

FILM AUTEURS: TODD HAYNES

FILM 2295G

Western University—Film Studies Winter 2018

Screening: Tuesdays 1:30-4:30pm (AHB-3B02)

Lecture/Discussion: Thursdays 1:30-3:30pm (AHB-3B04)

Dr. Joseph Wlodarz

Office: IGAB-0N60

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30-1pm;

Thursdays 3:30-5pm and by appt.

Email: jwlowarz@uwo.ca

Phone: 661-2111 x86164

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Since its inception, cinema has been produced, marketed, and experienced in relation to significant—if often loosely defined—notions of authorship. The magical films of Melies bore a specific authorial trademark just as D.W. Griffith left a permanent imprint on the history of American narrative cinema. And yet during the classical Hollywood era, the vision and input of film directors was typically overshadowed by high profile stars, producers, and studio moguls. It was only in the late 1950s—with the emergence of the auteur theory in France—that the film director would be restored to a position of prominence in the creative hierarchy of cinema. Although subject to thorough critical debate (and revision) over the years, the auteur theory continues to shape our understanding of cinema as an aesthetic, commercial, and cultural form.

Focusing on Todd Haynes, a major figure in early '90s New Queer Cinema and independent American film more generally, this course will explore key debates in the history of the auteur theory. Haynes is a revealing writer/director because of his interest in putting the aesthetic, political, and theoretical parameters of queer cinema in dialogue with the broader history of cinema and popular culture. Although Haynes's status as a gay filmmaker with a discernable thematic and aesthetic approach has fostered auteurist readings of his work, his films also interrogate classical notions of authorship, typically through postmodern strategies of pastiche, parody, and allegory. We will thus examine Haynes's films in relation to auteurist influences (Sirk, Genet, Fassbinder, etc.), generic modes (melodrama, musicals, film noir), and queer history and politics. Finally, while emphasizing formal analysis, cultural studies, and economic/industry-based analysis, the course will also examine the influence of key theoretical trends in film studies (structuralism, feminist film theory, queer theory, etc.) on conceptions of film authorship.

Course Objectives: This course provides an introduction to critical debates on authorship and the film auteur through a survey of the diverse cinematic work of Todd Haynes. Given the range of theoretical and aesthetic influences on Haynes, the course will also explore issues of genre, industry, narrative, and film form in relation to queer history and politics as well as independent film movements more generally.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course, you will have a thorough grasp of the major debates surrounding the auteur theory in film studies. You will also have a developed sense of the formal, thematic, ideological, and economic/industrial aspects of the films of Todd Haynes as well as many of his aesthetic influences/precursors. In

addition to helping you develop your skills of close film analysis and critical thinking, the course will enable you to apply this knowledge of cinema and authorship to a broader range of figures in film and media history.

COURSE TEXTS

Required:

1. Rob White, *Todd Haynes* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013)
2. C. Paul Sellors, *Film Authorship: Auteurs and Other Myths* (London: Wallflower Press, 2010)
2. Online Coursepack [OWL]. All other readings for the course will be available on the course OWL page under Resources (see schedule below).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Class Attendance and Participation (10%)
- Group Presentation & Discussion Leading (15%)
- Two In-Class Exams (15% each)
- Haynes/Auteur Theory Paper (1500 words) (20%)
- Final Research Paper (2000 words) (25%)

Attendance and Participation: You are required to attend all class meetings and screenings for the full duration. Attendance will be taken regularly. Be sure to come to class fully prepared, having read all of the weekly reading assignments, and with your course readings and textbook in hand. Thoughtful participation is highly encouraged and will improve your final participation grade. Lateness, early departures, not having the appropriate readings, texting, or other disruptive behavior will adversely affect your participation grade. More than **THREE unexcused** absences will result in a zero for your final participation grade. Only documented medical emergencies—verified through the Dean's office (see below)—will be considered for paper extensions or exam rescheduling. ***If you are absent for TEN or more classes (excused or unexcused) you will automatically fail the overall course.***

Laptops, Tablets, Cell Phones: Laptops/tablets/cell phones are **not** to be used during screenings. You will need to take notes using paper and pens, so be sure to bring these materials to class. Exceptions *may* be granted in the case of students with special needs, but this will only come with official approval from the Dean's office. Laptops/tablets will be permitted during lecture, but only on a probationary basis: if the instructor is distracted two times during the semester by non-note-taking/internet laptop use, the instructor will ban ALL use of laptops/tablets for the remainder of the term. In addition, be sure to turn off cell phones and refrain from text messaging during class. This counts as disruptive behavior and will lower your final participation grade.

Discussion Leading: Working with at least one of your fellow classmates, you will lead discussion once during the term. I will provide a list of guidelines and tips, but each discussion leader will be responsible for introducing a film/cultural text that influenced the Todd Haynes film screened that week as well as engaging your fellow students in a discussion about the film and course readings for that week. You will need to coordinate

with your group members in order to prepare and organize the discussion questions/material, and in most cases I will assess the group as a whole based on the overall quality of the discussion leading.

Exams: There will be two in-class exams during the course (Feb. 15 & March 22). Exams will typically feature an identification section (key concepts/terms/theories) and short answer/essay questions. Exams will cover material from screenings, readings, lectures, and in-class discussion. Exams will begin promptly at 1:30 pm on exam days, so be sure to arrive on time.

Paper Assignments: There will be two major writing assignments for the course. The midterm paper will require you to analyze key issues in authorship in relation to one or more Todd Haynes films. The final research paper assignment will be more open, but it will still require additional research on theories of authorship as well as a developed analysis of the films and/or director of your choice.

*****While daily late penalties apply (see below), papers that are over ONE week late will automatically receive a zero. Both paper assignments must also be submitted or you will automatically fail the overall course*****

Late Work: Course papers must be turned in complete and on time. In order to be fair to the entire class, I will not grant individual extensions on paper assignments, so be sure to budget your time accordingly. Late papers will be penalized 5% points per day late (including weekends), except in the case of *properly documented* medical emergencies or illnesses (see below).

Note on Screenings: You are required to attend weekly screenings on Tuesday afternoons (attendance will be taken). Be sure to arrive to the screenings on time and to follow traditional screening etiquette (turn off cell phones, laptops, no talking, etc.). If you are ill or have a legitimate excuse, you should set up an appointment to view the films in the Film Studies Resource Library [AHB-1G19] before Wednesday's lecture. [http://www.uwo.ca/arts/tech/video_resources_library.html] The library is open Monday-Thursday from 10am-3pm and Friday from 10am-2pm. Remember to contact Joanna Smith (jsmit459@uwo.ca) in advance to make a viewing appointment in the Resource Library if necessary. Keep in mind, however, that screening the film independently on a small monitor will hardly substitute for experiencing the film with an audience and projected on a large screen.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1—January 9-11—AUTHORSHIP & THE CELLULOID CLOSET

Screening: *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1955, 89 min.) & *The Celluloid Closet* (Rob Epstein & Jeffrey Friedman, 1995) [excerpt]

Reading: Sellors, *Film Authorship*, Ch-1
& Goldberg, *Melodrama*, pgs. 23-35; 44-55 [OWL]

WEEK 2—Jan. 16-18—REFRAMING the FIFTIES MELODRAMA

Screening: *Far From Heaven* (Todd Haynes, 2002, 108 min.)

Reading: Sellors, *Film Authorship*, Ch-2
& White, *Todd Haynes*, pgs. 74-92
& Goldberg, *Melodrama*, pgs. 36-44; 67-79 [OWL]

WEEK 3—Jan. 23-25—ILLNESS, IDENTITY, and the AIDS EPIDEMIC

Screening: *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* (Todd Haynes, 1987, 43 min.)
& *How to Survive a Plague* (David France, 2012, 109 min.)

Reading: White, *Todd Haynes*, pgs. 1-16
& Pearl, “AIDS & New Queer Cinema” [OWL]
& Hilderbrand, “Grainy Days and Mondays” [OWL]

WEEK 4—Jan. 30-Feb. 1—DEVIANT DESIRES/RADICAL SUBJECTS

Screening: *Un chant d’amour* (Jean Genet, 1950, 26 min.)
& *Poison* (Todd Haynes, 1991, 85 min.)

Reading: Sellors, *Film Authorship*, Ch-4
& White, *Todd Haynes*, pgs. 17-34
& Ishii-Gonzales, “To Appear, To Disappear” [OWL]
& Wyatt, “Cinematic/Sexual Transgression” [OWL]

WEEK 5—Feb. 6-8—SAFETY and SUBURBIA

Screening: *Safe* (Todd Haynes, 1995, 119 min.)

Reading: White, *Todd Haynes*, pgs. 40-56
& Doane, “Pathos and Pathology” [OWL]
& Potter, “Dangerous Spaces” [OWL]

WEEK 6—Feb. 13-15—QUEER YOUTH

Screening: *The Suicide* (Todd Haynes, 1978, 20 min.) &
& *Dottie Gets Spanked* (Todd Haynes, 1993, 30 min.)

Reading: White, *Todd Haynes*, pgs. 34-39; 131-148
& Hilderbrand, “Mediating Queer Boyhood” [OWL]

****EXAM #1 at the beginning of class on Thursday February 15****

WEEK 7—Feb. 20-22—READING WEEK

WEEK 8—Feb. 27-March 1—FANDOM & FANTASY

Screening: *Velvet Goldmine* (Todd Haynes, 1998, 127 min.)

Reading: Sellors, *Film Authorship*, Ch-3
& White, *Todd Haynes*, pgs. 57-74
& Bennett, “Flaming the Fans” [OWL]

****MIDTERM PAPER due at the beginning of class on Thurs. March 1****

WEEK 9—March 6-8—NOT THERE: Identity & Authorship

Screening: *I’m Not There* (Todd Haynes, 2007, 135 min.)

Reading: White, *Todd Haynes*, pgs. 92-106
& Dyer, “Believing in Fairies” [OWL]
& Wilkins, “I don’t know who I am...” [OWL]

WEEK 10—March 13-15—GENRE, ADAPTATION, and the WOMAN’S FILM

Screening: *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945, 111 min.)
& *Mildred Pierce*—Episode 1 (Todd Haynes, 2011, 60 min.)

****EPISODES 2 & 3 available on OWL and must be screened on your own****

Reading: White, *Todd Haynes*, 148-163
& Williams, “Feminist Film Theory” [OWL]
& Taubin, “Daughter Dearest” [OWL]

WEEK 11— March 20-22—MILDRED PIERCE and QUALITY TV

Screening: *Mildred Pierce*—Episodes 4 & 5 (Todd Haynes, 2011, 153 min.)

Reading: White, *Todd Haynes*, pgs. 106-130
& Hastie, “Sundays with Mildred” [OWL]
& Cook, “Beyond Adaptation” [OWL]

****EXAM #2 at the beginning of class on Thursday March 22****

WEEK 12—March 27-29—HOLLYWOOD and the COLD WAR FEMME

Screening: *The Children’s Hour* (William Wyler, 1961, 107 min.)

Reading: Corber, *Cold War Femme*, Introduction & Chapter 2 [OWL]

WEEK 13—April 3-5—TWILIGHT LOVERS and LESBIAN AUTHORSHIP

Screening: *Carol* (Todd Haynes, 2015, 118 min.)

Reading: Sellors, FA, Ch-5 & Conclusion
& Gilbey, “Todd Haynes,” [OWL]
& P. White, “Sketchy Lesbians” [OWL]

WEEK 14—April 10—NEW QUEER KIDS’ CINEMA?

Screening: *Wonderstruck* (Todd Haynes, 2017, 117 min.)

Reading: Dossier on *Wonderstruck* [OWL]

****FINAL RESEARCH PAPER due at the beginning of class on April 10****

POLICIES and REGULATIONS

This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically disabled, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor. For Film Studies regulations governing Term Work, Exams, Faculty Office Hours, Academic Relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please consult “Information for Students” on our website at www.uwo.ca/film

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Students must write their essays in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage, from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. In this course, citation of all material other than students' own ideas must be completed according to the guidelines established in *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th Edition*. For additional information on plagiarism see:

www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism Checking: All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). You should register immediately as a new user by going to <http://www.turnitin.com>. I will provide you with the Class ID # and password as soon as possible. Assignments not handed in to turnitin.com will receive a 0.

Prerequisites: Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to their Academic Counseling Office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. *Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Official accommodation is also required for ALL missed assignments (including quizzes).* Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

Please go to the following site for information on the university Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>)

For information on the examination services provided by the Student Development Centre, please visit www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd

Mental Health: Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

Disabilities: Please consult with me during the first three weeks of class regarding disabilities that might require special accommodations.

Complaints: If students have a complaint concerning a course in which they are enrolled, they must first discuss the matter with the instructor of the course. If students are still not satisfied, they should then take the complaint to the English Department chair. These regulations are in place because a failure to follow these procedures creates the potential for injustices of various kinds affecting either the instructor or the students themselves, or both parties. Concerns should not be allowed to fester but should be raised with the instructor in a timely manner, so that they can be addressed in time to make a difference to the course.

Office Hours: I will be available to answer questions, clarify concepts/assignments, and assist you with your coursework during my weekly office hours (posted above). If you have an occasional conflict, feel free to email me and we can set up an alternative time to meet. I will also be available via email M-F from 9-5 and will do my best to respond to your email within two days. ***Please note, however, that I may not respond to questions about the course that can be answered simply by reviewing the course syllabus.**

GRADING CRITERIA

A+ (90-100):

Argument: Clear development of a specific, challenging and original thesis. The writer has taken significant risks successfully; in the resulting piece, distinctive ideas and content have discovered their necessary distinctive form. Detailed reference to appropriate texts, with evidence of individual response. Ability not only to expound subject but to see it around—subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.

Presentation, structure: Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. Almost no typographical errors.

Language Skills: Sentence structure correct, with full range of sentence types (compound, complex, and compound-complex), with full range of punctuation (including semicolons, colons, dashes, parentheses). Graceful style, neither pompous nor breezy, and few errors.

Research/scholarship: Evidence of effective, extensive and independent research, with proper documentation of sources. Quotations used appropriately and purposively.

A (80 to 89):

Argument: The writer has taken risks and most of them succeed. Clear development of a specific and challenging thesis, with proper paragraphs. Detailed reference to appropriate texts, with evidence of individual response. Ability not only to expound subject but to see it around—subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.

Presentation, structure: Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. Almost no typographical errors.

Language Skills: Sentence structure correct, with full range of sentence types (compound, complex, and compound-complex), with full range of punctuation (including semicolons, colons, dashes, parentheses). Graceful style, neither pompous nor breezy, and few errors.

Research/scholarship: Evidence of effective and independent research, with proper documentation of sources. Quotations used appropriately and purposively.

B (70 to 79):

Argument: Clear development of a specific thesis, with proper paragraphs. Adequately detailed reference to texts. Ability to expound reasonably sophisticated ideas with clarity.

Presentation/structure: Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. A few typographical errors.

Language Skills: Sentence structure correct, with reasonable range of sentence types and full range of punctuation. Style not too wordy, with errors relatively few and minor.

Research Scholarship: Evidence of adequate research, with proper documentation of sources.

C (60 to 69):

Argument: Reasonably clear development of a thesis, with proper paragraphs. Basic ability to expound ideas, whose development might be rather thin. Effort to support points with references to the text. Tendency to replace analysis with descriptive retelling of plot.

Presentation/structure: Presentation showing lapses in tidiness and/or proofreading. Poor use of paragraphs.

Language Skills: Sentence structure correct, but perhaps overly simple, with tendency to avoid punctuation besides period and comma. Errors relatively few, but occasionally serious, with evident misunderstanding of some point of elementary grammar (comma splices, fragments, semicolon errors, subject-verb disagreements, poorly integrated quotations)

Research/Scholarship: reasonable effort at documentation, but rather thin.

D (50 to 59):

Argument: Difficulty with paragraphing or consecutive thought. Ideas inchoate but clouded by weak expression. Overgeneralization with inadequate support, or examples that run to lengthy paraphrase, with little or no analysis.

Presentation/Structure: Very poor to non-existent use of paragraphs. Inadequate and inaccurate documentation. Multiple typographical errors.

Language Skills: Errors of grammar or diction frequent enough to interfere with understanding.

Research/Scholarship: Little serious effort to research the topic.

F (49 and below):

Argument: Ideas too simple for level of course. Argument completely incoherent. Erroneous content showing little or no understanding of subject.

Presentation/Structure: Very sloppy proof-reading. Documentation virtually non-existent.

Language Skills: writing frequently ungrammatical.

Research/Scholarship: Non-existent. Content largely “borrowed” from sources with no individual distillation, but no apparent attempt to deceive. Failure to follow the course assignment and guidelines.

0 (Report to Department)

Plagiarism with intent to deceive.