

## **English 335—Studies in Film: Romantic Comedies**

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office hours: before or after class, or by appointment

### **Overview**

English 335 is an upper-division English class as well as an introductory film studies class. Taking it thus imposes a responsibility for exploring the literary 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 Summer 2017 section of this class will be to investigate the construction of romantic comedies, particularly (but not exclusively) in Hollywood cinema. As students will read during the semester, romance 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 both American culture and love have been figured over the decades. The class will survey a variety of films and explore the cinematic and cultural circumstances that have given rise to the many types of relationships which 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**

There will be no textbook for this section of the course. Each week there will be 2-3 articles to be read before class. The articles are available directly from the course website, which is located on the ISUComm Courses server. You can reach it at:

<https://courses.isucomm.iastate.edu/course/view.php?id=744>

You may enroll in the course website with your NetID username and password. Find the course listed as:

English 335: Studies in Film (Section A, G. Sauer, SS17)

Then, when prompted, enter the enrollment key:

romcom

## **Films**

- *It Happened One Night* (1934)
- *Bringing Up Baby* (1938)
- *The Palm Beach Story* (1942)
- *Adam's Rib* (1949)
- *The Apartment* (1960)
- *Harold and Maude* (1971)
- *Annie Hall* (1977)
- *Roxanne* (1987)
- *Pretty Woman* (1990)
- *You've Got Mail* (1998)
- *High Fidelity* (2000)
- *Love Actually* (2003)
- *Bride and Prejudice* (2004)
- *Enchanted* (2007)
- *Knocked Up* (2007)
- *Safety Not Guaranteed* (2012)

## **Evaluation**

There will be class discussion, discussion forum posts to the course website, and five longer writing opportunities which represent the bulk of the grade for the course. Three will be short papers, which will each be three pages, double-spaced. Two will be exams, a midterm and a final. Both the midterm and final exams will have short essay questions from the assigned readings and essays about the readings and films. I will provide further specification about each of these assignments via the course website, in advance of the exam dates.

## **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. I 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.

## **Attendance and Participation**

The attendance policy for this class is simple—I expect you to attend class. Because of the idiosyncratic summer schedule, you may miss only 1 class and still pass this course. If you miss 2 or more classes without providing an adequate excuse to your instructor, you will fail the course. In any case, you are responsible for information presented in classes you miss.

## **Cell Phone and Computer Use Guidelines**

Many of you might be planning to use a cell phone or computer in this class for note-taking, IMDB-checking, or PDF reading. These electronic devices can be distracting to some students, however, and the light from the screens interferes with film viewing. Please help to make the class environment conducive to viewing and learning by following these guidelines:

- **Silence your cell phone and put it away during class.** Even if you are able to work effectively while consulting or taking notes on your phone, the people around you may not be able to focus on their work or on class discussion if distracted by your phone.
- **Close your computer during film viewing and use it only during the discussion portion of class.** Computers will be used for class-related purposes only and not for Web surfing, Facebooking, tweeting or other social activities. These practices can also be distracting to those around you and are more obvious than you might realize.