TU | TIFFIN UNIVERSITY / **ONLINE**

FLM630 Cult and Independent Film
(3 credit hours)
Course Syllabus

Course Description

This course is a study of independent film and the phenomenon known as "cult film." Independent films and cult films are discrete categories, but the majority of cult films are independent films, therefore insights into their modes of production, marketing and distribution can shed light on their status. From the definition (or designation) of "cult" to the unusual yet vital role in society this non-genre fills, the cult film does not easily fit into traditional critical rhetoric. Instead, being a marginalized area of film, studying cult film and the audiences of this phenomenon can deconstruct mainstream film entertainment and analysis. The independent film portion of the course will focus on independent films that arose beginning in the 1980s "Miramax era" and their reception by audiences and influences on the Hollywood system. Independent films not considered cult will also be viewed. PLEASE NOTE: Due to the nature of many of the most famous and popular cult films, the majority of screenings are for mature audiences only and contain material that may be considered offensive.

Course Learning Outcomes

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

1. Understand the appeal of certain films and why they achieve cult status.

2. Identify the difference between cult and independent film and why they fall into those categories.

3. Explain the studio and distribution system and the role of independent filmmakers.

4. Understand and apply the major areas of criticism to film.

5. Explain the relationship between independent films and the resultant changes in the film industry.

Required Textbook(s) and Resources

Mathijs, E., & Sexton, J. (Eds.). (2020). The Routledge companion to cult cinema. Routledge

A digital copy of your textbook is included with your DragonACCESS fees for this course. Use the DragonACCESS tool in Moodle to view your book.

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Feature Length Films

You will be required to screen films periodically in this course. You will have a range of films to choose from, but it is your responsibility to make sure you can screen them during the week they are required. A quick search online can often locate some of the films streaming for free on sites such as YouTube or Vimeo, and many are available via streaming services such as Amazon Prime and Netflix. Some students have opted to purchase or rent their films, which is entirely up to you.

Be sure to also review the weekly Explore sections for additional library or web resources. For access to databases, research help, and writing tips, visit the Tiffin University Library. You might consider registering for one of the library's many webinars on library research, source evaluation, copyright, and other topics, at the Library Events - Upcoming Events web page. For further assistance email a librarian, at: library@tiffin.edu.

Time Commitment

Effective time management is possibly the single most critical element to your academic success. To do well in this online class you should plan your time wisely to maximize your learning through the completion of readings, discussions, and assignments. Because of our accelerated, seven-week term, TU online courses are designed with the expectation that you dedicate a little over **six (6)** hours per credit hour to course activities and preparation **each week**. For example, for successful completion of a three-credit, seven-week online course you should reserve roughly **twenty (20) hours per week**.

To help plan your time and keep on track toward successful course completion, note the distinctive rhythm of assignment due dates:

1. All times assume Eastern Time (GMT-4).

2. Weeks begin at 12:00 a.m. ET on Monday and end at 11:55 p.m. ET on Sunday.

3. Unless otherwise noted, initial assignments or discussion posts are due by **11:55 p.m. ET** on **Wednesdays.**

4. Additional assignments or follow-up discussion posts are due by **11:55 p.m. ET** on **Saturdays, and**

5. Major assignments and reflections are typically due by **11:55 p.m. ET** on **Sundays.**

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Learning Activities

This course has been designed as a *Position Post* course type.

This means that on **Wednesday** of each week, you will submit a "position post" to the forum in response to a given prompt. Although there is no specific minimum word requirement, your Position Post should:

- Be substantive enough to fully explore the question posed, while being well constructed and free of "filler" language and wordiness,
- Use, and properly cite, outside sources that support your position,

Saturday assignments for this class will usually be a film screening, and they will generally serve to deepen your understanding and build **connections** with the week's learning topics. Examples of possible Saturday activities include:

By **Sunday** of each week, you will be writing a **reflection** that reflects on your learning. This kind of writing often asks you to think about your own thinking (metacognition) and will include a prompt to which you must respond. It is **not** writing about your feelings. Reflection is often the best way we learn something, so do your best to analyze your own thought processes.

Grading

The chart below identifies the individual contributions from each type of activity, per week.

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Total
Forums Activity 1.1 (n/a) Activity 1.2 (50) Activity 1.3 (50)	**Forums** Activity 2.1 (50) Activity 2.2 (50)	**Forums** Activity 3.1 (50) Activity 3.2 (50)	**Forums** Activity 4.1 (50) Activity 4.2 (50)	**Forums** Activity 5.1 (50) Activity 5.2 (50)	**Forums** Activity 6.1 (20)	**Forums** Activity 7.1 (50) Activity 7.2 (50)	**620**
Assignments Activity 1.4 (30)	**Assignments** Activity 2.3 (30)	**Assignments** Activity 3.3 (30)	**Assignments** Activity 4.3 (30)	**Assignments** Activity 5.3 (30)	**Assignments** Activity 6.2 (200)	**Assignments** Activity 7.3 (30)	**380**
130	**130**	**130**	**130**	**130**	**220**	**130**	**1000**

Grading Scale

A: 90-100%

B: 80-89%

C: 70-79%

F: <70%

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Course Schedule and Weekly Checklist

Start Here

☐ MON: Activity 1.1: Meet Your Peers - Introductory Post

Week 1 – Cult & Indie Film Intro

☐ WED: Activity 1.1: Meet Your Peers – Secondary Post
☐ WED: Activity 1.2: Position Paper – Cult vs Indie Films
☐ SAT: Activity 1.3: Screening – Cult & Indie Film Classification
☐ SUN: Activity 1.4: Reflection

Week 2 – Transgression

☐ WED: Activity 2.1: Position Paper – Transgression
☐ SAT: Activity 2.2: Screening – Transgression
☐ SUN: Activity 2.3: Reflection

Week 3 – Sci Fi, Horror & Comedy

☐ WED: Activity 3.1: Position Paper – Sci Fi, Horror & Comedy
☐ SAT: Activity 3.2: Screening – Analysis of Genre
☐ SUN: Activity 3.3: Reflection

Week 4 – Auteurs

☐ WED: Activity 4.1: Position Paper – Auteurs
☐ SAT: Activity 4.2: Screening – Auteurs
☐ SUN: Activity 4.3: Reflection

Week 5 – Marketing & Transcultural Films

☐ WED: Activity 5.1: Position Paper – Cultural Influences
☐ SAT: Activity 5.2: Screening – Transcultural Cult Films
☐ SUN: Activity 5.3: Reflection

Week 6 – Presentations

☐ WED: Activity 6.1: Peer Review
☐ SAT: Activity 6.1: Peer Review
☐ SUN: Activity 6.2: Presentation Final Draft

Week 7 – Looking Forward

☐ WED: Activity 7.1: Position Paper – Future of Cult Films
☐ SAT: Activity 7.2: Position Post – Joss Whedon

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☐ SUN: Activity 7.3: Reflection

Tips for Success

Online learning requires self-discipline and self-direction. As seekers of the truth, we should be willing to challenge one another's academic work in a spirit of respectful comradery. Your course is a place for you to grow as you benefit from the expertise, experience, and diverse perspectives of your instructor and peers. Constructive feedback will challenge you to stretch your own thinking, thereby expanding your knowledge and understanding.

To get the most out of your learning experience, you should actively engage (participate) in **ALL** course activities. Course elements are arranged chronologically. To complete a week, simply work your way "down the page" through all of the course materials and activities.

Your Instructor Will Expect You to:

- Thoroughly review orientation materials (Start Here) within the first 48 hours of the term.

- Monitor your TU email account **daily** for important updates and announcements.

- Take ownership of your learning experience and act in a proactive, self-directed manner. That means:

  o Fully participate in all learning activities.

  o Complete assignments as described in rubrics or other instructions.

  o Submit all work on time and in the specified format (e.g. APA format for citations).

  o Utilize and incorporate instructor provided feedback to improve your work.

  o Ask questions so you can better understand course material or assignments.

  o Use the highest standards of intellectual honesty and integrity. For more information, see the TU Library guide: Digital Literacy: Netiquette and Internet Safety.

  o Treat others respectfully and demonstrate "netiquette" (online politeness and respectfulness) at all times. TU celebrates cultural uniqueness and expects all students to be considerate and thoughtful throughout their learning experiences.

You Should Expect Your Instructors to:

- Post an introductory announcement/email at the beginning of each week to provide updates and help you prepare for the week's activities.

- Maintain an active and engaged presence in all course activities and throughout the course.

- Respond to your emailed questions within 48 hours, if not sooner.

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- Clearly communicate any absences or expected non-participation due to extenuating circumstances. For example, "I will be traveling to attend a funeral this week and may not be able to respond to questions or participate in forums for a couple of days."
- When grading your work:
  - clearly indicate their grading approach (what they like to see in submitted work as well as what types of errors they tend to penalize more harshly),
  - thoroughly review and evaluate your submissions in a timely manner (in less than 5 days for most assignments), and
  - provide constructive feedback that indicates the strengths and weaknesses of your work and provides suggestions on how you can improve your performance on future assignments.
- Advocate for your success as a learner and help guide you toward successful completion of the course activities and most importantly, attainment of the course learning outcomes.

Accommodations (Disability Services)

The Office of Disability Services supports the institutional commitment to diversity by providing educational opportunities for qualified individuals with disabilities through accessible programs and services in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. If you need reasonable accommodations due to a documented disability, contact the Office for Equity, Access, & Opportunity via email at disabilityservices@tiffin.edu or by calling 419-448-3021.

Technical Support

For Moodle support, either email moodlesupport@tiffin.edu or call the 24/7 Technical Support Call Center at 855-664-1200 (3430, Option 2, from on-campus). For non-Moodle support, contact the Tiffin University ITS helpdesk at the number above or submit a support ticket.

Veterans

The Veteran and Military Resource Center assist veterans, active Military, and spouses of current service members in utilizing their education benefits. VMRC provides information regarding benefit processes and procedures, as well as support in navigating the transition from military to academic life by facilitating connections with the appropriate support services on campus. More information can be found on the Veteran and Military Resource Center website, at http://www.tiffin.edu/va.

Comments or Concerns

TU's online programs are designed to be student *driven*: to empower you with a voice and stake in your learning. Our courses feature multiple and varied ways that you can share feedback, and we invite you to become an active voice and help drive our improvement efforts. In addition to providing in-course feedback, we encourage you to submit questions or comments directly to the online team at online@tiffin.edu.