

ADVANCED SEMINAR: HITCHCOCK

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Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) directed 53 feature films, in a career that began in the silent period and ended in the era of Technicolor and CinemaScope. Many of his films were and still are deliciously entertaining: he once remarked, “Some films are slices of life, mine are slices of cake.” But he was a tireless experimenter with cinematic form, directing the first British talkie, an entire film with a single set, an entire film apparently shot in one take, a 3-D film, a film in which the lead actress is killed off early, and on and on. There is entertainment in his work, but also a good deal more than entertainment; the important *Sight and Sound* survey of film professionals now ranks *Vertigo* (1958) as the greatest movie ever made. (Hitchcock considered it something of a failure, since it didn’t do well at the box office.) The critical commentary on Hitchcock’s films—by Hitchcock himself, by other filmmakers, and by academic critics—is almost as entertaining as the films themselves.

For all these reasons, Hitchcock is an ideal subject for an Advanced Seminar. As with any Advanced Seminar, students are expected to finish with a 12-15 page critical research essay. The whole course will be geared toward the writing of that essay. There will be small assignments along the way, and a research project in the middle, and due dates for drafts of the final paper, and workshopping of drafts, and a great deal of individual consultation. In addition to watching and discussing Hitchcock’s films, we will read film criticism. The assigned reading (perhaps even the assigned viewing) will be shaped by the projects individual students generate. Expect improvisation and a devotion to the craft of critical writing and a continuing preoccupation with the (so-called) Master of Suspense.

If you read the next section carefully, you’ll see that you don’t have to buy *any* books for this

course. You can take it for free, almost! But you might want to snag two books we'll be drawing from frequently. The assigned readings from them will be posted on Canvas, and the whole books will be put on reserve in ML, but you can also find cheap used copies online. They are: François Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (with several titles and also a first and then a revised edition, all of which are equally good for our purposes), and Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (also in various editions).

Texts: —twelve to fifteen Hitchcock films, beginning with *Notorious* and moving back and forth through the filmography. (I'll put some later movies early in the semester, as they may be likely topics for term papers.) Our viewing and reading will be determined, in part, by the path our discussion takes and by the individual interests and projects of students. All films will be available as streaming video through Marriott Library. Students have other options too—Netflix, the public library, DVDs purchased or online. (*Alfred Hitchcock: The Legend Begins*, a 4-DVD set containing eighteen early films, sells for under \$10.) **Note:** one film on our list (*Psycho*, 1960) is rated R. I believe it got that rating when it was first made available on VHS tape, and I'm quite sure that it would not be rated R if it were released for the first time today. Still, it is irreplaceable in the course, and if you're unwilling to watch any R-rated movie you should probably find another seminar.

—a substantial amount of scholarship and criticism, via Canvas.

Requirements: —constant attendance, reading on schedule, participation in discussion
—participation in online discussion (details to be decided)
—several short papers and projects
—a substantial research project, in the middle of the term
—one 12-15 page critical research paper, at the end
—steps *toward* the final paper, on schedule (details to be decided)

Some course policies:

1. Regular attendance and active participation in the discussion are essential. If you must miss class, or arrive late or leave early, it's a courtesy to let me know ahead of time, but there are no "excused absences": if you're not in class, you're missing part of the course, no matter the cause. I will be lenient about absences—I understand that emergencies sometimes detain students elsewhere. If you miss class excessively, though, it will hurt your chances of doing well in the course, both because it will hurt your performance on the assignments and because attendance is itself part of the course. If you're there every time, it will count in your favor.

2. Attendance, part two. Showing up is just the beginning. You also need to do the reading and viewing, and *think* about it before coming to class. Bring questions and comments! This is very much a discussion class: the more energy, imagination, and intelligence you can contribute, the better it will be. And do please come on time and stay till the end. Traffic through the door disrupts discussions.

3. Typically in my classes I am extravagantly generous with extensions on written work. *Not in this class.* Once deadlines are set (for short papers and for the steps toward the final paper) they are written in stone. Obviously you may need to ask for an emergency extension anyway, and I will be understanding, but there has to be a real emergency.

4. Come see me. I will announce regular office hours, and I can arrange conferences at many other times of the week as well. I'm also easily accessible by email.

5. The usual warning about plagiarism applies, of course: if, in your written work, you draw substantially on the work of others, you must indicate this or face dire consequences (starting with an automatic E for the course). If you're not sure whether your debt is great enough to require acknowledgment, always err on the side of acknowledging. Normally, at this point, I say, "If you don't feel confident about the correct form, don't worry about it—you could always write me a separate note." And of course that's still true—if you indicate your debt to a secondary work, in any manner whatsoever, you'll be free of any imputation of plagiarism. But we will spend a fair amount of time discussing proper ways of using criticism and scholarship, so presumably you *will* know the correct form.

6. The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and the Center for Disabled Student Services, 581-5020 (Voice or TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information for this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification.