

Writing 100: From Page to Screen: Film Adaptations of Literature

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Dr. Matthew Blanshei

Office: Zinzendorf 102 (Meetings by appointment)

blanshei@moravian.edu

610-861-7513 (office)

Course Theme

This writing course provides students with the opportunity to reflect critically on how they respond to film adaptations of select novels and short stories. Over the course of the semester, we will address the following three interrelated questions: first, how do different film directors use the "language" of film to translate the written word into the visual image? Second, do readers imaginatively create their own "adaptation" of a literary work before viewing an actual film adaptation? And third, what set of criteria should we use in order to determine whether or not a film presents a "faithful" adaptation of a literary work?

Required Texts

Burgess, Anthony. A Clockwork Orange

Gianetti, Louis. Understanding Movies.

Hacker, Diana. Bedford Handbook for Writers, 6th edition. Boston: St. Martin's Press, 2002.

Palahniuk, Chuck. Fight Club

Custom Reading Packet

(Books available at Moravian College Bookstore; reading packet will be distributed in installments throughout the semester).

Films Viewed In Class

A Clockwork Orange (Kubrick); *Fight Club* (Fincher); *Million Dollar Baby* (Eastwood); *Memento* (Nolan).

Format/Requirements

This course will be primarily discussion-based. Each student is therefore required to complete the reading assignment prior to the beginning of class. This will allow each student to participate in the classroom discussions and workshops that will help him or her develop the ideas and arguments which are necessary for writing insightful and well-organized essays.

Writing Assignments

Each student will draft and complete 8 graded papers of varying lengths, including an expanded version of a previously written essay (that contains a research component) over the course of the semester.

Short Writing Exercises

5 graded writing exercises (up to one page) will serve two primary purposes; they will focus on a particular aspect of writing (such as commenting on a cited passage from a particular text or writing an introduction), and they will form the building blocks for three 3-page essays.

Oral Presentation

Each student will give two collaborative oral presentations (that is, each presentation will be delivered to the class with another student) that includes preparing and discussing a quiz on select readings for the rest of the class.

A handout that will describe what is required of the oral presentation will be handed out the second week of class.

Breakdown Of Writing Assignments And Corresponding Course Material To Be Covered

Weeks 1 through 4

(Note: schedule subject to slight change; **Assignment sheet covering 6 class periods will be handed out every two weeks**)

I. Comparative analysis focusing on Genre: 750 word essay

Each student will write a three-page essay contrasting aspects of their chosen film with another film that (s)he identifies as belonging to the same genre.

Weeks 5-7

II. Close Reading and Argument/Commentary (750 word essay)

Each student will write a three page essay analyzing how a particular passage (or passages) from their chosen novel is rendered into the language of their chosen film.

In this assignment, students will critique a select passage from a text or a scene from a video, focusing not merely on “what” is presented, but above all on “how” the material in question is presented.

Weeks 8-10

III. Comparative Analysis (750 word essay)

Each student will compare and contrast two reviews of their chosen film that are written from different perspectives. In this assignment, students will be expected to develop an argument stating why they think one perspective has more validity than the other. This essay will enable the student to learn how to analyze similarities and differences, expose argument subtleties, and discover significant criteria for an analysis.

IV. Expanded Paper With Research Component (10-12pages)

This assignment will allow students to conduct independent research, evaluate sources and develop an original argument.

In order to assist the student with this project, there will be several research related assignments due throughout the semester. There will also be a class session conducted by the librarian that is designed to introduce students to various library resources that will assist them with their research projects.

Each student will also meet with the instructor for a research paper conference.

Grades

Final grades will be determined on the basis of the following percentages:

Final 10-12 page paper: 20%

5 writing exercises: 10%

Oral Presentations: 10%

Peer Reviews: 10%

Quizzes: 10%

3 3-4 page essays: 20%

4 1-2 page papers: 20%

In accordance with the Moravian College grading policy, each letter grade corresponds with numerical “Quality Points”:

A: 4.00.

A-: 3.67

B+: 3.33.

B: 3.00.

B-: 2.77.

C+: 2.33.

C: 2.00.
C-: 1.67.
D+: 1.33.
D: 1.00.
D-: 0.67.
F: no points.

While this grading system is obviously quantitative, the final grade will be determined, in part, by a qualitative consideration; that is, on the basis of the first essay, each student will meet with the instructor to establish a set of goals for the rest of the semester in order to improve his or her writing in specific ways. If these goals are met, then the final grade will be adjusted upwards by 1/3 or 2/3.

Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is of course expected. There is no penalty for unexcused absences. However, please note the following: **there will no make-up quizzes given if you are not present on one of the days that a quiz is given. There will be no make-up oral presentations if you are not present when you are called to give one.**

Further, there will be no make-up assignment for missing one of the graded peer-review sessions. And finally, for each day a writing assignment is late, the final grade for that assignment will be lowered by 1/3 grade (exceptions made for documented medical absences).

(Due to past difficulties arising from electronic mail submissions, all essays are to be handed in during class; no essay is to be turned in via e-mail).