

## **BORDER CROSSINGS**

University Writing Seminar, Summer 2018

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**Meeting Time: TBD**

**Classroom: TBD**

**Office: TBD**

### **Course Description**

This university writing seminar looks at treatments of emigration and immigration in classic and contemporary Hollywood cinema, particularly as they relate to concepts of borders, globalization, war, ethnic identity, and cultural assimilation. Not only do these films situate immigration as the central formative experience of American identity, they also offer a variety of models for negotiating the difficulties of passing back and forth between old worlds and new, between the past and the future. The experience of border crossing, as depicted in these films, challenges us to rethink our own concepts of the family, nation, race, and ethnicity, as well as our social and cultural attitudes towards difference and otherness.

In order to delve deeper into the role border crossings play in our collective imagination, this course will foster the development of incisive analysis and sophisticated academic writing. Structured assignments, class discussions, peer group workshops, and conferences will direct us as we explore different writing tasks and consider an array of cultural artifacts. Our goal in this course will not be simply to improve as thinkers and writers, but to open up our concept of writing to new possibilities. While the analytical and expressive skills you develop in this class will be critical to your success at Brandeis and beyond, ultimately, this course will provide you with an opportunity to discuss not only the topics of the course, but the craft of writing as well.

### **Required Course Texts**

There are no required course texts to purchase. All of the films and supplementary texts we will read this semester, including selections from *Write Now!*, will be made available on LATTE. You will find them under “Course Texts” on the course homepage. If you don't think you have an assigned reading, look for it on LATTE. <http://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/newlatte/>

The film list for this course is as follows:

*The Immigrant* (1917)

*The Jazz Singer* (1927)

*Casablanca* (1942)

*The Godfather Part II* (1974)

*An American Tail* (1986)

*Man Push Cart* (2005)

### **Evaluation**

12% Attendance, Conferences, Participation

75% Assignments

    Essay 1           19%

    Essay 2           24%

    Essay 3           32%

8% Peer Reviews, Workshops, Exercises

5% Portfolio Review

## **Assignments**

### Essays

- Two close-reading, scene analysis essays
- The lens essay
- The research essay

### Draft Exercises

- In-class free-writing, note-taking on the films, & film responses
- Small, Draft-building Writing Assignments
- First drafts
- Peer Review
- Conferences

## **Class participation and Attendance**

Contrary to many accounts of the writerly process, writers produce in community. Our class discussions constitute that supportive but challenging community, where we can test new ideas and writing techniques. To facilitate this environment, you must come to class prepared to participate fully in class discussions and activities.

You are allowed **two** absences without penalty. For each additional absence, your final grade will be penalized by a third of a grade. **Five** or more absences will result in a failing grade. Please contact me in the event that you will miss more than two days.

## **Conferences**

Three times during the semester, we will meet in my office for 15 minute conferences. These will be one-on-one discussions of your course work, and it will give you a chance to get detailed and personalized feedback from me on your writing and the directions your projects are taking. Sign-up sheets will be posted in advance on LATTE. Conference attendance is mandatory; any missed conference will count as an absence. You should bring all relevant materials to your conference, including drafts, comments, revisions, outlines, and key sources. It is your responsibility to come to these conferences with a set of concerns that you want to deal with.

## **Peer Review Workshops**

Peer review constitutes a key part of the course trajectory. When you hand in your rough drafts, you will give one copy each to two classmates and receive two classmates' drafts in return. You should carefully and considerately read and mark these drafts and compose a peer-review letter for the following class, when you will share this feedback in small groups. These exercises are for the benefit of your essays; so, participate actively and intelligently for the sake of your colleagues, demanding the same from them. Your revisions will need to demonstrate significant changes, especially changes that address the issues I have identified, and those raised by your peers.

## **Class Policies**

### Formatting and Submission

All assignments should be submitted electronically, and written in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins (not 1.25 margins; check the page format). All citations must be in either MLA format or Chicago Style format.

### Optional Revision

At the end of the semester, you will have the option to submit a revision for your Close Reading Essays or your Lens Essay for an improved grade if you received a B+ or below. Revisions will yield **up to** 2 grades higher on that essay. Ex: B- à B+

### Late Work & Extensions

If you need to arrange an extension, contact me and do so **before** the due date. Otherwise, assignments will lose 1/3 of a grade for every day they are late (i.e. a B paper will receive a B-). Work will not be accepted more than a week past the deadline.

### Electronic Devices

Phones and tablets should be silenced and put away during all class time. Laptops are only to be used for specific in-class activities. Electronic devices may not be used to take notes, unless you have received explicit permission from me. Repeated misuse of electronics will result in lowered participation grades.

## **University Policies**

### Academic Integrity

In the academic setting it is critical that the work you present is original and that, when you use outside sources, you cite them appropriately. This course is no different. The Brandeis policy on academic integrity is available in section 3 of your *Rights and Responsibilities Handbook*, available at <http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/>. Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Development and Conduct for possible referral to the Student Judicial System, and may carry severe consequences. If you have any questions or concerns about citation, plagiarism, or academic standards of originality, please ask; I'm happy to discuss these standards.

## Accommodations

If you have special needs related to this course (a documented disability, for example), please contact me as soon as possible so we can make suitable arrangements. Information is available at the Disabilities Resources website (<http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/disabilities/>).

## Four-Credit Course

Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

## **Course Outcomes**

- To gain familiarity with the conventions of academic writing in the form of close reading, lens analysis, and independent research
- To use writing and discussion to develop complex interpretations of visual and print texts
- To practice thinking critically about style, structure, and argumentation in your own and others' writing
- To understand writing as a continuing process of production and revision
- To develop practical strategies for implementing this process in other courses

## **Schedule**

Monday 6/4

In-Class:

- Introductions
- Syllabus & Assignments
- In-class writing

Tuesday 6/5

Watch:

- *The Immigrant*
- "[Working Class Hero - Inside Charlie Chaplin's \*The Immigrant\*](#)"
- "[Shot Composition](#)"
- "[Camera Angle](#)"
- "[Editing](#)"
- "[Cinematography](#)"

Read:

- Basic Film Glossary
- Goldberg, "[How to Read a Film](#)"
- Gordon Harvey's "Elements of the Academic Essay"

Write:

- *The Immigrant* Film Response

Thursday 6/7

Watch:

- *The Jazz Singer*
- "[How The Jazz Singer Killed the Silent Film](#)"
- "[Sound](#)"

Read:

- Bordwell & Thompson "Sound in the Cinema"

Write:

- *The Jazz Singer* Film Response
- Scene Analysis #1

Monday 6/11

Write:

- Close Reading Scene Analysis #2

Tuesday 6/12

Read:

- Joseph H. Carens, "Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders"

Write:

- Lens Assignment #1

Thursday 6/14

Watch:

- *Casablanca*

Write:

- *Casablanca* Film Response
- Lens Assignment #2

Monday 6/18

Write:

- Lens Draft Due

In Class: Peer Review

Tuesday 6/19

Watch:

- *The Godfather Part II*
- "[The Godfather Part II - Renegade Cut](#)"

Read:

- Robert Warshow, "The Gangster as Tragic Hero"

Write:

- *The Godfather Part II* Film Response

Thursday 6/21

In Class: Library Session

Monday 6/25

Watch:

- *American Tail*
- "[Why We Need to be Talking About \*An American Tail\*](#)"

Write:

- *Ex Machina* Film Response
- Research Assignment #1

Tuesday 6/26

Write:

- Research Assignment #2

Thursday 6/28

Watch:

- *Man Push Cart*

Write:

- Research Assignment #3
- *Man Push Cart* Film Response

Monday 7/2

Write:

- First 5 pages & outline of Research Essay Due **SUNDAY** by **11:59 PM**

In class: Peer Review

Tuesday 7/3

In class: Course Review, cleanup exercises, and research troubleshooting

Thursday 7/5

**No Class** - extended office hours from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Friday 7/6

Final Research Essay due by 11:59 PM