

Rhode Island College
English 325
Literature and Film

From its beginnings at the end of the 19th century, film quickly became established as one of the dominant forms of storytelling in the 20th century. This course will look at the ways that film and literature tell stories. In what ways are film texts narrative texts? What is “classical Hollywood narrative”? What are some alternatives? How does the concept of “intertextuality” help us to think about the relation between literary texts and film texts in new ways? We will look at a number of film texts as well as selected literary texts in order to examine these and related issues. Course readings will also include both film and literary criticism/theory.

Although it is helpful if students have had English 116, that course is not a prerequisite and English 325 does not assume that students have studied film previously. However, all students will be expected to become familiar with the basic vocabulary of film analysis.

Required Texts: available at the Off-Campus Bookstore, 1017 Smith Street (861-6270).

Raymond Chandler, The Big Sleep. (Vintage)
Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway. (HBJ)
Susan Orlean, The Orchid Thief. (Ballantine)
Selected critical essays (to be distributed in class) *
Additional essays may be included

Course Requirements: Requirements include completing all reading assignments on time in order to participate in class discussion. Requirements also include attending all screenings—whether or not you have seen the film before or have access to it outside of class. . More than two absences will have a negative impact on final grades and more than three absences might result in course failure. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to obtain assignments or handouts as soon as possible and before the next class. If you miss a screening, you will need to see the film on your own. Some—but not all—may be available from local video stores. Copies may be available on reserve in Adams Library (check library website for hours).

Writing requirements include short response papers, a critical paper, and a final exam.

Class and Screening Etiquette: Do not be late to class and do not leave early. Both are disruptive. Do not leave during a screening except for an emergency. If you must leave, do not walk up the center aisle because you will interfere with the projection of the image. Please be quiet (in all ways) during screenings. Turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices.

Course Calendar

M Jan 26 Introduction
The 400 Blows (Truffaut, 1959)

M Feb 2 Joyce, “Araby,”

- M Feb 9 Chandler, The Big Sleep
The Big Sleep (Hawks, 1946)
- M Feb 16 Stam, “Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation” *
- M Feb 23 Thompson, from Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique *
Chinatown (Polanski, 1974)
- M Mar 2 Discussion

Spring Vacation

- M Mar 16 Classical Hollywood Narrative and Alternatives: clips
- M Mar 23 Rear Window (Hitchcock, 1954)
- M Mar 30 Discussion
- M Apr 6 Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway
Mrs. Dalloway (Gorris, 1997)
- M Apr 13 Discussion
- M Apr 20 Orlean, The Orchid Thief
Adaptation (Jonze, 2002)
- M Apr 27 Discussion
- M May 4 In America (Sheridan, 2002)