

English 335—Studies in Film: Espionage and Mendacity in Hollywood Cinema

Geoffrey Sauer, Ross 433

office hours: T 5-6pm, W 11am-12pm, and by appointment

Overview

English 335 is an upper-division college English class as well as an introductory "film" class. Taking it thus imposes a responsibility for exploring the literary, humanistic, and critical impact of film. This means we will learn to read about, talk about, and write about the films on the schedule. Our basic goals, then, are two: 1) to make the best sense we can of individual films, and 2) to relate that sense in some systematic fashion to larger frameworks of knowledge, chiefly those already generated by the discipline of film studies.

Our chief concern in the Spring 2015 version of the class will be to investigate the topic of mendacity (lies and lying) in narrative cinema's espionage films, particularly (but not exclusively) in Hollywood cinema. As students will read during the semester, the 'spy' as a narrative element is often used as a means of both introducing and resolving larger cultural or social issues. As a result, it's useful to examine how lying by and around spies has been figured over the decades. The class will explore the cinematic and cultural circumstances that have given rise to the many types of spies who have populated the screen in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Through this exploration, you'll develop a more sophisticated critical lens that will help you to discuss films more knowledgeably.

Texts

Each week there will be two or three articles to be read before class, as well as chapter(s) from the textbook. The articles are available directly from the course website, which is located on the ISUComm Courses server:

<http://courses.isucomm.iastate.edu/3295>

(it's third in the category of Literature courses). If you have used that site before, you may enroll in the course website with your previous username and password. If you've never used this course website before, click the 'Create a new account' button, sign up for an account with your preferred username, password and email address, and use the same enrollment key. When prompted, enter the enrollment key:

spies

There is no textbook for this course. Students will read a variety of articles about the films, each available from the course website.

Films

- *The 39 Steps* (1935)
- *Casablanca* (1942)
- *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956)
- *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962)
- *Goldfinger* (1964)
- *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965)
- *The Conversation* (1974)
- *Three Days of the Condor* (1975)
- *The Fourth Protocol* (1987)
- *The Hunt for Red October* (1990)
- *La Femme Nikita* (1990)
- *The Bourne Identity* (2002)
- *The Recruit* (2003)
- *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* (2005)
- *Argo* (2012)

Evaluation

There will be five “writing opportunities,” which will represent the bulk of the grade for the course. Three will be three short papers, which will each be approximately 3 pages, double-spaced. Two will be exams, a midterm and a final. Both the midterm and final exams will have objective questions from the assigned readings and essays about the readings and films. We will provide further specification about each of these assignments via the course website, in advance of the exam dates. There will also be a ‘class participation’ grade based upon speaking in class and posting to the course discussion forum, worth 8% of the total grade for the term.

Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Also, please make sure a Disability Resources staff member sends one of us an SAAR form verifying your disability and specifying the accommodation you will need. The DR office is located on the main floor of the Students Services Building, Room 1076, ph. 294-6624. We look forward to working with you and will try our best to accommodate your needs.

Academic Honesty

The work you turn in for this class must be your own. If you use others' work without crediting them, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment, and most likely for the course. While you certainly can ask for feedback from others, you should not allow anyone to write any part of your assignment for you. For further information, consult the ISU Student Handbook's discussion of academic dishonesty.