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. As this course constitutes the academic component of the LA Study Abroad program, the course structure is shaped to accommodate the particular time demands of the program’s practical component, the internship. During the first 5 weeks, the course will meet twice a week for 2 ½ hours each session. Over the final 4 weeks, the course will adopt a once-a-week meeting schedule for 2 ½ hours each session.
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

Week 1: Introduction to Genre in Film and Television: Where Do Genres Come From? How Do They Evolve?

May 31: 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.

Due: The above assigned readings

June 1: 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

SIX PREFERRED PRESENTATION TOPICS (3 FILM, 3 TV)
**Week 2:** The Dominance of Movie Horror and the Rise of TV Horror

**June 7:** 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.)
*Paranormal Activity* (2007; Oren Peli dir.)
*The Eyes of My Mother* (2016; Nicolas Pesce dir.)


Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor

**June 8:** Horror as a Recent Development on TV
Industrial and Moral Constraints in Early Television

Viewing: *The Walking Dead* (AMC) (outside viewing, selected episodes)

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


Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor
**Week 3: From Vaudeville to Veep: Comedy is King**

**June 14:** Comedy as a longstanding stable film genre  
Modern Love: The Buddy Comedy becomes the Bromance  
Gendered narratives in the contemporary comedy

**Viewing:** *The Hangover* (2009; Todd Phillips dir.) (outside viewing)  

**Clips:** *Baby Mama* (2008; Michael McCullers dir.)  
*Bridesmaids* (2011; Paul Feig dir.)  
*Step Brothers* (2008; Adam McKay dir.)  
*The 40-Year-Old Virgin* (2005; Judd Apatow dir.)  
*Wedding Crashers* (2005; David Dobkin dir.)


**Due:** Journal entry submitted to instructor  

**June 15:** 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) (outside viewing, selected episodes)

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


**Due:** Journal entry submitted to instructor
**Week 4:** Gangster Treatments as Vehicles for Quality and Industrial Prestige

**June 21:** Movie Gangsters
Gangster Films and Movie Censorship: a Historical Outline
Gangster Films as Expressions of the Cinematic Auteur

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

**Clips:**
- *The Departed* (2007; Martin Scorsese dir.)
- *Gangs of New York* (2002; Martin Scorsese dir.)
- *Miller’s Crossing* (1990; Joel Coen dir.)
- *Road to Perdition* (2001; Sam Mendes dir.)
- *Pulp Fiction* (1994; Quentin Tarantino dir.)


**Due:** Journal entry submitted to instructor

**June 22:** 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) (outside viewing, Season 1: Episodes 1 and 5)

**Clips:**
- *Breaking Bad* (AMC)
- *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO)
- *The Wire* (HBO)


**Due:** Journal entry submitted to instructor
Week 5: The Sports Genre: “What’s fascinating is that it’s physical”

June 28: Fictional Sports vs Real Sports on TV
Comedy and Melodrama against the backdrop of Sport
Masculinity under threat

Viewing: Friday Night Lights (NBC) (outside viewing, selected episodes)

Clips: Ballers (HBO)
Eastbound and Down (HBO)
Hard Knocks (HBO)

Readings: Michael Butterworth & Raymond I. Schuck, “American Mythology and

Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor

June 29: 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
RESPONSE MIDTERM PAPER QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED

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.)
Moneyball (2011; Bennett Miller dir.)
42 (2013; Brian Helgeland dir.)
Blind Side (2009; John Lee Hancock dir.)


Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor

PROPOSAL FOR FINAL RESEARCH PAPER

July 12: Women’s Stories: Film
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.)  
*The Kids are Alright* (2011; Lisa Cholodenko dir.)  
*Hidden Figures* (2016; Theodore Melfi dir.)  
*Lost in Translation* (2003; Sofia Coppola dir.)  
*Blue Jasmine* (2013; Woody Allen, dir.)  
*The Devil Wears Prada* (2006; David Frankel dir.)

Reading:  

Due:  
Journal entry submitted to instructor

**MIDTERM RESPONSE PAPER DUE**

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

Viewing:  
*Orange is the New Black* (Netflix) (outside viewing, selected episodes)

Clips:  
*The Handmaid’s Tale* (Hulu)  
*UnREAL* (Lifetime)  
*Girls* (HBO)  
*Olive Kitteridge* (HBO)  
*Insecure* (HBO)

Reading:  


Due:  
Journal entry submitted to instructor
July 26: 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) (outside viewing, selected episodes)

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


Due: Journal entry submitted to instructor

August 2: 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 viewing)

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