

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**
<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

**2015-2016 MLCS 299 B2:
The Wall Street Occupier's Guide to Cinema
(Winter Term)**

Instructor: Kara Abdolmaleki
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Personal Website: N/A

Time: T & R, 14:00-15:20
Lab: F, 12:00-15:20 (optional)
Place: CAB 369
Office Hours: T & R 15:30-16:30
or by appointment
Course Website: eClass

Course Prerequisite: none

Course-based Ethics Approval in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

Yes No, not needed, no such projects approved.

Community Service Learning component

Required Optional None

Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available

- Exam registry – Students' Union
<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>
- See explanations below
- Document distributed in class
- Other (please specify)
- NA

Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)

Yes No

Course Description and Objectives:

Occupy Wall Street was the first among a series of movements that took North America and Europe by storm. The OWS protests acted as a watershed event, giving rise to the worldwide Occupy Movement. In their entirety these movements function like an axis, around which a tremendous body of literature, art, and film revolves. Despite some divergences, the common themes that constantly reappear in these events are unbalanced income distribution, corporate greed, the government's rule by secrecy, and the

environmental hazards of Capitalism. The purpose of this course is to focus on the cinematic works that engage with the themes mentioned above from a wide variety of angles and within various cinematic genres.

Course Objectives

This course aims to:

- 1) Familiarize students with the occupy movement and the main body of theory that represents it.
- 2) Help students better understand the distinction between corporate and independent cinema and the cultural-economic implications of film production under each regime.
- 3) Provide students with the analytical and critical means to identify subtle ideological propaganda or critique of the status quo in contemporary Hollywood.
- 4) Familiarize students with film review as a genre and its distinction from film criticism. Help students acquire the skills to evaluate film reviews and gain the ability to analyze film from a theoretical standpoint.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Understand the social and cultural significance of OWS and the way it has challenged the status quo.
- 2) Identify the theoretical premise of the cultural left and its critique of mass media under Capitalism.
- 3) Draw on various theoretical outlooks to identify latent instances of ideological propaganda in Hollywood and re-interpret mainstream cinema subversively.
- 4) Produce insightful and theoretically-informed texts which offer a radical approach to North American culture in general and Hollywood in particular.

Texts:

The required texts will be uploaded on eClass every week. Please see the weekly schedule below for each week's film and the corresponding readings.

Grade Distribution (see "Explanatory Notes"):

Class Participation 10%

Weekly Reflection Pieces: 10 films each worth 4% = 40% of the final grade

Midterm 20% (Feb. 23)

Final Paper 30% (due April 08)

Date of Deferred Final Exam (if applicable):

N/A

Explanatory Notes on Assignments:

Film Screening Lab:

Attending the lab is optional. Students who are not able to attend the lab can borrow the films from the reserve desk at Rutherford Library and watch them at home.

Weekly Reflection Pieces

Each Tuesday, students are required to hand in a one-page reflection piece on the film that they have watched on Friday. The reflection pieces must be an analysis of the film based on the reading assigned for that week. The reflection pieces are due every Tuesday at the beginning of class. Each reflection piece is worth 4% which would amount to 40% of the final grade for the 10 films.

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam for this course will be based on the lectures and the assigned readings. Students will receive a few sample questions a week before the midterm to get a feel of the midterm exam. The midterm constitutes 20% of the final grade.

Final Paper

Students are required to hand in a paper of 2000 to 2500 words with at least three peer-reviewed, scholarly references. Papers should follow the 7th Edition of the MLA style and formatting guide. Also, papers must be exclusively analyzing the films listed in this course outline. Students are allowed to use reference material outside of the reading list to write their papers, as long as they are scholarly and peer-reviewed. All topics for final papers must be approved by the instructor. The final paper is due on April 08, 2016.

Required Notes:

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University calendar.”

Academic Integrity:

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/en/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour.aspx>) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

Learning and Working Environment:

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment safe and free of discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels this policy has been or is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that directs discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the student ombudservice (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/>).

Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures is described in UAPPOL at <https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Pages/DispPol.aspx?PID=110> .

Academic Honesty:

All students should consult the information provided by the [Office of Judicial Affairs](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the [Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook](#) and [Information for Students](#)). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

Students involved in language courses and translation courses should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.” **Students in languages courses** should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

Recording of Lectures:

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections

23.3(1) and 23.5.6 of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

In this course, student/instructor communication is important. If a student knows of upcoming absences, the instructor should be notified. If not, the instructor should be notified as soon as possible to be able to offer instructions regarding missed material, and/or assistance. When a student is absent, his/her level of participation in class cannot be assessed. The 10% allotted for class participation is based on effort and active engagement, shown when in attendance.

Policy for Late Assignments:

Students who consult **in advance** with an instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension just one time throughout the course with no penalty. However, if a second excuse will be granted for late assignments, half of the mark assigned for this particular work will be deducted. Otherwise, all assignments should be handed in on the stated deadline. Any assignment not handed-in in time or unexcused late assignments will not be given any marks. Late excuses will **not** be accepted for any reason.

Student Accessibility Services:

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with Specialized Support & Disability Services, contact their office immediately (2-800 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB www.ssds.ualberta.ca).

Grading:

Marks for assignments, tests, and exams are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below (“**MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale**”). The percentage mark resulting from the entire term work and examination then produces the final letter grade for the course.

“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”

Letter	%	Pts	Descriptor
A+	95-100%	4.0	Excellent: Superior performance showing understanding and knowledge of subject matter far exceeding expectations.
A	90-94%	4.0	Excellent: Superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.
A-	86-89%	3.7	Excellent: Clearly above average performance with complete knowledge of subject matter.
B+	82-85%	3.3	Good
B	75-81%	3.0	Good: average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.

B-	70-74%	2.7	Good
C+	66-69%	2.3	Satisfactory: Basic understanding of the subject matter
C	61-65%	2.0	Satisfactory
C-	58-60%	1.7	Satisfactory
D+	55-57%	1.3	Poor: Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.
D	50-54%	1.0	Minimal Pass: Marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.
F	0-49%	0.0	Failure: Unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements

Films:

Fight Club (1999)
 American Psycho (2000)
 Capitalism: A Love Story (2009)
 The Matrix (1999)
 Total Recall (1991)
 Wall-E (2009)
 The Truman Show (1998)
 Her (2013)
 Oblivion (2013)
 Brazil (1985)

Weekly Schedule and Reading List

General Framework:

Tuesdays: Group discussion of last week's film; short lecture by instructor analyzing the film based on the assigned readings

Thursday: Long lecture by instructor on theory; Q&A to ensure students grasp the concepts

Fridays: Students gather in a room to watch the film assigned for that week.

Week of January 04, 2016

- Tuesday: --Introduction
-- "Cinema: Art or Industry?"
- Thursday: --"What is Occupy Wall Street?"
--"Film Review Vs. Film Criticism"

Klein, Naomi. "Occupy Wall Street: The Most Important Thing in the World Now." *Critical Quarterly* July 2012.

- Friday: Watch *Capitalism: A Love Story*

Week of January 11

- Tuesday: Discussion of *Capitalism: A Love Story*; 1st reflection piece due
- Thursday: Lecture "Transgressive Fiction and Its Cinematic Equivalent"

Reading: Mookerjee, Robin. "Introduction" *Transgression: The New Satirical Fiction*. 1-14.

- Friday: Watch *American Psycho*

Week of January 18

- Tuesday: Discussion of *American Psycho*; 2nd reflection piece due
 - Thursday: "On Transgressive Fiction and Chuck Palahniuk."
- Reading: Ta, L. M. (2006), Hurt So Good: Fight Club, Masculine Violence, and the Crisis of Capitalism. *The Journal of American Culture*, 29: 265–277. doi: 10.1111/j.1542-734X.2006.00370.x
- Friday: Watch *Fight Club*

Week of January 25

- Tuesday: Discussion of *Fight Club*; 3rd reflection piece due
 - Thursday: "On Zizek's 'the Third Pill'"
- Reading: Barker, Jason. "Introduction: Which Pill Will You Take?" in Jason Barker ed. *Marx Reloaded: Interviews on Capitalism and Communism*. Seoul: Nanjang Publishing. (Author's typescript)
- Friday: Watch *The Matrix*

Week of February 01

- Tuesday: "Post-apocalyptic Film and Dystopia"; 4th reflection piece due
 - Thursday: "The End of the World in Cinema"
- Reading: Fisher, Mark. "Chapter 1: It's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism." *Capitalist Realism. Is There No Alternative?* Oxford: Zero Books. 2009. 1-12.
- Friday: watch *Oblivion*

Week of February 08

- Tuesday: Discussion of *Oblivion*, 5th reflection piece due
 - Thursday: Lecture: "On False Consciousness and Literature"; 5th reflection piece due
- Reading: Dinello, Daniel. "Introduction: Dreams of Techno-Heaven, Nightmares of Techno-Hell." *Technophobia!: Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology*. Austin: U of Texas P: 2005. 1-18.
- Friday:--

Week of February 15 (Reading Week)

Week of February 22

- Tuesday: Midterm Exam
- Thursday: "On Sci-Fi and Dystopia"
- Friday: Watch *Wall-E*

Week of Feb. 29

- Tuesday: Lecture “On Techno-Pastoralism in *Wall-E*”; discussion of *Wall-E*; 6th reflection pieces due
- Thursday: “On the Interdependence of Reality and Dream.”
Reading: Žižek, Slavoj. “How real is Reality?” *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*. 1991. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. 1991.
- Friday: Watch *Total Recall*

Week of March 07

- Tuesday: Discussion of *Total Recall*; 7th Reflection piece due
- Thursday: Lecture: “Get your Ass to Mars!”
Reading: Flaxman, Gregory. “Cinema Year Zero.” in: Gregory Flaxman (editor). *The Brain is the Screen. Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*. University of Minnesota Press. 2000. 87-108.
- Friday: Watch *Brazil*

Week of March 14

- Tuesday: “Bureaucracy and terrorism”; 8th reflection piece due
Reading: Price, David H. “Governing Fear in the Iron Cage of Rationalism: Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil* through the lens of 9/11.” *Reframing 9/11: Film, Popular Culture and the "War on Terror"*
Eds. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula, and Karen Randell. New York: Continuum, 2010. 167-83.
- Thursday: “The Machine God”
Reading: Dinello, Daniel. “Technology Is God: Machine Transcendence.” *Technophobia!: Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology*. Austin: U of Texas P: 2005. 18-31.
- Watch *Her*

Week of March 21

- Tuesday: Discussion of *Her*; 9th Reflection piece due
- Thursday: Film Screening in Class *The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology (first half)*
Reading: Žižek, Slavoj. “Hollywood Today: Report from an Ideological Frontline.” http://www.lacan.com/essays/?page_id=347
- Friday: (Good Friday)

Week of March 28

- Tuesday: Film Screening: *The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology (Second half)*
- Thursday: “On Corporate Media and Reality TV”
Reading: Andrejevic, Mark. “The kinder, gentler gaze of Big Brother: Reality TV in the era of digital capitalism.” *New Media & Society* June 2002 vol. 4 no. 2. PDF file. 251-270.
- Friday: Watch *The Truman Show*

Week of April 04

Tuesday: Discussion of *The Truman Show*; 10th reflection piece due

Thursday: --Film Screening of Zizek's address to Wall Street occupiers

<http://vimeo.com/30367180>

--"On Red Ink"

Friday: (April 08) Final papers due