San José State University
College of Social Sciences, Department of Geography & Global Studies
CRN# 48389, GEOG124, Topics in Physical Geography, Fall, 2016

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Kerry Rohrmeier, Ph.D.
Office Location: Washington Square Hall 111-E
Telephone: (408) 924-5497, but email for prompt reply
Email: kerry.rohrmeier@sjsu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:00-6:00 pm and by appointment
Class Days/Time: Tuesdays 6:00-8:45 pm
Classroom: Washington Square Hall 109
Prerequisite: GEOG 1 or instructor consent

Course Format
This course is a traditional lecture style format. Each week a film will be shown and then discussed. Students still need to use Canvas to access readings and files, and to submit all assignments.

MYSJSU (Canvas Announcements)
Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on Canvas Learning Management System course login website at http://sjsu.instructure.com. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU at http://my.sjsu.edu (or other communication system as indicated by the instructor) to learn of any updates.

Course Description
Catalog: Interactions between humans and environment from a geographical perspective. (3-units)

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)
Special topics theme: Physical Geography in Film. In approaching cinema from a geographic perspective we examine place as a subject in its a natural form, or as an re/imagined construction of the human mind as employed through visual technologies and techniques. Selected feature films showcase each major film genre and are linked in their demand for the physical landscape.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

CLO1. Demonstrate understanding of, and ability to analyze and critique human and environment interactions.
• This is a key component of this course. All four writing assignments call upon students to analyze and critique human-environment interaction as it pertains to a film.

CLO2. Demonstrate ability to read and understand research literature and engage in productive research activities.
• Readings from several peer-reviewed academic journal articles have been assigned. Students will be answering critical thought questions about their content during weekly in-class discussions.

CLO3. Demonstrate professional communication skills.
• Students will improve their video technology and presentation skills by recording and uploading a 3-minute movie review. Graduate students are expected to do a second movie review video.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook
In an effort to keep student costs low no textbook is required. Supporting readings and web content listed on the course schedule are posted to the Canvas ‘Files’ for your convenience and/or linked to in this syllabus.

Students have a choice to read one of the two popular novels selected this term (both are available at low cost in print and e-book formats):
  OR

Course
SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on.

Assignments

1) Active Participation during all in-class discussions about assigned readings is mandatory and imperative for success in this course (CLO2). In the event of an absence then written responses to in-class discussion prompts are required for participation credit.

2) Mad Max: Fury Road and The Revenant are 2015 films about “wo/man versus man” conflict in settings where extreme physicality, in both character and location, is fundamental to the storyline. In the Human Conflict Essay discuss the concept of place identity as it applies to the film (CLO1). The human conflict essay must be a concise well written 2-typed pages (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1” margins on all sides using Chicago style citations) and include a total word count noted at the end of 500 words (± 10 words ok), but no more or less.

3) Two contemporary biopics shown during class portray “man versus nature” conflict but are filmed at different scales and result in antipode outcomes: 127 Hours and Into the Wild. In the Biopic Essay examine how shot scale can foster intimacy with a character or swallow a character up in his/her environment (CLO1). The biopic essay must be a concise, well written 2-typed pages (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1” margins on all sides using Chicago style citation format) and include a total word count noted at the end of 500 words (± 10 words ok), but no more or less.

4) Chinatown and Apocalypse Now consistently rank high on American Film Institute’s Greatest Films of All Times list. They share water resources for a story setting, but in very different ways. Compare and contrast
these films by demonstrating how you have thought critically about their narratives, acting, and filmmaking from a human-environment geography context (CLO1). Do they reflect culture, politics, economics, or social issues at the time of release? Keep in mind the historical contexts and cultural paradigms that were in place and discuss whether the film holds up today? The Greatest Films Critique must be a concise well written 3-typed pages (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1” margins on all sides using Chicago style citation format and include a total word count noted at the end of 750 words (± 10 words ok), but no more or less.

5) Each student will select movies from the instructor-approved list. After viewing a movie outside of class then create a 3-minute Movie Review Video in the spirit of Roeper at the Movies (www.richardroeper.com) or The New York Times Critics’ Picks (http://www.nytimes.com/video/movies-critics-picks) to be shared with your classmates (CLO3). For Graduate Students: department policy dictates that graduate students are expected to contribute more than undergraduate students when taking undergraduate courses. Therefore, each graduate student will prepare a 2nd 3-minute Movie Review Video.

Final Examination

The Final Exam Essay examines the power of film to translate literature into visual form (CLO1). Based on the suspense novel selected earlier in the term, either Jaws or The Shining, clearly argue whether, “the book was better,” or, “the film was better.” Then discuss how audience fears shifted environmental perception and to a degree, popular culture, at the time of its release [citing specific examples to support your argument].

Grading Information

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<td>2nd Movie Review Video (Graduate Students Only)</td>
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Extra Credit: World GIS Day #missingmaps map-a-thon

50

SCALE:

A+ = ≥98%  
A = 94-97%  
A- = 90-93%  
B+ = 87-89%  
B = 84-86%  
B- = 80-83%  
C+ = 77-79%  
C = 74-76%  
C- = 70-73%  
D+ = 67-69%  
D = 60-66%  
D- = 51-59%  
F = ≤50%

All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades. In keeping with this policy, and to making grading responsive. All assignments are due as stated on the Course Schedule and Canvas. Late work is not accepted. Please save all your work until after you have checked your final course grade. Then if you have questions about your final grade, you can bring in past work, and if necessary, corrections can be made.
Classroom Protocol

- Attendance is mandatory.
- On-time arrival is not only good practice it is polite.
- Technology and electronic devices will be confiscated when the instructor is speaking, a film is being shown, and/or guests are lecturing.
- Assigned readings must be completed prior to each screening in order to be prepared for discussions.
- Plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and will merit a 0 for the assignment.
- This course can cover controversial content so civility and courteousness is always expected. While we may not agree with other perspectives and opinions stated, respect is mandatory.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs’ Syllabus Information web page at http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/”
# 48389 / Topics in Physical Geography, Fall 2016, Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change with fair notice so please refer to Canvas often for announcements.

## Course Schedule

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<th>Week</th>
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<th>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</th>
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| 1    | 8/30  | SPORTS – 1st Day  
*The Endless Summer* (Bruce Brown, 1966; 95 min). A film that birthed surf-and-travel culture, and one which is ripe for social sciences criticism.  
Readings:  
| 2    | 9/6   | FILM NOIR & CRIME – Labor Day  
*Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974; 130 min). Considered by many to be one of the greatest films of all time it is a complex story of corruption in the development of the American Dream [specifically, by bringing water from the Owens Valley to southern California].  
Readings:  
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| 5    | 9/27 | **DRAMA**  
Into the Wild (Sean Penn, 2007; 148 min) Tragic biographical retelling of Chris McCandless’ postgraduate days traveling across North American wilderness.  
Readings:  
| 6    | 10/4 | **DRAMA**  
127 Hours (Danny Boyle, 2011; 94 min) Biographical retelling of mountaineer Aron Ralston’s time spent trapped in a slot canyon while hiking in Canyonlands National Park, Utah.  
Readings:  
• Bingham, Dennis. 2010. Whose lives are they anyway?: The biopic as contemporary film genre. Rutgers University Press: New Jersey. Introduction Only pages 1-28. [https://books.google.com/books?id=NW-v7-tlRZYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Whose%20lives%20are%20they%20anyway%3F%3A%20The%20biopic%20as%20contemporary%20film%20genre%20%3A%20Introduction&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwHf6WQlcXmYAhX4ZDIKHZSvCIkQ6AEIQDAA#v=onepage&q=Whose%20lives%20are%20they%20anyway%20%3A%20The%20biopic%20as%20contemporary%20film%20genre%20Introduction&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=NW-v7-tlRZYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Whose%20lives%20are%20they%20anyway%3F%3A%20The%20biopic%20as%20contemporary%20film%20genre%20%3A%20Introduction&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwHf6WQlcXmYAhX4ZDIKHZSvCIkQ6AEIQDAA#v=onepage&q=Whose%20lives%20are%20they%20anyway%20%3A%20The%20biopic%20as%20contemporary%20film%20genre%20Introduction&f=false)  
• Kennedy, Christina B. 1994. “The myth of heroism: Man and desert in Lawrence of Arabia” in Aitken/ Stuart and Leo Zonn, *Place, Power, Situation & Spectacle: A Geography of Film*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, London: Only pages 161-162. [https://books.google.com/books?id=kCiYSkjd0eUC&pg=PA161&lpg=PA161&dq=the%20myth%20of%20heroism%20lawrence%20of%20arabia&source=bl&ots=b6rwnDqoBO&sig=QafNH7MYIUVa7xF6V2ehIoIXZs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjUsseMyOLOAhVQymMKHXJYCQYQ6AEIODAE#v=onepage&q=the%20myth%20of%20heroism%20lawrence%20of%20arabia&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=kCiYSkjd0eUC&pg=PA161&lpg=PA161&dq=the%20myth%20of%20heroism%20lawrence%20of%20arabia&source=bl&ots=b6rwnDqoBO&sig=QafNH7MYIUVa7xF6V2ehIoIXZs&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjUsseMyOLOAhVQymMKHXJYCQYQ6AEIODAE#v=onepage&q=the%20myth%20of%20heroism%20lawrence%20of%20arabia&f=false) |
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<tr>
<td>10/10</td>
<td><strong>DUE: Biopic Essay (Submit on Canvas by 11:59pm)</strong></td>
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| 7     | 10/11 | **DRAMA**

*Cast Away* (Robert Zemeckis, 2000; 143 min). Escape American life and material comfort through isolation and survival on the uninhabited Pacific Island of Monuriki.

**Readings:**

| 8     | 10/18 | **HORROR**

*Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975; 124 min). A heroic journey pitting man versus monster, arguably symbolizing WWII.

**Readings:**

| 9     | 10/25 | **HORROR – Halloween**

*The Shining* (Stanley Kubric, 1980; 146 min) Examine masterful spatial disorientation and a seditious subtext about Native Americans persecution.

**Readings:**
- Ascher, Rodney (2013). *Room 237* is a documentary film deconstructing *The Shining*

[myth%20of%20heroism%20lawrence%20arabia&f=false](http://www.maverick.com.br/filmes/lawrence-of-arabia)
- Ralston, Aron. Video Footage from Canyon [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NerTo86BE9w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NerTo86BE9w)
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<td>10</td>
<td>11/1</td>
<td><strong>ACTION</strong>&lt;br&gt;Night at the Movies! Let’s enjoy a blockbuster in situ by watching <em>Deepwater Horizon</em> (Peter Berg, 2016; 107 min) at Camera Cinemas in downtown San Jose. Specific details forthcoming.&lt;br&gt;Readings: Refer to Canvas announcements for this week’s assigned readings.</td>
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<td>11/14</td>
<td><strong>DUE: Great Film Critique (Submit on Canvas by 11:59pm)</strong></td>
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<td>11/16</td>
<td><strong>Extra Credit:</strong> Participate in our department-wide World GIS Day #missingmaps map-a-thon on from 7:00-9:00 pm (to be held near campus; details forthcoming).</td>
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| 13   | 11/22 | **FANTASY**  
*Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Benh Zeitlin, 2012; 93 min). Made by a New Orleans based collective, its success proves money, names, and establishment aren’t key to making great film.  

Reading:
| 14   | 11/29 | **SCIENCE FICTION**  
*Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller, 2015; 120 min). The so-called feminist action flick in a franchise about an oil-obsessed post-nuclear dystopian future society in the Australian outback.  

Readings:
- Stasia, Cristina Lucia. 2004. “‘Wham! Bam! Thank you ma’am!’: The new public/private female action hero” in Gillis, Stacy, Gilliam Howie and Rebecca Munford. *Third wave feminism: A critical exploration*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. Chapter 14 (pages 175-184 Only). [http://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/3466696/Ecofeminism_as_Third_Wave_Feminism_Essentialism_Activism_and_the_Academy.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJ56TQJRTWSMTNPEA&Expires=1472346008&Signature=gIVdp2KXCGIDSlIAZ9mMJpnMIydY%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DEcofeminism_as_Third_Wave_Feminism_Essen.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/3466696/Ecofeminism_as_Third_Wave_Feminism_Essentialism_Activism_and_the_Academy.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJ56TQJRTWSMTNPEA&Expires=1472346008&Signature=gIVdp2KXCGIDSlIAZ9mMJpnMIydY%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DEcofeminism_as_Third_Wave_Feminism_Essen.pdf)  
<p>| 14   | 12/5  | <strong>DUE: Human Conflict Essay (Submit on Canvas by 11:59pm)</strong> |</p>
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| 15   | 12/6 | EXPERIMENTAL  
*Baraka* (Ron Frike, 1993; 96 min) A non-narrative cinematic kaleidoscope of Earth’s geography phenomena, and an inspiring way to end any course.  

**Readings:**  
  [http://cadair.aber.ac.uk/dspace/bitstream/handle/2160/6679/Imagining%20geographies%20of%20film.pdf?sequence=1](http://cadair.aber.ac.uk/dspace/bitstream/handle/2160/6679/Imagining%20geographies%20of%20film.pdf?sequence=1)  
  [https://books.google.com/books/about/Landscape_Allegory_in_Cinema.html?id=XRhdAQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books/about/Landscape_Allegory_in_Cinema.html?id=XRhdAQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button#v=onepage&q&f=false)  
- Roger Ebert Review  

**Final** | 12/20 | **DUE: Submit your final exam to Canvas essay by 7:30 pm.** The essay prompt has been provided above in Course Assignments. |
APPROVED MOVIE LIST

The Magnificent Seven (John Sturges, 1960)
Lawrence of Arabia (David Lean, 1962)
The Birds (Alfred Hitchcock, 1963)
Easy Rider (Dennis Hopper, 1969)
Local Hero (Bill Forsyth, 1980)
The Sheltering Sky (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1990)
A River Runs Through It (Robert Redford, 1992)
Last of the Mohicans (Michael Mann, 1992)
The River Wild (Curtis Hanson, 1994)
The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill but Came Down a Mountain (Christopher Monger, 1995)
Seven Years in Tibet (Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1997)
The China Syndrome (James Bridges, 1979)
The Bounty (Roger Donaldson, 1984)
Gorillas in the Mist (Michael Apted, 1988)
Dances with Wolves (Kevin Costner, 1990)
Thelma and Louise (Ridley Scott, 1991)
Alive (Frank Marshall, 1993)
Twister (James de Bont, 1996)
Dante's Peak (Roger Donaldson, 1997)
Titanic (James Cameron, 1997)
Volcano (Mick Jackson, 1997)
Hard Rain (Mikael Salomon, 1998)
Deep Impact (Mimi Leder, 1998)
The Beach (Danny Boyle, 2000)
The Perfect Storm (Wolfgang Peterson, 2000)
The Day After Tomorrow (Roland Emmerich, 2004)
Motorcycle Diaries (Walter Salles, 2004)
Open Water (Chris Kentis, 2003)
Touching the Void (Kevin Macdonald, 2004)
Duma (Carroll Ballard, 2005)
Encounters at the End of the World (Werner Herzog, 2007)
Trouble the Water (Tia Lessin and Carl Deal, 2008)
The Way Back (Peter Weir, 2011)
On the Road (Walter Salles, 2012)
The Impossible (Juan Antonio Bayona, 2012)
All is Lost (J.C. Chandor, 2013)
Tracks (John Curran, 2013)
Maidentrip (Jillian Schlesinger, 2014)
Wild (Jean-Marc Vallee, 2014)
Everest (Baltasar Kormakur, 2015)
San Andreas (Brad Peyton, 2015)
The Shallows (Jaume Collet-Serra, 2016)