

English 203
Film Into Literature
Valk
Spring 2002

Required Texts:

The Beard: Michael McClure

The Big Knife: Clifford Odets

Celebrities in Disgrace: Elizabeth Searle

Children of Light: Robert Stone

The Day of the Locust: Nathanael West

Ghost World: Daniel Clowes

A Night at the Movies: Or, You Must Remember This: Robert Coover

Play it as it Lays: Joan Didion

“Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”: Laura Mulvey (handout)

Description of the course:

Not especially interested in the issue of what happens when drama and works of fiction are adapted to the silver screen (they change), this course is more concerned with how film – both as a specific kind of narrative medium and as a vehicle for a whole set of cultural preoccupations and prejudices – has influenced works of literature. Accordingly, we’ll read some novels about the movies, some novels that “read” as if they were movies, and, yes, we’ll watch some movies...all this is an attempt to understand how and why the movies (especially the Hollywood movie) – commercial products the purpose of which is to turn a profit and effect of which is to perpetuate a culture in which such a product can turn a profit – are, if not the dominant form of the last 50 or so years, then, arguable, the dominant influence on the other arts.

Required Work:

Three critical essays (approx. 1000 words)

Periodic in-class writing assignments

Midterm Examination

Final Examination

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES:

- Jan 18 Introduction to the course
23 –
28 ...movies, variously considered e.g. Plato, Locke, Kafka, Lacan, Postman, Mulvey, Bloom, et al.
- Feb 1 –
8 The Day of the Locust
11 –
15 The Big Knife
18 –
*25 Play it As it Lays: Essay # Due
27 –
- Mar 8 Children of Light
*11 Midterm examination
13 –
15 Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema
25 –
*29 Movie! Essay #2 Due
- April 1 –
8Celebrities in Disgrace
10 –
15 The Beard
17 –
22 Movie!
24 –
*29 Ghost World: Essay #3 Due
- May 1 –
8 A Night at the Movies: Or, You Must Remember This