

Mr. Pingree  
Rice 111 (5-6585)  
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Class Meetings: T, Th 1:30-2:45, King 343  
Screenings: T 7-10, Mudd 050; W 7-10 Mudd 456  
Office Hours: Th 3-5, F 1-2, and by appointment

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## **MEDIA AND MEANING**

FYSP 171 - Fall 2003

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If this course were a story, its hero would be the conscious reader, the reflective self. The purpose of this class, then, is to become more thoughtful about media—to better understand our relations with the countless television shows, movies, newspapers, magazines, CDs, DVDs, websites, and other things that shape the ways we understand and experience the world. Our primary concern will be how such media produce meaning. We will examine a variety of different media “texts” and learn to read them more self-consciously, expanding our sense of *what* they mean to include *how* and *why* they mean what they do.

To develop tools for this task, we will consult various critical and theoretical perspectives and then practice “reading” critically by grappling directly with a number of diverse cultural “texts” (monuments, poems, stories, cartoons, photographs, advertisements, films, television programs, etc.). We will attempt to understand these texts from distinct rhetorical perspectives, considering how they are built, for example, or how they mediate the actual world, how they influence—and are influenced by—their audiences, and how they do or do not relate to their authors’ intentions.

We will, in short, learn how to read from a critical distance, paying close attention to the values and assumptions that we each bring to our readings so that we can develop a more reflective and ultimately richer relationship not only with the forms that structure our world, but with our own processes as readers of those forms, creators of the meanings of that world.

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### **Readings, Materials, and Resources**

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#### Required Texts

- E-RESERVE readings, found at: <http://eres.cc.oberlin.edu> [E-RES]  
(required readings as well as supplementary articles can be found here; teacher is “pingree” and password is “fysp171”; some readings may be listed under “cin101”); please download and print required readings)

#### Recommended Texts and Materials

- Joseph Williams, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (Longman, 2000, 6<sup>th</sup> edition)  
(Williams’ book is a superb resource for learning how to write with greater precision and power)
- Light Pens (I recommend these for taking notes during screenings; they’re available at the bookstore)

#### Library Resources

Copies of the films shown on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings are available on reserve in Mudd Library (A level) for the purposes of study and review. There is also a growing collection of films, in both DVD and VHS formats, available in the Audio-Visual department (A/V) of Mudd Library (fourth floor). These films can be found by searching in OBIS or by using the catalog near the A/V desk, and you may watch them at one of viewing stations there.

#### Production Resources in the A/V Lab

The Cinema Studies Program has a modest collection of digital cameras and accessories and several basic non-linear editing stations in A/V in Mudd Library that, depending on their availability and your experience, you may request to use for projects. You may be asked to attend training sessions first to familiarize yourself with the equipment.

#### Course Writing Assistant

Georgia Cool (Georgia.cool@oberlin.edu) is my writing assistant for this course. She will work with you individually and in groups on your assignments and projects and is available for consultation. Take advantage of her tim and talents.

#### Blackboard

This course has a Blackboard page to post and read individual essays and group exchanges. I encourage you to use this as a forum for discussion with those who may teach you the most—your classmates.

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## **Graded Work**

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### Attendance and Participation

In order to do well in this seminar, you must attend and actively participate in classes and screenings. I expect you to engage—keep up with the reading, pay close attention to the films, and take part in discussions. Regardless of your reasons, if you miss classes or screenings, you cannot fully participate in the course, and your grade will reflect that. Attendance at film screenings is not optional, and absences from classes or screenings will influence your final grade. I will ask you to keep a record of your attendance at class and screening sessions and to turn in this record at mid-term and at semester's end.

Films will be screened on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings (except when otherwise indicated) so that we can discuss them during Thursday's class sessions. Depending on the running time of the screening assigned in a given week, we will repeat the same screening on both Tuesday and Wednesday of that week or show a different screening each night. You must attend at least one of these scheduled screenings each week. Please arrive on time to screenings as a courtesy to your classmates.

### Notebooks

Please keep a notebook and take notes on each assigned reading and screening. I will collect your notebooks twice during the semester, in weeks seven and thirteen. I suggest that you make notes both during and after the screenings (the Light Pens will help). I promise that if you take notes during screenings, and write up those notes immediately after the screenings, you will get much more out of class discussions, and your writing about the screenings will be more substantive. In-class assignments will count towards your screening notebook grade.

### Short Creative Project

You will select a subject, use some medium to represent that subject, then reflect on your own work process. I will hand out a sheet with more specific information about this assignment.

### Short Essays

Over the semester you will write six or seven short, two- to three-page essays, in which you carefully discuss the relation of form to content in a particular text. In your essays you should not only analyze the form/content relationship, but also discuss how this relationship shapes the text's meaning. On or before the date each essay is due, you must post it on Blackboard and submit a hard copy to me.

### Long Creative Project

Similar to the Short Creative Project, this will involve several parts (proposal, rough draft) and will be carried out on a grander scale. You will also submit a longer, more substantive paper in which you reflect on your work.

### Final Essay Exam

Your final assignment is an essay exam (perhaps take-home) that will give you the opportunity to synthesize the issues and concerns of the seminar in a longer piece of writing about one or more texts.

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## **Policies and Procedures**

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### Deadlines and Procedures for Assignments

If you'd like to discuss a draft of an assignment, you can see me or email me until two days before it is due.

If you turn in an assignment late, I reserve the right to refuse it. If I accept your late assignment, I can't guarantee that I'll read it in a timely fashion. Any late assignment will receive a lesser grade.

### The Honor Code

In this course I expect you to live by the Honor Code. Please write and sign the honor pledge ("I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment") on all your work. I will return assignments that are submitted without the signed honor pledge.

### Disabilities

Please speak with me about any accommodations you may need for an assignment due to a disability.

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## Course Schedule and Outline

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Readings and screenings should be completed by the dates indicated. \* denotes a special screening date. Schedule subject to revision.

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### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "MEDIA"?

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<b>Week 1</b>	T Sept 2	Overview
	Th Sept 4	Williams, "The Use of Force" (E-RES)
	Screening:	<i>Nobody's Business</i> [Berliner, 1996]

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### READING AS A CRITICAL ACTIVITY

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<b>Week 2</b>	T Sept 9	Scholes, "Reading: An Intertextual Activity" (E-RES) SHORT ESSAY 1 DUE
	Th Sept 11	Screening: <i>Rocky</i> [Avildsen, 1976]
<b>Week 3</b>	T Sept 16	WORKSHOP (SHORT ESSAYS AND SHORT PROJECTS)
	Th Sept 18	Campbell, from <i>The Hero with a Thousand Faces</i> (E-RES) McGann, "How to Read a Book" (E-RES)
	Screening:	<i>Girlfight</i> [Kusama, 2000]

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### READING FORM AND STRUCTURE: TEXTS

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<b>Week 4</b>	M Sept 22	SHORT PROJECT DUE
	T Sept 23	Shklovsky, "Art as Technique" (E-RES) Pound, "In a Station of the Metro" (E-RES) Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow" and "This is Just to Say" (E-RES)
	Th Sept 25	Visit Memorials Screening: <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> [Fleming, 1939]
<b>Week 5</b>	T Sept 30	Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" (E-RES)
	Th Oct 2	SHORT ESSAY 2 DUE
	Screening:	<i>Before the Rain</i> [Manchevski, 1994]

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### MIMESIS AND REPRESENTATION: TEXTS AND ACTUAL THINGS

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<b>Week 6</b>	T Oct 7	Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book X and "Parable of the Cave" (E-RES)
	Th Oct 9	Berger, from <i>Ways of Seeing</i> (E-RES)
	Screenings:	<i>Quiz Show</i> [Redford, 1994] Reality Television
	Th/F Oct 9/10	CONFERENCES (SHORT PROJECTS)
<b>Week 7</b>	T Oct 14	Spiegelman, from <i>Maus</i> (E-RES)
	Th Oct 16	Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary" (E-RES) Sontag, "Looking at War" (E-RES) SHORT ESSAY 3 DUE
	Screenings:	<i>Night and Fog</i> [Resnais, 1955] from <i>Shoah</i> [Lanzmann, 1986] <i>Human Remains</i> [Rosenblatt, 1998]
	F Oct 17	SCREENING NOTEBOOK DUE ATTENDANCE SHEET DUE
	T Oct 21	FALL RECESS
	Th Oct 23	FALL RECESS

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**RECEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING: TEXTS AND AUDIENCES**

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<b>Week 8</b>	T Oct 28	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> (E-RES) Stevens, "Anecdote of the Jar" (E-RES) Brooks, "We Real Cool" (E-RES) Ginsberg, "America" (E-RES)
	Th Oct 30	Edmundson, "On the Uses of a Liberal Education as Lite Entertainment for Bored College Students" (E-RES) Dubus, "A Father's Story" (E-RES)
	Screening:	<i>Sex, Lies, and Videotape</i> [Soderbergh, 1989]
	F Oct 31	LONG PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE
<b>Week 9</b>	T Nov 4	Jenkins, from <i>Textual Poachers</i> (E-RES)
	Th Nov 6	SHORT ESSAY 4 DUE
	Screenings:	<i>He Got Game</i> [Lee, 1998] <i>American Idol</i>

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**AUTHORITY AND INTENTION: TEXTS AND PRODUCERS**

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<b>Week 10</b>	T Nov 11	Orwell, "Why I Write" (E-RES) Sartre, "Why Write?" (E-RES) Salman Rushdie, "Is Nothing Sacred?" (E-RES)
	Th Nov 13 Screening:	<i>Annie Hall</i> [Allen, 1977]
<b>Week 11</b>	T Nov 18	Anderson, "Death in the Woods" (E-RES) Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (E-RES) Fish, "Is There a Text in This Class?" (E-RES)
	Th Nov 20 Screening:	SHORT ESSAY 5 DUE <i>Crimes and Misdemeanors</i> [Allen, 1989] or <i>Capturing the Friedmans</i> [Jarecki, 2003]

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**READING AND TEXTUALITY IN A DIGITAL AGE**

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<b>Week 12</b>	*Sun Nov 23	<i>Waking Life</i> [Linklater, 2001]
	*M Nov 24	<i>The Fast Runner</i> [Kunuk, 2001]
	T Nov 25	Landow, from <i>Hypertext</i> (E-RES) Goldstein, from <i>Copyright's Highway</i> (E-RES) Internet sites
	W Nov 26	SHORT ESSAY 6 DUE
	Th Nov 27	THANKSGIVING

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**READING MEDIA TEXTS: SYNTHESIS**

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<b>Week 13</b>	T Dec 2	WORKSHOP (LONG PROJECTS)
	Th Dec 4	
	Screening:	<i>The Godfather</i> [Coppola, 1972]
<b>Week 14</b>	T Dec 9	WORKSHOP (LONG PROJECTS)
	Th Dec 11	Joan Didion, "On Self-Respect" (E-RES)
	Screening:	<i>The Sopranos</i> , Season 1, Episode 5 (Chase, 1999)
	F Dec 12	SCREENING NOTEBOOK DUE ATTENDANCE SHEET DUE LONG PROJECT DUE
<b>Week 15</b>	W Dec 17	FINAL ESSAY EXAM DUE