ENGL 379 Literature & Film: History, Theory, Criticism  
Professor Susan White  
TuTh 3:30-4:45pm  
Tu 5:00-7:30pm  
Modern Languages, Rm 304

This is a pragmatic but mind-blowing exploration of how the major elements of films are created and how we look at them.

We will screen films, read essays, and watch compelling interview and clip-oriented DVDs that let us in on how some of film’s most remarkable effects were achieved.

Four questions: What is editing? What is film sound? What is cinematography? What is mise-en-scene?

We will explore some of the most exciting instances of each of these film style elements by looking closely, for example, at editing in classic chase scenes in films like Bullitt, and Heat; in the innovative editing work Hitchcock used in North by Northwest and Psycho; and more avant-garde exemplars of editing in films like Memento and Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind.

In cinematography, we will discuss Godfather-cinematographer Gordon Willis’s mode of achieving his Rembrandt-like visual style; Emmanuel Lubezki’s shocking clarity of vision in Gravity, Tree of Life and Children of Men. Great film noir cinematographers, including John Alton, who painted the screen in black shadow to reflect the dark mood of post-war America, will be represented.

In sound, both effects and music will be discussed.

Of especial interest are Bernard Herrmann’s dynamic work (Psycho, Vertigo) with Alfred Hitchcock; Kubrick’s revolutionary use of “available” music in his films; and Walter Murch’s (The Godfather,

We will perhaps also cover the “rockumentary” as a special form of sound-oriented film (This is Spinal Tap, Help!).

We will touch on the great history of mise-en-scene by looking at some of the most clever uses of setting and the most astonishing performances by actors. Students will write 5 brief screening reports, take a mid-term and a final exam.