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Guilford Technical Community College
HUM 160
Final Module

Course Description:

HUM 160 **Introduction to Film** 2 2 3

Prerequisites: RED 090 and ENG 090 or ENG 095

Corequisites: None

This course introduces the fundamental elements of film artistry and production. Topics include film styles, history, and production techniques, as well as the social values reflected in film art. Upon completion, students should be able to critically analyze the elements covered in relation to selected films. *This course has been approved to satisfy the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement general education core requirement in humanities/fine arts.*

Description of the Module:

The module, entitled “Engaging with Cinema of the Middle East,” covers approximately 3-4 weeks in a traditional sixteen-week course, or approximately 15-20% of the course curriculum. This unit appears as part of a larger introduction to film course and continues discussions on how filmmakers create theme and meaning. Since some introductory students have a limited understanding and/or misconceptions about Middle Eastern cultures, we spend ample time developing ideas and discussing similarities between Western and Eastern cultures through the selected films, in-class discussions, and journals.

Objectives:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how Middle Eastern filmmakers grapple with similar concerns and ideas about the human condition.
2. Analyze the works through their historical and global context by focusing on how these films support and/or challenge a specific worldview.
3. Critically engage with the texts to find similarities between Eastern and Western styles.
4. Discuss the relevance of these works to our current and past perceptions of Middle Eastern cultures.

Methodology:

Discussions: Students engage with critical questions about the films in class between the instructor and other classmates. Student performance is assessed through active engagement with the discussion group.

Critical Questions for *Rana's Wedding*:

- (1) What is the significance of the still photographs at the beginning of *Rana's Wedding*?
- (2) How is the hand-held cinematography used to comment on Rana's uncertainty?
- (3) Why is it significant that the opening street scenes are relatively free of people? Hint: Tie this into your ideas about the Israeli occupation witnessed throughout the film.
- (4) How are physical roadblocks and checkpoints used to comment upon Rana and Khalil's relationship?
- (5) Pay close attention to the two instances of direct address in the film. The first of the two occurs after Rana is caught up in the funeral procession and the second occurs when Khalil addresses the security camera. In both instances the characters reveal their frustrations to the camera, and viewers, yet we cannot hear them. Why is their silence significant, and how can we tie this to the idea that the Israeli occupation has rendered Palestinians voiceless?
- (6) Read Mahmoud Darwish's poem, "A State of Siege." What is the significance of Abu-Assad concluding the film with an excerpt from this poem? How are Darwish's words tied to the film's message about holding on to love in a time of occupation?

Critical Questions for *Waltz with Bashir*:

- (1) What could the title of the film signify? How could this title tie into Folman's inability to remember his involvement in the Sabra and Shatila massacre?
- (2) How are flashbacks used to comment on Folman's fragmented memory?
- (3) Though the film is animated, the work is a piece of non-fiction cinema. What components of *Waltz with Bashir* indicate its ties to this genre?
- (4) Why do you think the filmmakers choose to show viewers animated images of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps juxtaposed against actual imagery from the massacre?
- (5) What is ironic about Israelis becoming complicit in the genocide of innocent people? Hint: Tie this back to comparisons to the Holocaust discussed and inferred by characters in the film.

Critical Questions for *A Taste of Cherry* and *Ten*:

- (1) What could the long takes signify in *A Taste of Cherry*? How are these used to comment on the meditation on life versus death evidenced throughout the film?
- (2) Why are long shots significant in *A Taste of Cherry*? What could these reveal about Mr. Badii's isolation?
- (3) Why do you think the film ends with footage of Kiarostami shooting *A Taste of Cherry*? How does this blurring of the line between fiction and reality get us closer to truths about the human condition?
- (4) *A Taste of Cherry* and *Ten* are shot primarily in automobiles, but the characters in both films have difficulties moving forward in their personal lives. How can we see the

physical mobility provided by the automobiles working against the characters' personal immobility?

- (5) How does *Ten* challenge some of the preconceptions Western audiences seem to hold about Muslim women? What do you think Kiarostami and the film are trying to accomplish here?

Journals: Students are required to respond to each film through interpretive analysis of the films and written texts. These journal responses are included in a larger portfolio worth 25% of the overall grade in the course.

Journal Prompts for *Rana's Wedding*:

- (1) In a response of at least 250-300 words, please engage with the following prompt using specific evidence from the film to support your logic: How does Hany Abu-Assad use loose framing and the setting to comment upon the Israeli/Palestinian conflict? Hint: Pay careful attention to the construction of the mise en scène throughout the film.
- (2) In a response of at least 200-250 words, please engage with the following prompt using specific evidence from the film to support your logic: What could the marriage of Khalil and Rana at the roadblock reveal about opportunities for love in a time of occupation? Is this an optimistic, pessimistic, or neutral ending? Defend your reasoning.

Journal Prompts for *Waltz with Bashir*:

- (1) In a response of at least 250-300 words, please engage with the following prompt using specific evidence from the film to support your reasoning: The animation in *Waltz with Bashir* is used as a formalist technique to provide distance from the horrific events witnessed in the film. How is this distancing device used to get an audience closer to an objective truth about the loss of innocent lives in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps?
- (2) In a response of at least 250-300 words, please engage with the following prompt using specific evidence from the film to support your reasoning: *Waltz with Bashir* deals specifically with how trauma shapes our memory of events. How does the film use editing to comment upon the idea that Folman's understanding and the truth of the massacre can be found in the fragments?

Journal Prompt for *A Taste of Cherry and Ten*:

- (1) In a response of at least 500 words, please engage with the following prompt using specific evidence from both films to support your logic: Western audiences generally have a skewed understanding of Iranian culture due to media coverage that too readily associates its people with extremism; however, Kiarostami's films work to debunk these stereotypes by revealing commonalities between our human experiences and ideas about life, death, family, and love. Using evidence from both films, discuss how *A Taste of*

Cherry and *Ten* challenged and changed some of your preconceptions about Iranian culture.

Quizzes: In addition to the assessments above, students complete quizzes corresponding to ideas and concepts related to each film. These quizzes stress general knowledge and an application of knowledge through multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. Quizzes make-up 15% of the overall grade in the course.

Quiz for *Rana's Wedding*:

- (1) True/False: Loose framing is used at the beginning of *Rana's Wedding* to indicate Rana's closeness to her father.
- (2) Hand-held cinematography is used throughout the film to indicate:
 - A. Rana's confusion about where to find Khalil
 - B. Rana's uncertainties about marrying Khalil
 - C. the chaos created by the Israeli occupation
 - D. all of the above
- (3) The roadblocks and checkpoints in the film could signify all of the following except:
 - A. a government's inability to communicate effectively without force
 - B. a metaphor for the troubles in Rana and Khalil's relationship
 - C. the difficulties of finding and holding on to love in a time of occupation
 - D. all of the above are possible interpretations
- (4) In a short answer response of at least 5-7 sentences, using specific evidence from the film to support your reasons, please engage with the following: There are moments in the film where Rana seems unsure about marrying Khalil. Some of these are personal problems inherent in their relationship, but others seem shaped by the occupation that constantly affects their lives. Why do you think the Israeli occupation weighs so heavily on Rana's decision to marry Khalil?

Answer Key: (1) False (2) D. (3) D. (4) Interpretive

Quiz for *Waltz with Bashir*:

- (1) Ari Folman's film, *Waltz with Bashir*, deals with all of the following except:
 - A. Folman's inability to remember his involvement in the Sabra and Shatila massacres
 - B. the 1982 Lebanon War
 - C. questions about how trauma shapes our understanding of the past
 - D. the Mossad's involvement in tracking down those responsible for the Munich massacre at the 1972 Olympics
- (2) Who is Bashir?
 - A. the assassinated president of Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel

- B. an individual in the Phalangist party responsible for ordering the murder of innocent civilians
 - C. Folman's psychiatrist
 - D. Folman's close friend who served with him in the IDF during the Lebanon War
- (3) *Waltz with Bashir* can best be described as:
- A. a fictionalized account of the Sabra and Shatila massacre
 - B. an animated documentary that relies on formalist aesthetics
 - C. a surreal meditation on how trauma shapes memory
 - D. none of the above
 - E. all of the above
 - F. B and C only
- (4) Which historical event is closely associated with the Sabra and Shatila massacre in the film:
- A. the genocide in Sudan
 - B. the Rwandan genocide
 - C. the Holocaust
 - D. 9/11
- (5) In a short answer response of 5-7 complete sentences, using specific references from the film to support your ideas, please engage with the following: How does *Waltz with Bashir* challenge some of our preconceptions about what documentary films can and should do? Why do you think Folman chooses to depart from the form to reveal a new understanding of history and truth?

Answer Key: (1) D. (2) A. (3) F. (4) C. (5) Interpretive

Quiz for *A Taste of Cherry and Ten*:

- (1) *A Taste of Cherry* and *Ten* rely heavily on this film style:
- A. classical
 - B. realist
 - C. formalist
 - D. none of the above
- (2) All of the following are true of *A Taste of Cherry* and *Ten* except:
- A. the films provide viewers with a contemporary look at Iranian society
 - B. the films utilize tight framing to provide viewers with an opportunity to identify with characters
 - C. the films reveal the limitations placed on filmmakers like Kiarostami to shoot in Iran
 - D. all of the above statements are true
- (3) Which of the following is not used in *Ten*:
- A. tight framing
 - B. jump cuts
 - C. high angle shots

D. low angle shots

(4) True/False: Mr. Badii's conflict can best be described as a conflict of life over death.

(5) In a short answer response of at least 5-7 complete sentences, using specific references from *Ten* to support your ideas, please engage with the following: At the conclusion of the film *Mania* picks up the woman who had doubts about her future husband. In the scene, this woman loosens her hijab revealing a shaved head. What could the loosening of the hijab and the woman's shaved head reveal about her growth as a woman in Iran?

Answer Key: (1) B. (2) D. (3) C. (4) True (5) Interpretive

Resources:

Armes, Roy. *Third World Filmmaking and the West*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987. Print.

Darwish, Mahmoud. *A State of Siege*. Trans. Munir Akash and Daniel Moore. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2010. Print.

Folman, Ari and David Polonsky. *Waltz with Bashir: A Lebanon War Story*. New York: Metropolitan, 2009. Print.

Gertz, Nurith and George Khleifi. *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008. Print.

Orgeron, Devin. *Road Movies: From Muybridge and Méliés to Lynch and Kiarostami*. New York: Palgrave, 2008. Print.

Paradise Now. Dir. Hany Abu-Assad. Perf. Kais Nashif, Ali Suliman, and Lubna Azabal. Warner Home Video, 2005. DVD.*

Rana's Wedding. Dir. Hany Abu-Assad. Perf. Clara Khory and Khalifa Natour. AFD, 2004. DVD.

Saeed-Vafa, Mehrnaz and Jonathan Rosenbaum. *Abbas Kiarostami*. Champaign: U of Illinois P, 2003. Print.

Schlunke, Katrina. "Animated Documentary and the Scene of Death: Experiencing *Waltz with Bashir*." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110.4 (2011): 949-62. *Academic Search Complete*.

Web. 30 Mar. 2012.

Shohat, Ella. *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*. I.B. Tauris, 2010. Print.

Siegel, Ellen. "After Nineteen Years: Sabra and Shatila Remembered." *Middle East Policy* 8.4 (2001): 86-100. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 30 Mar. 2012.

Tapper, Richard ed. *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation, and Identity*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006. Print.

Taste of Cherry. Dir. Abbas Kiarostami. Perf. Homayan Ershadi and Abdolrahman Bagheri. Criterion, 1999. DVD.

Ten. Dir. Abbas Kiarostami. Perf. Mania Akbari, Amin Maher, and Kamran Adl. Zeitgeist Films, 2004. DVD.

Waltz with Bashir. Dir. Ari Folman. Perf. Ron Ben-Yishai. Sony Picture Classics, 2009. DVD.

*Film not screened in the initial module, but will be used in the future.