

## ENGL 4109: Film as Literature

Language (Un)Bound:  
Representations of Language on Film  
Sect. 02W, CRN 81532,  
MW 3:30-4:45, PAF 102

Professor: Dr. Rebecca Harrison  
Office: TLC 2225  
Office Hours: W 9:30-10:30, 2:15-3:15,  
& by appt.  
Phone: 678-839-4868  
Email: rharriso@westga.edu



**Class Description:** The relationship between individuals, language, and culture is complex. Language is certainly a tool for communication, but it is also a mechanism used in conveying, maintaining, and resisting cultural borders. Canadian author Margaret Atwood once stated that “war is what happens when language fails.” Her words point to the profound and political tie between what we say and who we are, and the need to develop fluent and broad cross-cultural literacies. At its core, then, this class will explore representations of language and culture on film and in literary texts in a broad variety of contexts (literal and cultural). We will consider questions such as: what constitutes “valuable” language? How is language used to create and maintain social institutions and hierarchies? How do we use language to express difference and critique the status quo? Etc. Etc. In sum, we will investigate the ways in which film and literature make the variety of languages visible and ask what happens to language in moments of both crisis and translation/transformation—the contact with alien races, the questioning of faith, the boundaries of science, constructs of gender and identity, the extinction of species, peoples, and languages, and the search for alternative forms of utterance among those whom our society and culture has left speechless.

### Required Films:

- 🇺🇸 *Arrival* (Directed by Denis Villeneuve).
- 🇺🇸 *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Directed by Benh Zeitlin).
- 🇺🇸 *Eating Alabama* (Directed by Andrew Beck Grace).
- 🇺🇸 *Food, Inc.* (Directed by Robert Kenner).
- 🇺🇸 *I Origins* (Directed by Mike Cahill).
- 🇺🇸 *The Cove* (Directed by Louie Psihoyos).
- 🇺🇸 *The Piano* (Directed by Jane Campion).
- 🇺🇸 Student selected film (tbd).

**Film Access:** Most of these films are available on common streaming services (such as Hulu, Amazon Prime, and Netflix), many of which have student rates. Of course, you can also purchase new or gently used DVD copies through a variety of on-line venues (like Amazon). How you choose to access them is up to you, but having access to these texts is a course requirement. FYI—Some films are available in the English Department library (2<sup>nd</sup> floor of TLC, see Jonette Larrew), the Ingram library, and/or the Georgia Public Library system. However,

remember the number of copies housed in each of these entities is limited; so, you want to be cautious about relying on these avenues as your primary access to the films.

**Other Required Texts and Materials:** In addition to being able to access the required films, each student will need

- ✚ M.T. Anderson's *Feed*. (This novel is available at the bookstore for purchase.)
- ✚ a course packet of materials, which I will distribute electronically. Students are expected to bring hard copies to class.
- ✚ a bound notebook (spiral or journal style) for your reading journal if you are handwriting, and a folder or plastic sleeve if you are typing it.
- ✚ an organized system for taking class notes.
- ✚ a two pocket folder for turning in and keeping up with graded work.

**Course Learning Outcomes:** Students will learn to

1. Analyze films as texts in discussion and in written work;
2. Examine how film employs the aesthetic and cultural techniques of other literary forms;
3. Describe film's distinctive characteristics;
4. Evaluate the ways in which social, political, economic, and historical influences affect the production and consumption of film texts;
5. Investigate film as literature and film's multiple contexts using thesis-driven analytical prose.

**Assignments & Grade Distribution:** In-class presentations, group work, and other activities will complement class discussions on a regular basis. As the semester progresses, I will discuss and/or distribute specific guidelines for each written assignment. Please Note: You must complete *all* assignment to pass this course.

- ✚ (15%) Participation. (Learning Outcomes 1, 2 & 3.)
- ✚ (15%) Reading journal & other homework as assigned. (Learning Outcomes 1, 2, & 3.)
- ✚ (10%) Book Club Review.
- ✚ (30%) Theme Analysis Essay I and II: 15% each. (Learning Outcomes 1, 4, & 5.)
- ✚ (30%) (Re)Presenting Language Film Festival. A scaffolded, creative research project. (Learning Outcomes 3, 4, & 5.)

**Grading Scale:**

A+ = 98	B+ = 88	C+ = 78	D+ = 68	F = 50
A = 95	B = 85	C = 75	D = 65	
A- = 92	B- = 82	C- = 72	D- = 62	

*FYI—The English program mission statement and outcomes are available at <https://www.westga.edu/academics/coah/english/english-program-assessment.php>.*

## Reading Schedule

This schedule provides a tentative layout of in-class and out-of-class activities and assignments. As it is based on the estimated progress of our class, some modification (including additions, postponements, or deletions) will be necessary as we move through the semester. In the event West Georgia closes due to inclement weather, you should continue your out-of-class assignments according to this schedule and check your email regularly for class updates.

Class Date	Assignments	Due Dates & Notes.
W 8/14	<b>Class Overview.</b> Thinking through and ahead to our work as an inquiry class.	
M 8/19	<b>Language Extinction.</b> Read “A World of Many (Fewer) Voices” by K. David Harrison (e-copy) before class. We will discuss it in concert with our in-class screening of segments of <i>The Linguists</i> .	
W 8/21	Continued in-class screening & discussion of <i>The Linguists</i> .	<b>Due:</b> Your reading journal checks start today. Bring them to class daily.
M 8/26	<b>Contact &amp; Translation.</b> Discussion of <i>Arrival</i> . Prescreen film before class.	
W 8/28	Discussion of <i>Arrival</i> (continued).	
M 9/2	<b>Labor Day; No Class.</b>	
W 9/4	<b>Language, Place, and Identity.</b> Read “A Vermont Writer from the Dominican Republic” and “A White Woman of Color” by Julia Alvarez (e-copy) before class.	
M 9/9	<b>Discourses of Truth and Proof: The Coexistence of Science and Faith.</b> Discussion of <i>I Origins</i> . Prescreen film before class.	
W 9/11	Discussion of <i>I Origins</i> (continued).	
M 9/16	<b>Art and the Act of Speech.</b> Discussion of <i>The Piano</i> . Prescreen film before class.	
W 9/18	Discussion of <i>The Piano</i> (continued).	

M 9/23	Discussion of <i>The Piano</i> (conclusion). Make sure you have finished the movie on your own as we will only be viewing key scenes today. Remember, copies are now available on library reserve.	
W 9/25	Critical Perspectives on <i>The Piano</i> Read the criticism packet (e-copy) before class.	<b>Due:</b> Essay One & Journal Check One.
M 9/30	<b>Language Climate and Climate Extinction</b> Discussion of <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> . Prescreen film before class.	
W 10/2	Discussion of <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> (continued).	
	<i>FYI—UWG's fall break is 10/3 and 10/4.</i>	
M 10/7	Critical Perspectives on <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> . Read the criticism packet (e-copy) before class.	
W 10/9	Full Class Conference on Term Project Assignment. FYI—Your reading for today's class will be the actual assignment sheets.	FYI—Last day to withdraw with a grade of W from Full Term (non-eCore) 16 week courses.
M 10/14	<b>Foodways: Is It Really Just A Matter of Taste?</b> Discussion of <i>Food, Inc.</i> Prescreen film before class.	
W 10/16	Discussion of <i>Eating Alabama</i> . Prescreen film before class.	
M 10/21	No Class; Work On Your Papers.	
W 10/23	Term project in-class workshop; assignments tbd.	<b>Due:</b> Essay Two.
R 10/24	<i>Department of English Undergraduate Conference</i> <i>(Extra Credit Opportunity Provided.)</i>	
M 10/28	<b>Is Resistance Futile? Technology, Language, and Real/Imagined Impacts.</b> Read <i>Feed</i> by M.T. Anderson, pages 1-40.	
W 10/30	<i>Feed</i> continued, pages 41-123.	
M 11/4	<i>Feed</i> continued, pages 124-203.	
W 11/6	<i>Feed</i> continued, pages 204-276.	
M 11/11	<i>Feed</i> continued, pages 277-End.	<b>Due:</b> Journal Check Two.
W 11/13	Project Conferences; No Class. <i>FYI—Appointments for today arranged via SignUp Genius.</i>	

M 11/18	Project Conferences with Dr. Harrison; No Class.	.
W 11/20	In-class film project workshop; bring your materials to class.	<b>Due: VLOG Book Review is Due by 5:00 this Friday (11/22).</b>
M 11/25	No Class; Thanksgiving Break.	
W 11/27	No Class; Thanksgiving Break.	
M 12/2	In-class film project workshop; bring your materials to class.	
W 12/4	(Re)Presenting Language Film Festival (session I). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Hicks, Mcmillon, Peck, Davis</li> <li>• Team Lavender, Padierna, Camp</li> </ul>	<b>Due:</b> Your final project is due the day of your scheduled presentation: either 12/4 or 12/11.
W 12/11	(Re)Presenting Language Film Festival (session II). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Gentry, Smith, Boone, Patrick</li> <li>• Team Young, Wright, Hanniford, Bush</li> <li>• Team Benitez, Harris, Markle, Rivers</li> </ul> <p>FYI—We will meet during the full final exam block 2:00 to 4:00. Attendance is required.</p>	<b>Due:</b> Optional Revisions. See specific requirements on page 6 of this document.
	<i>Reading schedule updated on 11/21/2019.</i>	

### Course Policies

**Attendance:** Attendance and punctuality are mandatory and key to your success in this course. Arrive to class on time having completed any reading/writing assignments and be prepared to participate in class discussions and group work. As this class meets twice per week, a student is allowed **three (3) absences** over the course of the semester. Upon the fourth absence, the student **will no longer be able to pass the class**. Be aware that no distinction exists between excused and unexcused absences. In addition, should a student choose to withdraw, she/he will receive a “W,” if the withdrawal date falls before the midpoint. If the withdrawal date falls after the midpoint, the student will receive a “WF.” Please note that tardiness counts against your two allotted absences at a rate of 0.25 per day late. In other words, if you are late to class four times, it will count as one missed class period. Tardiness may also negatively affect your class participation grade and may result in missed in-class work that cannot be made up. FYI—Official decisions about campus closings and/or examination cancellations due to severe weather or emergency will be made by the university President and posted on the UWG homepage.

**Breaks:** There are none. Our class meets for only seventy-five minutes. As such, I expect that you go to the restroom, get tissues, and grab coffee *before* class starts. If you have emergency situations that may require you to leave and return during my class, you must make prior arrangement with me.

**Paper Format:** All work for this class must be typed, use Times New Roman 12 point font, be double-spaced, use standard 1 inch margins, and conform to standard MLA guidelines as outlined in the *MLA Handbook* (8<sup>th</sup> edition). Papers must be submitted in a clearly labeled two pocket folder.

**Make-Up Work, Late Work, & Recycled Papers:**

- In-class work cannot be made up and may count as zeros in the daily grade component.
- If you miss a class, it is up to you to check with a classmate in a timely fashion concerning missed notes and any homework assignments due the next period.
- All formal assignments are due at the start of class on the date specified in the course schedule. If you must miss a class on a date when an assignment is due, you need to make prior arrangements with me to submit your work on time.
- Late assignments are subject to a *five point deduction* for *each day* submitted after the due date, including weekend days.
- Recycled work (i.e. turning in material written for other professors) is not permissible in this class and will result in a non-passing grade on the assignment.

**Plagiarism:** The Department of English and Philosophy defines plagiarism as taking personal credit for the words and ideas of others as they are presented in electronic, print, and verbal sources. The use of another individual's words, phrases, or ideas without proper citation will result in the following at my discretion (no questions):

- a zero on the assignment.
- possible failure of this course.
- an official academic dishonesty report filed with UWG, which could lead to suspension from the university.

In short, as members of the UWG community, I expect you to fully abide by the university honor code, which can be found at <http://www.westga.edu/handbook/59.php>

**Optional Revision Policy:** You may revise either of the first two essays for resubmission. If the revised assignment receives a higher grade, it will be used in your final grade calculation in place of the original. The revision *must be meaningful* and submitted *along with the original, graded assignment* in order to be considered. Revised papers are due no later than the start of the final exam period; however, you may turn them in at any point before that date as well.

**Conferences:** Each student is required to attend at least one conference with me during the course of the semester about the film festival project. Having that said, my office door is always open to you. Please come by during the hours noted on this syllabus whenever you have questions concerning class discussions, need advice or help with reading/writing assignments, etc. If you cannot attend my scheduled office hours, email me for an appointment.

**Controversial Content:** Some of our texts contain offensive language, violence, nudity, and a host of adult themes. It is my expectation that you approach and discuss the content of each piece in class with intellectual maturity and professionalism. FYI—There are no text substitutions; all films are required.

**Class Decorum:** Throughout the semester, we will examine controversial topics, materials, and our critical reactions to them. Everyone in this class has both the right and the responsibility to express his or her critical reads of the texts in class discussions and to treat one another's ideas respectfully and seriously, even if – or especially if – you disagree. Consequently, ill-spirited discussions, unmerited comments, and intolerance are not permitted in the classroom. Also, please raise your hand when you would like to have the floor. This format facilitates structured discussion and equal participation.

**Disruptive Behavior:** Students may be dismissed from any class meeting at which they exhibit behavior that disrupts the learning environment of others. Such behavior includes—but is not limited to—arriving late for class, sleeping (or the appearance of it) in class, allowing cell phones to ring, text-messaging, frequently leaving class, and speaking disrespectfully to the instructor and/or to other students. Each dismissal of this kind will count as an absence and will be applied toward the attendance requirements policy above.

**Email:** In accordance with university policy, all email correspondence must take place through the UWG email system. I will email the class often; therefore, please be sure that your default address is set for your westga account in the Banner student system and that you check it regularly. Also, please keep in mind that email is professional correspondence; thus, remember to properly address your audience, use the same standards of writing that you would in any paper you write, and sign your email. FYI—While I normally respond to student emails within 48 hours during the work week, please note that I do not regularly answer emails sent after noon on Friday until Monday morning.

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center (TLC 1201) is a valuable student resource and, while, consultants will not proofread, they will question, respond to, offer choices, and encourage revision in student essays. This is a free university service for you to take advantage of as often as you need. To schedule an appointment call the center at 678-839-6513. See <http://www.westga.edu/~writing/> for more information.

**Student Support:** The UWG community cares deeply about student welfare and is committed to providing a variety of support mechanisms for those who need additional academic support or who are experiencing distressing situations. The following resources may be helpful if you have specific needs that arise:

- Center for Academic Success—<http://www.westga.edu/cas/>
- Counseling Center—<https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/index.php>
- UWG Cares—<http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/>

**Special Accommodations:** Students in the UWG community have a right to equal access to classes and materials, regardless of special needs, whether temporary or permanent. Students with needs on file with Accessibility Services will be accommodated in this class per West Georgia regulations. Please send me your packet and meet with me immediately for arrangements. Accessibility services may be reached at (770) 839-6428 or see <https://www.westga.edu/accessibility/>

*Students should review the full common syllabus policies for UWG at*

<https://www.westga.edu/UWGSyllabusPolicies/>

***Information about the regulations governing campus carry at UWG can be found at***

<https://www.westga.edu/police/campus-carry.php>