ACM 485 Seminar in Creative Media: American Outlaws

Fall 2016 – Fridays 9:30-12:20  Arch 101A  Office: HI 314
Prof. (Tom) Brislin, Ph.D.  Hours: By Appt.
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<www2.hawaii.edu/~tbrislin>

This course has a Contemporary Ethical Issues (E) Focus designation. Contemporary ethical issues are fully integrated into the main course material and will constitute at least 30% of the content. At least 8 hours of class time will be spent discussing ethical issues. Through the use of lectures, discussions and assignments, students will develop basic competency in recognizing and analyzing ethical issues; responsibly deliberating on ethical issues; and making ethically determined judgments.

TEXT: There is no text to purchase. Readings will be assigned from several books and articles and posted on the course Laulima site. Films screened in class and on your own will also be treated as “texts” subject to class and individual analysis. You will be responsible for individual screenings via Sinclair Library, Netflix, Hulu, etc. streaming, video rental or purchase (Amazon, iTunes), etc. Assigned Readings, and resources you should consult for your essays and Group Presentation will come from such books as:

- **Gangster Film Reader**, by Alain Silver and James Ursini (Limelight Editions: 2007)
- **The Western Reader** by Gregg Rickman and Jim Kitses (Limelight Editions: 2004)
- **From Shane to Kill Bill: Rethinking the Western** by Patrick McGee (Wiley-Blackwell: 2006)
- **Down and Dirty Pictures: Miramax, Sundance, and the Rise of Independent Film** by Peter Biskind (Simon and Schuster: 2013).
- **Classic Questions and Contemporary Film** (2nd ed.) by Dean Kowalski (McGraw-Hill: 2015)
- **The Moral Premise: Harnessing Virtue and Vice for Box Office Success** by Stanley Williams (Michael Wiese: 2006).
- **Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures** by Noel Carroll and Jinhee Choi (Blackwell: 2006).
- **Media Ethics Magazine.**
- **The Journal of Mass Media Ethics.**

INTRODUCTION: Aloha. This seminar will examine films portraying both outlaws and outliers in American society, from Westerns, Film Noirs, Gangster Films and Ethnic Films. To traditional genre and auteur theories, we will add Ethical Theory as an avenue of analysis, focusing on how films featuring anti-hero protagonists address and illustrate enduring ethical questions, such as good vs. evil, truth vs. loyalty, self vs. community, social responsibility, contracts, consequences and justice. We will also explore how these films, mostly set in earlier historic periods, actually comment on contemporary ethical issues, and how representation in film of minority, marginalized, and outlier groups has itself become a contemporary ethical issue. We will learn some basic ethical theories, how they can guide our deliberation and principle-based decision-making, not only in the analysis of existing films, but also in the creation of our own films and the characters that will inhabit them – the “moral premise” of a rich and textured character-driven narrative. Our learning will be measured by active participation in class and online discussions and exercises, individual written essays and film analyses, and a group presentations and analysis of a selected film. You will find the seminar experience more involving than a traditional lecture/discussion class, and carries more responsibility on the part of each student to contribute to the group learning. The first part of the course is more “front-loaded,” with the instructor providing the basic tools, vocabulary, and structure. The second part shifts to the students, who will lead the class presentations and discussions.
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: The Academy for Creative Media embraces Student Learning Outcomes in the areas of Critical Thinking, Writing, History & Aesthetics, Professional Skills & Creativity, and Ethics & Responsibility. At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Constructively critique their own and other's intellectual and creative work.
2. Write a critical piece that applies theoretical principles.
3. Conduct and communicate original research findings.
4. Understand and articulate the role and rights of a responsible artist.
5. Articulate the underlying ethical theories and guiding principles that apply to film narratives.
6. Identify and analyze contemporary ethical issues.
7. Apply ethical standards to professional situations.

READ THIS TWICE: Attendance and Participation are required.

Critical Note: ONLY ONE unexcused absence is allowed. With a second unexcused absence and/or a pattern of late arrivals, points are deducted from the final score that can reduce your grade by an entire level. Obviously one can’t participate if one is excessively absent, or regularly late for class, so that portion of the grade will fall as well. The rule is: "Below Average" performance in attendance and on-time arrival will result in a "Below Average" Grade.

Writing: Three film analysis essays will be required. A key element of critical studies and of ethical deliberation and decision-making is the ability to publicly articulate our reasoning. Writing helps. A lot. A group-produced outline of a film and points of analysis for class discussion will also be turned in as part of the group project assignment. (See page 4 describing Writing Assignments and note their due dates in the weekly schedule.)

Online Discussion: In addition to in-class discussions, we will be conducting weekly online discussions via Laulima <https://laulima.hawaii.edu>. I’ll send out some supplementary thoughts after each class, including some discussion questions or calls for reactions. You will be expected to post at least one comment or reaction in each of the discussion topics on the course Laulima site. This way we can continue thinking about what we’re learning outside of the classroom. The Participation portion of your final score will reflect the level of your participation in both class and online discussions. No discussions, no points.

Course Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Film Analysis Essays (3 x 20)</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation – In Class and Online Discussions</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Film Presentation &amp; Analysis</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Possible</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
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A: 186-200 Points  B: 166-185 Points  C: 140-165 Points  D: 120-139  F: Below 120

Website Resources: A special web page has been created with numerous resources to help you understand the underlying philosophical principles of this course, to help you find ideas and reference materials for commentaries, and to connect you with online sources for film, journalism and professional communications. You'll find it at: www2.hawaii.edu/~tbrislin/ethics

The "Open Door Policy:" In addition to office hours, I will be happy to meet with you individually to discuss readings, commentaries, other assignments, or any class matter. Feel free to call me at my office direct line, 956-3788, or e-mail me at tbrislin@hawaii.edu.
**Course Calendar:** (Subject to revision to accommodate current events and extended discussions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics/Textbook Readings/Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/26</td>
<td>Introduction. Ways of Looking at Film: Genre Theory; Auteur Theory; Ethical Theory; The essential Moral Premise of story and character. Readings: Auteur Theory, Genre Theory, Ethics on Film. Screening: <em>The Great Train Robbery</em> (1903. dir: Edwin S Porter). Early Outlaws</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>GROUP I Presentation: Film &amp; Discussion</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10/28</td>
<td>OPEN</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>11/4</td>
<td>GROUP II Presentation: Film &amp; Discussion</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>11/11</td>
<td>HOLIDAY (Veterans’ Day)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11/18</td>
<td>GROUP III Presentation: Film &amp; Discussion</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>11/25</td>
<td>HOLIDAY (Thanksgiving Break)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>12/2</td>
<td>GROUP IV Presentation: Film &amp; Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>12/12</td>
<td>Final Exam (Noon – 2 pm as Scheduled in University Calendar)</td>
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ACM 485 – Writing Assignments/Group Presentations

**Format:** 12pt Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins all around. Papers with excessive errors in spelling, grammar & usage will be returned ungraded. **NOTE:** No assignments by email or attachments. You can upload to your dropbox on the course Laulima site, bring a hard copy to class, or deliver it to my office in Hawai‘i Hall 314 by 3 pm on date due.

**Essays/Film Analyses.** 20 points each.

NOTE: Don’t spend a lot of time recounting the plots of the films. They are familiar stories. Focus instead on the analytical points suggested below. Don’t think of these as film reviews. Think of them as an opportunity to apply what you have learned so far to analyzing the thematic and ethical issues presented in the films, and to analyzing how ethical principles and tests would either justify or indict the actions of the characters. (Sinclair Wong A/V Library DVD call numbers follow titles where available.)

#1. Min. length 3 pages. Due Week 3 (September 9).
Watch one of the following films and compare it to *Bonnie and Clyde*.
- *The Getaway* (1972. dir. Sam Peckinpah. DVD 1415)
- *Badlands* (1973. dir. Terrence Malick. DVD 0529)
How are the stories, characters, dilemmas, and resolutions similar and different? How are good and evil portrayed? What do these films say about friendship, loyalty, responsibility, and the individual vs. authority? Why do we identify with, or care about, or root for bad people doing bad things?

#2. Min. length 4 pages. Due Week 5 (September 23).
Watch one of the following films and compare it in theme to *The Wild Bunch*:
- *Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* (1972. dir: Philip Kaufman DVD 12671)
As above, how are the stories, characters, dilemmas, and resolutions similar and different? How are good and evil portrayed? What do these films say about friendship, loyalty, responsibility, and selfishness vs. altruism? Add to this the new things we’ve learned: What insights do we get when we apply the “Ethical Triumvirate” of Virtue, Duty, and Consequences to the behavior of the characters? How do they fare when we apply the “Three Tests” of Universality, Reversibility, and Transparency as justification for the actions the main characters take?

#3. Min. length 4 pages Due Week 7 (October 7)
Watch one of the following films and compare it in theme to *Goodfellas*. Use the same guidelines as above.
- *Donnie Brasco* (1997. dir: Mike Newell VIDEOTAPE 15607)

**Other Writing**
- Brief Reactions posted to Laulima on class screenings and discussions, and on Group Presentations.
- Annotated Outline for Group Presentation: References; Film Synopsis; Main Discussion Points.

**Group Film Presentation & Discussion**
Working in small groups, you will present two films to the class, using representative clips to spark a class discussion on course themes. Each group will schedule at least one meeting with me to discuss formats and structures. Presentation schedule in Course Calendar.

- **Group I:** Peckinpah’s West: *Ride The High Country* (1962) and *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid* (1973)
- **Group III:** Mamet & Mann’s Cerebral Criminals: *Heist* (2001) and *Heat* (1995)
- **Group IV:** Outliers: Justin Lin’s *Better Luck Tomorrow* (2002) and Barbara Kopple’s *Havoc* (2005)
What Does a Grade Mean in Creative Media?

ACM instructors never “give” grades. Students earn grades, according to standards set in each course. ACM grades are “additive,” not “subtractive.” That means each student earns and accumulates points or credits throughout the semester that add up to the final grade.

ACM curriculum is “incremental.” Each assignment or lesson is a foundation for the next one, just as each introductory course is a foundation for the intermediate courses, which are in turn foundations for the advanced courses. In that respect, students should expect to receive a final grade based on the consistency of their performance throughout the semester. One shouldn’t expect to miss assignments, deadlines, or otherwise underperform in the first part of the semester and attempt to overcome it in a flurry of activity at the end.

Students should also keep in mind that we are graded not on what we already know, but on what we learn. Even the most accomplished filmmaker or scholar can’t expect an A or B without a consistent and continual growth and improvement in knowledge, skills, and critical thinking.

Here are how grades in ACM are defined:

**C**
The grade of C signifies the level of performance or accomplishment expected of a university student in the state’s premier and nationally ranked institution of higher learning. A grade of C recognizes that the student met the expectations of the course: regular attendance, completion of all assignments, tests and exams, meeting all deadlines, and participation in all class activities. A grade of C rewards the academic behavior and performance expected of a UHM student. The student earning a C has grasped the basic concepts of the course and can apply them with adequate skill to assignments and/or projects. The student is able to accept feedback in the direction and correction of her/his work and incorporate it in her/his learning to demonstrate improvement. In courses involving group projects, the student offered solid and adequate support and contributions to the group’s outcome. A course where the common grade is C carries no negative reflection on either the students or the instructor. It is not a penalty grade – it is the norm. A grade of C (NOT C-) in a pre-requisite course is required to continue in the higher-level course(s).

**B**
The grade of B signifies an increased level of effort AND performance by the student. The student earning a B has not only met expectations of student performance (attendance, assignments, etc.), but has exceeded many in significant, measurable ways. The student has consistently improved throughout the semester as demonstrated by increased quality and quantity of work reflected in assignments, projects, tests, exams, participation, etc. The student’s work requires some direction and correction, but she/he can then exercise independence in taking it to higher levels and improved outcomes. In courses requiring group projects, the student was able to assume full responsibility, often assuming multiple roles and duties, to making significant contributions to the group’s success. There is no “B for effort” alone. It is not a reward for simply “trying hard.” The grade of B is NOT “the new C.”

**A**
The grade of A signifies the highest level of performance and accomplishment, exceeding ALL expected course outcomes. The student earning an A has taken responsibility for her/his learning, independently accumulating knowledge and improving skills beyond the classroom. The A student’s work requires minimal direction and correction and results in outcomes that can serve as a model of student achievement for the course. In courses requiring group projects, the student has exercised leadership, often assisting others in realizing their full potential to contribute to the group’s success.

**D**
The student has performed below the expectations of the course. Many factors can contribute to this minimal passing grade including poor attendance, poor performance in assignments, projects, tests and exams, lack of participation and cooperation with others. Any behavior that interferes with the learning of others, including frequent lateness, class disruptions, and lack of contributions to group projects, can result in a grade of D regardless of other levels of individual performance. Any incident of academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, can result in an automatic D or F.

**F**
The student has not completed a sufficient level of quantity or quality of work to earn a passing grade. The student earning an F has not met a significant number of course expectations.

**+/-** Individual instructors may utilize the plus and minus system to further define or elaborate on these standards.
### CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL ISSUES RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Not Meeting-1</th>
<th>Approaching-2</th>
<th>Meeting-3</th>
<th>Exceeding-4</th>
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</table>
| Identifies ethical issue(s)           | - Does not identify the ethical issue(s) or realizes something is not “right” but does not clearly identify the professional and/or contemporary ethical issues at play  
- Sees issues mostly in “black and white” terms | - Identifies some of the professional and/or contemporary ethical issues or identifies what is legal/illegal or acceptable/unacceptable  
- Recognizes relevant ethical ambiguities/dilemmas but does not clearly describe them | - Identifies/names the inherent ethical choices and implications involved in the professional and/or contemporary situation  
- Clearly describes relevant ethical ambiguities/dilemmas | - Clearly identifies the inherent ethical choices and implications involved in a professional and/or contemporary situation  
- Understands the effects of perspective, context, personal views, codes and laws (if applicable)  
- Specifies the decision-makers and stakeholders  
- Integrates clear descriptions of relevant ethical ambiguities/dilemmas into the overall analysis |
| Deliberates responsibly using ethical tools, processes, and/or frameworks | - Unclear about the frameworks, principles, and/or code of ethics to be applied  
- Fails to acknowledge multiple viewpoints or embraces contradictory viewpoints  
- May discuss ethical issues but unclear on own position and/or the effects of different perspectives | - Describes the frameworks, principles, and/or code of ethics that can be applied  
- Comfortable discussing ethical issues from own point of view, but may have difficulty seeing different points of view | - Draws upon frameworks, principles, and/or code of ethics to develop pertinent arguments and/or positions  
- Debates and/or discusses ethical issues with sensitivity to others’ points of view and different perspectives | - Draws upon frameworks, principles, and/or code of ethics to develop pertinent arguments and/or positions  
- Develops and presents alternate arguments/positions  
- Discusses and/or debates ethical issues with sensitivity to others’ perspectives and the context while also defending own position with logic and fact |
| Forms sound ethical judgments         | - Does not specify a resolution or judgment or decision | - Makes a judgment/decision but may not take into account multiple perspectives  
- Partial or flawed use of a systematic decision-making process | - Makes a judgment that considers and is sensitive to multiple perspectives  
- Evidence of a logical, systematic decision-making process | - Makes a reasoned judgment that takes into account an array of arguments and perspectives  
- Evidence of a logical, systematic decision-making process |
| Uses professional code of ethics (IF APPLICABLE) | - Does not correctly reference sections of the professional code of ethics | - Cites applicable sections, but may not correctly use in decision-making process | - Correctly cites applicable sections of the professional code and explains how they guide forming a judgment | - Correctly cites applicable sections of the professional code and explains their meaning and/or implications on forming a judgment |
ACM 485 - Understanding the Rules of the Course

(NOTE: Check each item. This form must be completed and signed to remain registered in the course)

☐ I understand that attending university involves making many choices. I understand that I am responsible for all the choices I make.

☐ I understand that attendance is mandatory for this course. If I choose not to attend a class, it will be recorded as an unexcused absence. There will be no possibility to make up a missed Assignment for an unexcused absence.

☐ I understand I am only allowed ONE unexcused absence. Beginning with the second unexcused absence, my grade will start to drop by an entire level (for example: from A to B, or B to C, or C to D or D to F).

☐ I understand that in order for an absence to be excused, it must be caused by circumstances beyond my choice and control and that I must provide documentation of those circumstances (for example: a doctor’s note; a summons for jury duty; student athlete travel). I will endeavor to inform the instructor before a class I’m unable to attend whenever possible. I understand that a test missed because of an excused absence must be made up before the next scheduled class.

☐ I understand the instructor will make the final determination of whether the absence is excused, and that there are no automatically excused absences.

☐ I understand that it is essential that I arrive promptly for class so that I have ample time to prepare myself for learning so that I do not disrupt others and their learning in the class.

☐ I understand that if I arrive too late to sign in on the day’s attendance roster, I must explain my lateness to the instructor at the end of that class period in order to be counted present.

☐ I understand that repeated late arrivals (two or more) will also start my grade to drop by an entire level.

☐ I understand that participation is an important part of this course – both in class and in online discussions. If I choose not to participate, I will not earn those points toward my final score.

☐ I understand that I am responsible for the assigned readings in the syllabus and will be expected to have completed those readings before the class for which they are assigned.

☐ I understand that if I have chosen not to complete the assigned readings, I will not be able to engage in serious and thoughtful class discussions, so will put at risk the participation points that make up my final score. I also understand that by not contributing meaningfully to class discussions, I am shortchanging the opportunities for learning by my classmates.

☐ I understand that this course requires me to work in small groups, and that those groups rely on my participation to be successful. If I choose not to contribute to group efforts, I will not be able to earn the group project points that make up my final score. I also understand that not contributing to the group shortchanges the learning opportunities for others.

☐ I understand that the deadlines for turning in assignments are absolute and that there are no extensions.

☐ I understand that all writing for this course is to be my original work. Any use of ideas or writings or materials that have originated with others will be credited to them. I understand the penalties for plagiarism (claiming the ideas or work of others as your own), or for “dry-labbing” (making up sources, data, or results that do not exist) or for cheating, will result in failure for the course.

________________________________________  ______________ @hawaii.edu
PRINT your Name                                             Signature                        Date

Student ID Number ______________________  PRINT your E-Mail address