Film 399/English 399/Pop Culture 399  
Film Festival Experience: Sundance  
Winter Term 2019

Course Description
This hybrid course is an intense submersive experience of film through the Sundance Film Festival. The course will introduce students to the study and practice of film festivals, including the analysis of independent films and the understanding of independent production and distribution. Students will engage with the films and filmmakers at Sundance firsthand through a series of screenings, panels, course lectures, and class assignments. **This course is approved as a Gender and Women’s Studies elective and as an Honors course. Film Majors are eligible to receive credit for World Cinema (FILM 369).**

Student Learning Outcomes

**Sundance**
- Students will understand the history and importance of the Sundance Film Festival for independent cinema.
- Students will be able to define and articulate the economics of film and the important of Sundance as a marketplace for independent cinema.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast multiple approaches to independent cinema.
- Students will engage and converse first hand with film makers, critics, and fans of independent film.

**The American Film Festival**
- Students will be able to recognize and define the distinguishing characteristics of films in the American film festival tradition.
- Students will be able to identify alternate film language (i.e. narration, lighting, camera angles, and acting) which characterize independent films.
- Students will be able to describe the history of American Independent cinema including influential films and filmmakers in the genre.
- Student will articulate the role of independent film in political and social change.

Course Assignments
This will be a hybrid (online/f2f) course. Please follow the assignment schedule as indicated on the syllabus. The onsite activities in Park City are an extension of the materials covered in the online portion of the class.

Primary Texts
*Indie: An American Film Culture* by Michael Z. Newman - Chapters: Introduction, 1, 2, 3, 5

Supplemental Readings: (in PDF format)
Sherry Ortner *Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of the American Dream* Chapter 1 “Making Independence” (everyone) ; Chapter 6 “Film Feminism”
“Just another Girl Outside the neo-indie” by Christina Lane
Pre-Course Screening Suggestions

Winter’s Bone
Meek’s Cutoff
Bubble
Easy Rider
The Blair Witch Project
Pulp Fiction
Walking and Talking
Passion Fish
Welcome to the Dollhouse
Fruitvale Station (2013 Dramatic Award Winner)
Whiplash (2014 Dramatic Award Winner)
Me and Earl and the Dying Girl (2015 Dramatic Award Winner)
Birth of a Nation (2016 Dramatic Award Winner)

**Anything on the list of winners of the Sundance Grand Jury Prize or Audience Award**

This list is on Blackboard under the Additional Readings Tab

Documentary Sundance Grand Jury Winners

How to Die in Oregon – 2011
The House I Live In – 2012
Blood Brother – 2013
Rich Hill – 2014
The Wolfpack – 2015
Weiner - 2016

Short Sundance Grand Jury Winners

Brick Novax Pt 1 and 2 - 2011
The Whistle – 2013
Of God and Dogs - 2014
World of Tomorrow - 2015
Thunder Road - 2016

Attendance

Attendance (in all forms—virtual or f2f) at all scheduled class activities is required.

Course Point Breakdown

50% Pre-Sundance Journals (includes readings/home screenings)
20% Midterm (multiple choice/short-answer questions on pre-Sundance material)
30% Sundance Discussion Board Posts (six out of the ten required festival screenings)

Pre-Sundance Journals (online) 50%

Students should upload their pre-Sundance journals by TBA noon.

Journal entries will include material from readings, questions related to pre-Sundance screenings, and application of course content. Journal entries consist of a minimum of 250 words and should contain:

- A thesis statement
- A detailed explication
- An application of course content from assigned readings
- An illustration or example
Midterm Exam  20%  Due before arrival in Park City (opens online TBA)
The exam will include multiple choice questions and short-answer questions over assigned readings and home screenings.

Screenings @ Sundance
Students will be required to screen a minimum of ten films and visit the New Frontier installation. Students should select the films from the festival catalog. Students may also screen films from the Slamdance film festival. We encourage students to screen films as a group as much as possible. Students should see one film from at least seven of the following festival categories:

World Cinema Documentary Competition
World Cinema Dramatic Competition
U.S. Documentary Competition
U.S. Dramatic Competition
Spotlight
Premieres
Documentary Premieres
Shorts
Next
Park City at Midnight
Slam Dance
New Frontier (required)

Post to Discussion Board on BB onsite
Sundance Film Critiques (ONSITE)   30%
Students should select four of the ten films they screen and complete the following analysis:

- Film Title & Director
- Date and Time Film was screened
- Short description of film plot.
- Personal Reaction to the film. What did you like or dislike about the film? Why?
- Application of course concepts. Select one concept we have read about in our pre-Sundance assignments and apply it to the film.
- Market Assessment. Who would pay to see this film? Why?

Additionally, students will upload an analysis of their New Frontiers experience with the following guidelines:

- Experience Title & Creator
- Date and Time of the experience
- Short description of the experience
- Personal Reaction to the experience. What did you like or dislike about the experience. Why? How did the experience expand the definition of film or the filmic experience?
- Do you think the creator achieved their goal?

The analyses should be at least 250 words and will be posted to a discussion board on Blackboard. The analyses should be concise but provide enough detail to reflect an effective critical perspective.
All onsite critiques and the New Frontier analysis are due no later than Sat. January 29th at 3 PM CST, but should be posted onsite as you see the films. Finally, students will post a minimum of ONE entry to the course blog while at Sundance, describing your experiences in Park City. This blog will be public, and will be a significant way to publicize this program, the film major, and WKU as a whole.

**Tentative Schedule** *(dates off site portion my change)*

This schedule, especially the onsite portion, is subject to change as we discover all of the opportunities and challenges available to us at Sundance.

**Pre-Sundance Off Site Portion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2</td>
<td>Contact your spring instructors to inform them that you will miss class from Wednesday afternoon, January 23-Wednesday January 30. Drs. Hall and Hovet will provide a template email. Ask them NOT to drop you for Nonattendance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Jan 2-4    | **Reading**: Ortner, Chap. 1 (pdf); Newman Chapter 1  
**Viewing**: Daughters of the Dust (Dash, 1991) – ON BLACKBOARD  
sex, lies, and videotape (Soderbergh, 1989)  
see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q52yy8APHLU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q52yy8APHLU)  
**Optional/Extra**: Smith, et. al “Exploring Barriers/Women Filmmakers”  
Journal #1 Due |
| Jan 5-7    | **Reading**: Lane (pdf); Newman Intro (1-18)  
**Viewing**: Wendy and Lucy (Reichardt, 2008)  
High Art (Cholodenko, 1998)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-Y8ykbh_S8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-Y8ykbh_S8)  
**Optional/Extra**: Ortner, Chap. 6 “Film Feminism” (pdf)  
Journal #2 Due |
| Jan 8-10   | **Reading**: Newman, Chap. 2  
**Viewing**: Rich Hill  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBmjVajAQA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBmjVajAQA)  
Journal #3 Due |
Jan 10-12  **Reading:** Newman, chapter 3: pages 87-99, 106-116, 137  
**Viewing:** *Advantageous* (Phang, 2015)  
Streaming on both Netflix and Amazon  
**Optional/Extra:** Remaining sections of Newman, Chap. 3  
Total Pages = 20  

**Journal #4 Due**

Jan 13-15  **Reading:** Newman, Chap. 5  
**Viewing:** *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Gondry, 2004)  
Total Pages = 35  

**Journal #5 Due**

Jan 16  **Midterm Exam opens on Blackboard at 3PM CST**  
SEND REMINDER EMAIL TO SPRING INSTRUCTORS

Jan 16  All **Pre-Sundance Journals due on Blackboard by 12 noon CST**  50%

Jan. 17  **Midterm Exam Open until Jan. 17th at Midnight CST**  20%

**Sundance Onsite Portion**

Jan. 23 (Wed.)  Travel to Park City (see flight agenda on Blackboard)

Jan. 24 (Thurs)  Pick Up Pass/Tickets – Tour Park City and Learn Bus System  
Soft Opening Film Screenings (evening)

Jan. 25 (Fri.)  Film Screenings, Panels, and Workshops

Jan. 26 (Sat.)  Film Screenings, Panels, and Workshops

Jan. 27 (Sun.)  Film Screenings, Panels, and Workshops

Jan. 28 (Mon.)  Film Screenings, Panels, and Workshops

Jan. 29 (Tues.)  Film Screenings/Class Dinner (optional)

Jan. 30 (Wed)  Check out/Fly Home (see flight agenda)

Jan 31-Feb 1 (Thurs-Fri)  GET TO YOUR SPRING CLASSES

Feb 2 (Sat)  **DUE:** Sundance Film Critiques (onsite)   30%  
Post any remaining critiques to Discussion Board by Feb 2  3PM CST