

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF FILM STUDIES
FILM 2194A-650 SPECIAL TOPICS IN FILM GENRE, SUMMER 2017
CINEMAS OF DISASTER**

Dr. Barbara S. Bruce
bbruce2@uwo.ca

Email:

Please read the following information completely and carefully:

WELCOME

Film Studies and Distance Studies and taught by Dr. Barbara Bruce, this course introduces the study of genre, a survey of disaster films, and analyses of films from various perspectives. The lectures are supplemented by secondary articles, which are posted in Owl. You are encouraged to discuss course material with your classmates, through the Forum, and with your professor. You are thus in the advantageous position of studying a cross-section of a genre and a wide range of interpretations. You should come away from this course with an enriched understanding of how this popular genre developed and of the variety of disaster films and the critical responses to them.

Please do not hesitate to ask me questions or to let me know if you encounter any problems or see any errors in the course. I try to keep the course as up-to-date as possible, but sometimes a web link will no longer function if the URL has changed, an image in a lecture will disappear (often for some inexplicable reason), etc. This syllabus contains important information about the course requirements, expectations for the course, how to contact me, assignments and grade dist

documented in this syllabus.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS ONLINE COURSE

Any online course demands as much time and effort from you as a conventional lecture-based university course in Film Studies, but this is a 12-week course condensed into 6 weeks, so it is particularly intense. You are required to participate in the course regularly, as you would in a classroom setting, which means watching the assigned films, reading the lectures and the assigned articles, and engaging with the material, the professor, and your classmates. As in any university course, then, you must devote several hours a week to each unit and there are two units per week to keep up with the reading and to complete the assignments. I recommend you schedule specific times for this course each week, just as if you were attending a regular class.

This course is designed for Owl, which operates as an "online classroom." Whether from home, from the computers provided by the university, or from the public library, but you must ensure that you have access to the internet on a regular and consistent basis. This means that, in the

How to Post a Discussion

-

must still have a beginning, middle, and end. Begin with an introduction that includes a statement that focuses and summarizes the argument you will be presenting, an argument about the significance or meaning of the element, motif, sequence, or scene. The rest of the analysis should also be organized into paragraphs, each one focusing on a specific point and beginning with a topic sentence that highlights the main point of that paragraph. End your analysis with a succinct conclusion.

In your paper, you must analyze the *specific* details of the film. Vague and/or generalized discussions of the films, and especially mere plot summaries, will receive low grades. In developing your analysis, you should consider narrative details—setting, plot, characters, and symbols—as well as such cinematic details as sets, props, costume/make-up, lighting, and performance or figure behaviour, camera angles and distance, sound.

In the Assignment Information subpage under Course Content in Owl, I have provided a document with information that will help you to write these assignments. It includes a list of questions to help you develop your analysis.

Grading will also depend on organization and the quality of the writing. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of good writing skills. Students should make good use of a writing handbook, such as *Checkmate* or *The Little Brown Handbook*, and if necessary, the [Writing Support Centre](#). They offer, reW* nBT/F2 11.04 Toso3(d)13(T/F2 11.9TÆ15W* nBT/F2 11.04 Tff1 0 0 1 431.71

The assignments must be posted no later than 11:59 p.m. Sunday of the week each is due. Assignments handed in late without prior permission will be returned with a grade only, no comments, and 3% per day late, including weekends (i.e., 6% for Saturday and Sunday), deducted from the grade assigned to your paper. Papers submitted after the assignment has been r

information is

[Rights and Responsibilities](#)

and other scholastic offences will be prosecuted to the fullest extent that university regulations arism
The act or an
instance of copying or stealing and
(emphasis added).

Western University subscribes to **Turnitin**, a plagiarism-prevention service, and the Senate

commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)

All assignments in this course will be submitted through Owl and checked by and marked it Turnitin. This service is *not* used on the assumption that most students plagiarize, rather to deter a small minority of students who may be tempted to plagiarize and to protect all students from academic theft. As well, we do not rely solely on Turnitin: other measures are in place to ensure students hand in their own, original work.

-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences

If you are not sure what plagiarism is or what constitutes an academic offence, *ask!* The [Scholastic Discipline for Undergraduate Students](#) excuse.

TALKING TO YOUR PROFESSOR

hours are scheduled for this course. Instead, students who wish to talk to me may do so by email.

Email

I am happy to communicate with students via e-

in class. Unfortunately, most students wait until the last minute or until all hell is breaking loose before consulting their instructors. Please see me well ahead of deadlines and the onset of nervous breakdowns.

FURTHER INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, medical issues, or religious obligations. Contact the appropriate person (myself, an academic counsellor, a staff member in Student Services, etc.) as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Legend for film technical specifications: m = minutes; c = colour; b/w = black & white; sil = silent

Note! The Works Cited, or bibliography, for the course readings is posted on the Syllabus page in Owl.

Week Dates

Units Topics, Films, Readings, Assignments

Week 1 May 8 to 12

Unit 1 Introduction and The Classic Hollywood Disaster Film

Required Film:

The Hurricane (Ford, USA, 1937, 110m, b/w, 1.37:1)

Required Reading:

The Hurricane

2 short articles from *Life Magazine*

Unit 2 Disaster and *Film Noir*

Required Film:

Panic in the Streets (Kazan, USA, 1950, 96m, b/w, 1.37:1)

Required Reading:

Noir

Week 2 May 15 to 19

Unit 3 The Creature Feature

Required Film:

Gojira (Honda, Japan, 1954, 98m, b/w, 1.37:1)

Required Reading:

Them! is U.

Unit 4 The Historical Disaster Film

Required Film:

A Night to Remember (Baker, UK, 1958, 123m, b/w, 1.66:1)

Required Reading:

Titanic (1953)

and *A Night to Remember*

Close Reading 1 due Sunday, May 21 by 11:59 p.m.

The Day the Earth Caught Fire (Guest, UK, 1961, 98m, b/w, 2.35:1)
Required Reading:

Unit 12 The Modern Disaster Drama

Required Film:

The Impossible (Bayona, Spain/USA, 2012, 114m, c, 2.35:1)

Required Reading:

Close Reading 3 due Sunday, June 18 by 11:59 p.m.

Final Exam: June 24 at 2 p.m., Room tba

Enjoy the course, and best of luck with your studies.