNIT ONE – INDIE FORM AND TECHNIQUE

Objectives for this unit:

- Describe how independent films use specific formal techniques that differ from conventional filmmaking.
- Explain the relationship between independent film techniques and non-cinematic forms, including visual art, music, literature, and performance.

Lesson One: Introduction

Video Lecture: What is an Indie Film?

Discussion Post: Introduction Assignment

DUE WEDNESDAY JULY 2ND, 11:59 PM

Lesson Two: Formal Techniques

**Video Lectures: Part One: Indie Film History
Part Two: Basic Film Form and Conventions
Part Three: A History of Avant-Garde Films**

**Readings: Articles by Rabinowitz and Metz
Reviews of “Shadows”
“Shadows” website**

Watch: “Shadows” (<http://asu.kanopystreaming.com/video/shadows-0>)

**Assignment: Essay #1 – “Shadows” and Formal Technique
700-900 word essay**

DUE FRIDAY JULY 9TH, 11:59 PM

Lesson Three: Indie Films and Narrative

Video Lectures: Narrative and Storytelling

Readings: Articles about “Slacker”

Watch: “Slacker”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB4xIYKAVCQ>
(also available for \$1.99 on Amazon, may be better quality)

Watch an ADDITIONAL film from list provided

Or suggest one via e-mail or discussion post

END OF UNIT QUIZ: WEDNESDAY, JULY 14TH, 11:59 PM

**Assignment: Essay #2 – Your selected film and narrative
700-900 word essay**

*Note: Be sure you watch the supplemental “How to do Research”
lecture for guidance on how to complete this assignment.*

DUE TUESDAY, JULY 20TH, 11:59 PM

WEEK 3-4: UNIT TWO - INDIE BUSINESS

Objectives for this unit:

- Explain how “independent” has been historically defined in comparison to conventional filmmaking financing, production, and distribution.
- Identify the ways in which specific terms relate to the production and distribution of independent film as defined by various film communities.
- Determine how current independent films and their position and place affect today’s film/media marketplace.

Lesson Four: Understanding Studio and Indie Filmmaking Practices

Video Lecture: Early Indie Pioneers and the Studio System

Readings: Articles about Oscar Micheaux

Articles about Alice Guy-Blache

Watch:

[v=xnAEHFhXuQI](#)

[LPIN4kcU](#)

[v=ZxCBvgnjmPU](#)

Short films:

“The Immigrant”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3PbTzarsvc>

“The Playhouse”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxWF5gIBiiA>

“The Life and Death of 9413”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

“Mystery of the Leaping Fish”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8->

“The Musketeers of Pig Alley”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

Discussion Post:

Who Would You Want to Work With?

DUE FRIDAY, JULY 23RD, 11:59 PM

Lesson Five: New Definitions and Post-War Paradigms

Video Lecture: Deregulation and the Indie Audience

Readings:

Article by Kinkade and Katovich

Selections from AFI History of Amer. Cinema

Assignment:

FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

DUE MONDAY, JULY 26TH, 11:59 PM

Lesson Six: Indie Practices Today

Video Lecture: The Festival Era

Readings: Selections from AFI History of Amer. Cinema

END OF UNIT QUIZ: **FRIDAY, JULY 30TH, 11:59 PM**

Assignment: 72-Hour Indie Streaming Review
Due MONDAY, AUGUST 2ND, 11:59 PM

WEEK 5-6: UNIT THREE - INDIE SPIRIT

Objectives for this unit:

- Explain how independent films can be understood and examined in relation to a specific filmmaker's cultural identity and personal/political beliefs.
- Analyze how independent films represent specific identities and practices from underrepresented groups including consideration of gender, race, region, religion, sexual identity, class, etc.

Lesson Seven: Understanding Independent Films

Video Lectures: Part One: Indie Film and Race/Ethnicity
Part Two: Queer Identity and Politics
Part Three: Regional Film
Part Four: Technology and Indie Film

Discussion Post: Post your Final Project "Pitch"
DUE BY TUESDAY, AUGUST 3RD-11:59 PM

Lesson Eight: Understanding Independent Filmmakers

Video Lectures: Part One: Indie and the Auteur Filmmaker
Part Two: Case Study – Linklater
Part Three: Final Remarks

Readings: As required for your project (research)

Assignment:

Final Paper or Video Project

1300-1600 word essay or 4-5 minute video

DUE BY MONDAY, AUGUST 9TH – 11:59 PM

Official ASU Absence Policy:

Excused absences related to religious observances/practices in accord with [ACD 304-04](#), "Accommodation for Religious Practices." Students may be excused for the observance of religious holidays. Students should notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester about the need to be absent from class due to religious observances. Students will be responsible for materials covered during their absence and should consult with the instructor to arrange reasonable accommodation for missed exams or other required assignments.

Excused absences related to university sanctioned activities in accord with [ACD 304-02](#), "Missed Classes Due to University-Sanctioned Activities." Students required to miss classes due to university sanctioned activities will not be counted absent. However, absence from class or examinations due to university-sanctioned activities does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of the absence. Students should inform the instructor early in the semester of upcoming scheduled absences and immediately upon learning of unscheduled required class absences. Reasonable accommodation to make up missed exams or other required assignments will be made. Consult the instructor BEFORE the absence to arrange for this accommodation.

Line-of-duty absence and missed assignment policy:

A student who is a member of the National Guard, Reserve, or other U.S. Armed Forces branch who misses classes, assignments or examinations due to line-of-duty responsibilities, shall have the opportunity to make up the coursework in accordance with [SSM 20-18 Accommodating Active Duty Military Personnel](#). This accommodation also applies to spouses who are the guardian of minor children during line-of-duty activities. This policy does not excuse students from course responsibilities during their absence. Students should first notify the Pat Tillman Veterans Center of their activation and then the instructor to discuss options.

Academic Integrity and Student Honor Code:

Besides academic performance, students should exhibit the qualities of honesty and integrity. Every student is expected to produce his/her original, independent work. Any student whose work indicates a violation of the ASU Academic Misconduct Policy including cheating, plagiarism, and dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action. Plagiarism is defined as deliberately passing off someone else's words or ideas as your own. All necessary and appropriate sanctions will be issued to all parties involved with plagiarizing any and all course work. Plagiarism and any other form of academic dishonesty that is in violation with the Student Code of Conduct will not be tolerated. Arizona State University and the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts expect the highest standards of academic integrity from all students. Failure to meet these standards may result in suspension or expulsion from the university or other sanctions as specified in the ASU Student Academic Integrity Policy (<http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>), "Each student must act with honesty and integrity, and must respect the rights of others in carrying out all academic assignments." This policy also defines academic dishonesty and sets a process for faculty members and colleges to sanction dishonesty. Violations of this policy fall into five broad areas that include but are not limited to:

- Cheating on an academic evaluation or assignments
- Plagiarizing
- Academic deceit, such as fabricating data or information
- Aiding Academic Integrity Policy violations and inappropriately collaborating
- Falsifying academic records

I sanction any incidents of academic dishonesty in my courses using University and HIDA guidelines. Should you have any question about whether or not something falls subject to this clause, feel free to contact me or review the university policy on academic integrity at the above link. Per ASU policy, a student may not avoid the consequences of academic dishonesty by withdrawing from a course, and may be placed back in the course in order to face sanctions resulting from academic integrity violations. You are responsible for abiding by this policy.

Copyright:

Students must refrain from uploading to any course shell, discussion board, or website used by the course instructor or other course forum, material that is not the student's original work, unless the students first comply with all applicable copyright laws; faculty members reserve the right to delete materials on the grounds of suspected copyright infringement. A statement that the course content, including lectures and other handouts, is copyrighted material. Students may not share outside the class, upload, sell, or distribute course content or notes taken during the conduct of the course (see [ACD 304-06](#), "Commercial Note Taking Services" for more information). THIS CONTENT IS PROTECTED AND MAY NOT BE SHARED, UPLOADED, SOLD, OR DISTRIBUTED.

Professor's Note: most of your class assignments would be covered by the "fair use" exception in copyright law, as they are intended for review in the classroom only for educational purposes. However, it is essential that any material subject to copyright is clearly acknowledged by credit and attribution, as per project instructions. Students retain the right to their own creative and academic work for use outside of class purposes, but be advised that you may not be protected by the fair use exception and/or may need to comply with additional copyright requirements. For a full explanation of issues related to fair use and copyright, visit: <https://libguides.asu.edu/copyright/fairuse>.

Student Conduct:

ASU adheres to a university-wide Student Code of Conduct. The philosophy behind this policy states: The aim of education is the intellectual, personal, social, and ethical development of the individual. The educational process is ideally conducted in an environment that encourages reasoned discourse, intellectual honesty, openness to constructive change and respect for the rights of all individuals. Self-discipline and a respect for the rights of others in the university community are necessary for the fulfillment of such goals. The Student Code of Conduct is designed to promote this environment at each of the state universities. You are expected to treat your instructor and your fellow classmates with respect and kindness. In all correspondence and in Discussion Board postings, you should show respect for the viewpoints of others who may disagree with you or see things from a different perspective. Criticizing, ridiculing, insulting, or belittling others will not be accepted. Keep in mind that electronic communications do not have the advantage of nonverbal cues that are so much a part of interpersonal communication. Humor or satire can sometimes be misinterpreted in strictly electronic communication forums.

Threatening or disruptive behavior:

Self-discipline and a respect for the rights of others in the classroom or studio and university community are necessary for a conducive learning and teaching environment. Threatening or violent behavior will result in the administrative withdrawal of the student from the class. Disruptive behavior may result in the removal of the student from the class. Threatening, violent, or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated in this class, and will be handled in accordance with ASU policy (SSM 104-02). For more information please visit: <https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/srr/PoliciesAndProcedures> and <https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/safety/ThreateningBehavior>.

Policy on Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation:

This professor abides by all regulations and guidelines outlined at <https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd401.html>, and is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation based on any protected status: race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and genetic information. **As an employee of ASU, I am a mandated reporter and obliged to report instances of reported or suspected incidences of sexual harassment.**

TITLE IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make it clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subject to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <http://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs/students>.

Special Accommodations:

Your instructor is willing to make any reasonable adaptations for limitations due to any disability documented with the DRC, including learning disabilities. Please contact the instructor during office hours or by appointment to discuss any special needs you may have. You must contact the Disability Resource Center to process the paperwork for special course accommodations. To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the ASU Disability Resource Center (<http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc/#>; Phone: (480) 965-1234; TDD: (480) 965-9000). This is a very important step as accommodations may be difficult to make retroactively. If you have a letter from their office indicating that you have a disability which requires academic accommodations, in order to assure that you receive your accommodations in a timely manner, please present this documentation to me as soon as possible so that your needs can be addressed effectively. Campus-specific [location and contact information](#) can be found on the DRC website. DRC offices are open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday – Friday. Check the [DRC website](#) for eligibility and documentation policies (<https://eoss.asu.edu/drc>)

Student Rights and Responsibilities:

Students must abide by all the requirements stated in this syllabus. In addition, all students should be aware of their [Rights and Responsibilities](#) at Arizona State University and abide by the [ASU Student Honor Code](#).

Student Services & Resources:

You will find a list of student resources at: <https://eoss.asu.edu/resources>
Resources included are advisement, registration, financial aid, disability services, counseling, tutoring, library, and more.

Academic Calendar and Important Dates:

The academic calendar can be found here: <https://students.asu.edu/academic-calendar>

Subject to change:

The Instructor reserves the right to change portions of this syllabus (assignments, deadlines etc.) by verbal instructions during scheduled class time. The student is responsible for noting changes and acting accordingly. Grading and absence policies are not subject to change.

Computer, Internet, and Electronic Communications Policy:

<http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd125.html>

