

Seminar in Film Studies: Film Criticism

Last Updated: Sat, 01/03/2026

Course prefix: LMC

Course number: 4500

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
31545

Instructor First Name: Kristi

Instructor Last Name: MxKim

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

How do we write, read, and talk about films we love? How might we reconcile our unique experiences of films—the memories, dreams, desires, hopes, and fears that they conjure—with those of a mass audience? How might film criticism help us appreciate both the audiovisual richness of cinema and the expressive capacity of language? Who gets to be a critic, and how? Whose voices aren't we hearing, and why? How does the history of film criticism—in tandem with the history of film—reveal societal trends and power dynamics? This intimate and rigorous seminar studies the work of canonical film critics alongside contemporary modes of film criticism (e.g., print/online journalism, video essays, podcasts, Letterboxd reviews, and social media posts). Students will create original work within a supportive workshop environment that emphasizes craft, practice, and revision; students will also have the opportunity to write and edit film criticism for the international undergraduate film journal, *Film Matters*.

Course learning outcomes:

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

- Read film criticism with discernment about film analysis (how does the critic approach the film itself?), writerly craft (how does the critic shape their assessment via style and structure?), and socio-historical context (how does the critic participate directly and indirectly in both a historical conversation and contemporary dynamic about film experience and culture?)
- Describe with more self-awareness the kind of writing that captures their attention and/or the kind of writing they want to read, in relation to experiencing film

- Think more intentionally about what criticism is and does, in relation to art and daily experience
- Register (to a cursory degree) the gravity of film criticism within broader socio-cultural movements, insofar as film criticism impacts our perception (and the kinds of films that are made and that receive attention)
- Appreciate writing as a process (and not a whimsical act of genius or fleeting inspiration), insofar as writing benefits from revision in response to one's own and peers'/editors' feedback
- Situate their own film experience and their practice of reading/writing film criticism (however informal) relative to cultural trends and historical trajectories
- Collaborate on a student editorial board to evaluate submissions and work with student writers to shape their writing into publishable form
- Offer incisive criticism that supportively critiques and assesses peers' work (and their own work)
- Work together as a seminar group that has high standards and inspires each other to create their best writing

Required course materials:

Essays (uploaded/linked within Canvas)

Grading policy:

CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT (10%): Structured as a dynamic sustained conversation instead of a lecture course, this seminar class expects your prepared, thoughtful, and respectful participation. Your discussion contributions need to reflect your careful reading, screening, and thinking about class materials. Engagement doesn't mean simply talking but also listening, responding to, and asking questions of your colleagues and professor.

Substantive participation involves respect for each other's ideas alongside careful attention to the assigned texts/films. Your classroom engagement should demonstrate:

- Careful reading of texts and screening of assigned films/clips before coming to class;
- Preparedness to be an involved discussant and engaged listener (not a spectator);
- Active thinking about questions and issues raised during class;
- Courage in trying out your own ideas, exercising vulnerability, and asking for help;
- Respect for the ideas and worth of others in the discussion; and
- Effort and thoughtfulness on any written exercises assigned to prepare you for discussion.

Moreover, in this seminar that involves the professional responsibilities of collaborating and evaluating submissions for publication with *Film Matters*, engagement means that you are proactive, trustworthy, collaborative, responsible, and congenial. Instead of my evaluating (in ways that seems tedious and micromanaging) your every move as part of the editorial board, I am here opting for this more holistic assessment as to your engagement. To earn engagement points, you should be involved in every class.

CRITICS ON CRITICISM (20%): A major part of our semester involves the opportunity to meet leading film writers and editors. Out of respect to our guests and with hopes to make the most of our time together, we will prepare for these visits by not only reading and discussing but also writing about their work and their recommended pieces. This exercise helps you to ask thoughtful questions that expand upon what our guests have already created (instead of asking questions that are readily answerable in their writing), and this assignment also helps you with your own craft of criticism. Your writing should demonstrate that you've thought about the texts with care (as opposed to offering more agreeable or obvious ideas that could be offered without reading the text). Take note of passages, and look for trends and exceptions. Describe as specifically as possible, while also trying to make generalizations about, this editor/writer's style, concerns, structure, voice. What passages do you most admire? What sentences do you wish you'd written? What confuses you or impresses you? What do you wish were otherwise? Explore this guest's work beyond the required readings on the syllabus. What fascinates you about this writer/editor, and what do you want to learn? What questions do you have for this person, and what questions do they seem already to have answered? How do you see this writer's work and interests fitting within the pieces we've studied thus far in our class? You are able to drop your lowest grade here. (roughly 1000 words).

FILM REVIEW (draft and final, 15%): This assignment expects that you review a film for *Film Matters*. Your first draft will undergo peer review within a workshop discussion, toward your submitting your best work. Exemplary reviews will be published within *Film Matters*.

DISCUSSION POSTS (15%): These assignments extend and enrich our in-person class discussion, as indicated in the syllabus (and as further prompted via Canvas). Your lowest grade will be dropped (you can either skip one or have a second chance to improve a lower grade). Writing all posts will favorably factor into your engagement grade. Given the timely nature of these posts, late submissions will not be accepted (the whole point of this assignment is helping you to keep up with the course and to maintain engagement with your peers), and a missed post will simply be recorded as a "zero" and will be the one that you drop.

PEER REVIEWS (15%): This class enjoys a seminar structure that strengthens through dedicated attention to your peers' work (and learning how to incorporate this feedback in your revisions). Students will be expected to comment formally on drafts of a film review and also a final film essay, in addition to discussion posts. The cumulative effort of these peer reviews (details will be distributed in class) will comprise a substantive portion of your grade in this course.

FINAL FILM ESSAY, DRAFT (20%) and FINAL (5%): This final project—and accompanying artistic statement/rationale—represents your culminating work in the course. This project will be phased into our semester via in-class exercises, a pitch to your peers, and a workshop of your draft. More details TBD. Exemplary writing will be published within *Film Matters*.

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A 90-100%

B 80-89%

C 70-79%

D 60-69%

F 0-59%

Attendance policy:

This class expects that you will be present for our meetings. Absences for religious holidays and observances, Georgia Tech athletic competitions (for athletes), illness, and sanctioned school functions will be excused (with notice). You can achieve the objectives of this course only through regular, responsible attendance and active engagement during our meetings. Students who miss more than three classes without documentation of illness or family emergency will see a lowered final grade, and students who miss more than six classes for any reason will fail the course. Students who are absent do not have the option of accessing a recorded class or participating remotely.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

n/a