Course Description:
This course provides students with an introduction to genre studies facilitated through an overview of a sampling of highly contemporary film and television genres. As the course uses genre studies to introduce students to the synergized yet stratified film and television industries, each genre is represented through one film example and one example from television, creating a closely comparative study of genres across different yet related industrial spheres. The course engages several key questions: (1) Where do genres come from and how do they evolve? (2) What is the relation between genres and the industry (i.e., did the industry invent genres?) (3) What is the relationship between genres and popular audiences? (4) How have genre studies evolved over time and how are they keeping up with contemporary genres? (5) Do contemporary genres fulfill similar functions as their ancestors during the classical era, such as furnishing viewers with popular myths? The current popularity of the genres selected for this course ensures that this sampling reflects American popular culture in representative manner. Later iterations of this course may substitute certain weeks, should other genres emerge as more popular. The course readings have been selected with an eye to striking a balance between overarching critical takes on genre in general and specific case studies of individual genres.

Summary of Course Objectives:
- Students will be introduced to a range of contemporary genres popular in film and television.
- Students will study popular genres to gain insight into the stratified yet synergistic relation between the motion picture and television industries.
- Students will study contemporary genres to understand the basic principles of how genres work economically and culturally, that is, as industrial branding tools and as building blocks for modern-day mythologies.
- By mastering the particularities of the sampling of genres selected for this class, students will be able to apply the principles of genre study to the most recent ebbs and flows in film and television production.

Course Scope and Distribution of credit hours:
This class meets over 14 sessions, each consisting of an in-class lecture/discussion portion that requires preparatory media viewing, which is individually arranged by students. The course will sometimes meet twice a week, and sometimes once a week. All class dates are listed in the course outline below. In addition, students are required to attend the class visit to the Getty Museum and the panel of experts discussing the relation between the film and television industries.
Course Requirements:
Regular attendance of lecture and discussion sections is mandatory. Grades will be distributed according to grade breakdown listed below.

Two Presentations: Each student is required to do a presentation on an assigned film and a presentation on an assigned television show, based on student preference selected from the list of “clips” in the course outline or approved by the instructor. Presentations must be between 10 and 15 minutes and CANNOT exceed 15 minutes. Students should show one clip and the clip cannot be longer than 5 minutes. Presenters also must hand in a bibliography on the day of their presentation, which is required to list at least two academic sources. NOTE: The film’s synopsis should be no more than 30 seconds to 1 minute. The presentation should focus on an academic overview of the film’s major themes and its relation to the genre topic of that class.

The midterm paper is a concise (1,200 words) response paper in which students will respond to prompts administered in class.

Students will email/print journal entries for Classes 2 through 13, due by the start of each class. Journal entries should include the synthesis (not just summary) of the assigned readings and the application of those readings to contemporary film and television artifacts, including the assigned viewing. The journal entries will track the student’s central interest in genre, how that interest evolves as the course proceeds, and how that interest ultimately manifests itself in the final paper.

The final paper is an individualized argument/research project (2,000 words), for which students will submit a proposal to the instructor on a designated date.

Grade Breakdown:
Journal: 20%
Midterm paper: 20%
Final paper: 40%
Presentations and overall quality of class contributions: 20%

Plagiarism Statement:
"Plagiarism is the act of representing someone else's creative and/or academic work as your own, in full or in part. It can be an act of commission, in which one intentionally appropriates the words, pictures or ideas of another, or it can be an act of omission, in which one fails to acknowledge/document/give credit to the source, creator and/or the copyright owner of those words, pictures or ideas. Any fabrication of materials, quotes or sources, other than those created in a work of fiction, is also plagiarism. Plagiarism is the most serious academic offense that you can commit and can result in probation, suspension, or expulsion."

Use of laptops, cell phones, and other electronic devices prohibited in class:
While some of you may consider laptops instrumental for note taking, I consider the introjection of an interface between you and me in the classroom alienating and
counterproductive. If laptops are used in class, I am unable to tell whether students pay attention to lectures and class discussion or to the multiple functions of their laptops. The use of laptops in my classes thus violates my notion of a productive oral communication scenario that involves the attention and commitment of all students for the duration of the class. The prohibition of cell phones and i-phones should be self-explanatory

Course Outline

May 29: Introduction to Genre in Film and Television: Where Do Genres Come From? How Do They Evolve?

Transforming Common Understandings of Genre
Film Genres vs. Genre Films; Culture and Genre

Viewing: Selected Excerpts from American television and films

Readings: Rick Altman, Film/Genre (British Film Institute, 1999), Chapter 2: What is Generally Understood by the Notion of Film Genre?” pp.13-29. Jason Mittell, Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture, Chapter 1, “Television Genres as Cultural Categories,” pp. 1-29.

Due: The above assigned readings

June 12: Genres as Industrial Categories; Genre and Hollywood
The Question of Subgenres

Viewing: Selected Excerpts from American television and films


Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor

PREFERRED PRESENTATION TOPICS (2 FILM, 2 TV)
The Dominance of Movie Horror and the Rise of TV Horror

**June 14:** The Long Life of Horror in Movies  
Found footage vs. Nostalgic Horror  
The Blackest Eyes: Race and the Horror Film

**Viewing:** *It Follows* (2014; David Robert Mitchell dir.) (outside viewing)

**Clips:**  
*Get Out* (2016; Jordan Peele dir.)  
*The Conjuring* (2013; James Wan dir.)  
*The Eyes of My Mother* (2016; Nicolas Pesce dir.)

**Reading:**  

**Due:** Journal entry submitted to instructor

**June 19:** Horror as a Recent Development on TV  
Industrial and Moral Constraints in Early Television

**Viewing:** *The Walking Dead* (AMC) (selected episodes)

**Clips:**  
*True Blood* (HBO)  
*Bates Motel* (A&E)  
*American Horror Story* (FX)

**Reading:**  
Angela Tenga and Jonathan Bassett, “‘You kill or you die, or you die and you kill’: Meaning and Violence in AMC's *The Walking Dead,*” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 49, no. 6 (2016): 1280-1300.

**Due:** Journal entry submitted to instructor

Comedy From Vaudeville to Veep

**June 21:** Comedy as a longstanding stable film genre  
Modern Love: The Buddy Comedy becomes the Bromance  
Gendered narratives in the contemporary comedy

**Viewing:** *Bridesmaids* (2011; Paul Feig dir.) (outside viewing)
Clips:
- *The Hangover* (2009; Todd Phillips dir.)
- *Step Brothers* (2008; Adam McKay dir.)
- *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* (2005; Judd Apatow dir.)
- *Wedding Crashers* (2005; David Dobkin dir.)

Reading:

Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor

June 26:
**TV Comedy Matures**
- Target audiences and the decline of the live studio audience
- I was being ironical: Self-reflexive critiques of the sitcom
- “Reality” TV: the autobiographical TV comedy
- Can genres programs be ahead of their time?

Viewing:
- *The Office* (U.S.; NBC) (Selected episodes)

Clips:
- *All in the Family* (CBS)
- *Veep* (HBO)
- *Seinfeld* (NBC)
- *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (HBO)
- *Louie* (FX)

Reading:

Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor

**Gangster Treatments as Vehicles for Quality and Industrial Prestige**

July 3:
**Movie Gangsters**
- *Gangster Films and Movie Censorship: a Historical Outline*
- *Gangster Films as Expressions of the Cinematic Auteur*

RESPONSE MIDTERM PAPER QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED

Viewing:
- *Goodfellas* (1990; Martin Scorsese dir.)

Clips:
- *The Departed* (2007; Martin Scorsese dir.)
- *Gangs of New York* (2002; Martin Scorsese dir.)
- *Pulp Fiction* (1994; Quentin Tarantino dir.)

Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor

**July 5:**

**TV Gangsters**  
Violence and Quality Television  
Crime Family Melodrama—the Meeting of Film and Television Genre Traditions  
Male Antiheroes/Difficult Men

Viewing: *The Sopranos* (HBO) (Season 1: Episodes 1 and 5)

Clips: *Breaking Bad* (AMC)  
*The Wire* (HBO)


Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor

**The Sports Genre: “What’s fascinating is that it’s physical”**

**July 10:**  
Fictional Sports vs Real Sports on TV  
Comedy and Melodrama against the backdrop of Sport Masculinity under threat

Viewing: *Friday Night Lights* (NBC) (selected episodes)

Clips: *Ballsers* (HBO)  
*Hard Knocks* (HBO)


Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor

MIDTERM RESPONSE PAPER DUE

**July 12:**  
Facing the Challenge: the Modern Sports Film
A Descent into Savagery: the field of sport as a contemporary frontier
The appeal of the boxing subgenre
The sports biopic

Viewing:  *Creed* (2015; Ryan Coogler dir.) (outside viewing)

Clips:  *Rocky* (1976; John G. Avildsen dir.)
*Warrior* (2011; Gavin O’Connor dir.)
*Miracle* (2004; Gavin O’Connor dir.)


Due:  Journal entry submitted to instructor

PROPOSAL FOR FINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Women’s Stories in Film and TV

**July 17:**  Women’s Films
The Woman’s Film as Hybrid Genre
Let’s get Physical: Violence and the 21st century woman
The Significance of Melodrama and Comedy
Stardom as Genre

Viewing:  *Girlfight* (2000; Karyn Kusama dir.) (outside viewing)

Clips:  *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015; George Miller, dir.)
*Wonder Woman* (2017; Patty Jenkins dir.)
*Lost in Translation* (2003; Sofia Coppola dir.)
*Blue Jasmine* (2013; Woody Allen, dir.)


Due:  Journal entry submitted to instructor

**July 19:**  Women’s TV as a Concept
Gendered Audiences/Gendered Programming
The History of Women’s Television
Women at Work
Antiheroines

Viewing:  *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix) (selected episodes)
Clips:  
*The Handmaid’s Tale* (Hulu)  
*Girls* (HBO)  
*Olive Kitteridge* (HBO)  
*Insecure* (HBO)  

Reading:  

Due:  
Journal entry submitted to instructor

---

**The Western and American Myth and Reality**

**July 24:**  
*The Western and American Television Law and Disorder: the Man in the Gray Flannel Suit and the Appeal of the Western TV show*  
*Sizzle Reel: Network Branding of Genre Modern Cowboys and the Moral Code*  

Viewing:  
*Deadwood* (HBO) (selected episodes)  

Clips:  
*Westworld* (HBO)  
*Sons of Anarchy* (FX)  

Reading:  
Brad Benz, “*Deadwood* and the English Language,” in *Great Plains Quarterly* 27 (Fall 2007): 239-251.  

Due:  
Journal entry submitted to instructor

**July 31:**  
*The Western Film Genre: Dying since 1911 The Myth, Importance, and Resilience of The American West(ern)*  
*The Neo-western and the revised role of the white man*  

Viewing:  
*The Revenant* (2015; Alejandro González Iñárritu dir.) (outside vewing)
Clips

*True Grit* (2010; Coen Bros. dir.)
*Hateful Eight* (2015; Quentin Tarantino dir.)
*There Will Be Blood* (2007; Paul Thomas Anderson dir.)
*Brokeback Mountain* (2005; Ang Lee dir.)


Due: FINAL PAPER

**Bibliography:**


