San José State University
Communication Studies 145I:
Rhetorical and Cultural Criticism
(Special Topic: Communicating Legal Culture)
Section 01, Fall 2012
Area: Inquiry

Instructor: Hanns Hohmann
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Office hours: Tu 20:45-21:15, W 10:30-11:45, Th 16:15-17:30, & by appointment
Class days/time: Tu 18:00-20:45
Classroom: HGH 223
Prerequisites: Upper-Division Standing (Pre/Corequisite: COMM 101)

Catalog Description
Survey of leading theorists, critics and movements in the area of rhetoric and cultural studies. Examines interpretations of speech and discourse as an approach to understanding both real life issues and advanced work in communication studies.

Succeeding in this Four-Unit Course
At SJSU, students are expected to spend two hours outside of class for every one hour of class time. In this four unit class, you can expect to spend on average 12 hours per week during a regular semester in class and on scheduled tutorials or activities. Careful time management will help you keep up with readings and assignments and enable you to be successful in all of your courses.

Foundations, INQUIRY, Practice
Each course in the Department of Communication Studies primarily focuses on one of three areas: Foundations (theoretical underpinnings of the discipline), Inquiry (research in the discipline), or Practice (application of communication theories and concepts to real world contexts). COMM 145I is an Inquiry course. Although the course also addresses theory (foundations) and practice (application), the primary purpose of COMM 145I is to familiarize you with the application of rhetorical methods of inquiry in the study of films that contribute to the communicational constitution of legal culture by shaping narratives designed to convey to their audiences persuasive messages about the nature of law and the character of the legal profession.

Inquiry Area Learning Objectives
This course satisfies the INQUIRY area of Communication Studies learning objectives. All INQUIRY courses, including COMM 145I, share these learning objectives:
Students will be able to demonstrate proficiency in methods of communication inquiry.

- Research Methods: Demonstrate understanding of methods of communication research and analyses, such as rhetorical, critical, interpretive, performative, and social scientific approaches.
- Research Critique: Develop and apply analytical skills for understanding and evaluating communication research studies.
Course Goals

Within the INQUIRY area, COMM 145I is unique in providing students with an overview of the use of rhetorical methods in conducting inquiries into the use of film narratives designed to convey to their audiences persuasive messages about the nature of law and the character of the legal profession.

In addition, this course provides an opportunity to enrich the student experience in the understanding and use of research methods by an engagement unit giving students the opportunity to conduct an individualized research project, accompanied by face-to-face tutorials with the instructor, that enables them to link the learning goals of the course with their personal educational interests. This project will result in a research paper; the grade for this paper will contribute 30% to the course grade.

Course Learning Outcomes

Successfully completing this course will enable you to:

CLO1: Demonstrate your understanding of rhetorical methods of inquiry as they are applied to film narratives; the course will particularly help you to develop and apply rhetorical analytical skills for understanding and critiquing different forms of persuasive messages contained in narratives in general and in film narratives in particular.

CLO2: Enhance your cultural literacy by developing your ability to recognize and understand how narratives that are ostensibly merely entertainment vehicles are actually making significant contributions to the communicational constitution of legal culture, and what particular conceptions and images of the cultural roles of law and lawyers they convey.

CLO 3: Develop your capacity for cultural critique by helping you to appreciate how such film narratives convey persuasive messages designed to question or affirm the contributions of law and lawyers to our overall culture, and to critique these messages in view of alternative interpretations and evaluations provided by scholarly sources.

CLO4: Further deepen your understanding of rhetorical methods of inquiry and critique by giving you the opportunity, in an engagement unit, to conduct an individualized research project, accompanied by face-to-face tutorials with the instructor, and eventuating in a term paper that enables you to link the learning goals of the course with your own personal educational goals by carrying out a critical rhetorical analysis and evaluation of a law-related film narrative of your own choosing.

Required Reading/Viewing

Reading:

Course Reader (Available at San Jose Copy, 109 East Santa Clara St., San Jose, CA 95113, Telephone [408] 297-6698) (CR)

Readings available electronically (Through the SJSU King Library website)

Viewing:

We will view significant excerpts from the films we are discussing in class; it is also most strongly recommended that you view these films in their entirety, either by renting them for home viewing or by viewing them in the Instructional Resource Center.

You will also need to acquire a DVD copy of the film you will be analyzing in your individualized research project; you will submit this together with your paper, and it will be returned to you.

Library Research Help

You can obtain assistance for your library research at the Library Reference Service Desk on the second floor of the King Library. The telephone number is (408) 808-2100. There you can get immediate help with your questions about library resources (the library catalog, journal article databases, Link+, Interlibrary Loan, etc.).

Classroom Protocol

Students are expected to come to class on time, and prepared by a thorough study of the reading assignments, ready to engage in focused and attentive discussion of the written and visual material we will address. They are also expected to complete all work on time and to submit it in person to the instructor; emailed work will not be accepted; late work incurs a grade reduction of one letter grade per week; there will be no makeup work.

Dropping and Adding

You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, and similar topics found at www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct.
Assignments and Grading Policy

Reading and Viewing Quizzes (20% of Course Grade) (Meets CLO 1-2)

Midterm Examination (20% of Course Grade) (Meets CLO 1-3)

Final Examination (30% of Course Grade) (Meets CLO 1-3)

Individualized Research Paper (30% of Course Grade) (Meets CLO 1-4)

Detailed information about each assignment will be provided in handouts in class which will also be made available online [URL TBA].

University Policies and Student Learning Resources

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to be familiar with the University’s Academic Integrity Policy available at sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct. “Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University’s integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical development.”

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on quizzes or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. “If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.”

Campus Policy in Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the new Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. In addition, computers are available in the Martin Luther King Library. The COMM lab, located in Clark Hall 240, also has a few computers available for student use.

A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, screens and monitors.

Communication Center

The Communication Center is newly located in Hugh Gillis Hall 229. The Center provides support for all students interested in developing their personal and professional communication skills, and offers specialized support for those enrolled in Communication Studies courses. Services include in-person workshops and self-paced online modules via D2L. Upper-division Communication Studies students staff the Center and are trained in coaching students on a variety of topics related to our department courses. Enrollment in COMM 80 provides support for the Center. More information can be found through the department website http://www.sjsu.edu/comm/.

Learning Assistance Resource Center

The Learning Assistance Resource Center is designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. The center provides support services, such as skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. The Learning Assistance Resource Center is located in Room 600 in the Student Services Center.
SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center in Clark Hall 126 is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. The writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. More information available at sjsu.edu/writingcenter.

**COMM 145I, Rhetorical and Cultural Criticism**

*(Communicating Legal Culture: Lawyers and Law in Movies)*

**Course Schedule:**

*(Please note that this schedule is subject to change with fair notice)*

(Indented titles in *italics* refer to the films we will be discussing; readings marked CR are from the Course Reader; the other readings are available electronically through the SJSU King Library website; readings will be discussed on the date next to which they are listed, and therefore need to be completed by you before that class meeting)

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Discussion Topics/Assignments/Examinations/Tutorial Meetings</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(1/31)</td>
<td>I. Setting the Scene: Lawyers and Law in Film and Fiction</td>
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<td><em>Anatomy of a Murder</em></td>
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<td>(2/7)</td>
<td>Primal Fear</td>
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<td>R. Weisberg, The Literary Lawyer's Six Compelling Traits (CR)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>(2/14)</td>
<td><em>The Lincoln Lawyer</em></td>
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<td>W.C. Booth, Types of Narration (CR)</td>
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<td><strong>Engagement Unit Individualized Research Paper Assigned</strong> (Tuesday, 14 February)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>(2/21)</td>
<td>II. Women in the Law: Trials and Tribulations</td>
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<td><em>Class Action</em></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>(2/28)</td>
<td>Suspect</td>
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<td>C. Lucia, Women on Trial: The Female Lawyer in the Hollywood Courtroom (<em>Cineaste</em> Vol. 19, Nos. 2-3 [1992], pp. 32-37; available electronically through the database <em>Academic Search Premier</em>)</td>
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<td>Individual face-to-face <strong>tutorials with the instructor</strong> to discuss individualized research paper <strong>topic choice and research strategies</strong> begin during this week (Schedule TBA)</td>
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<td>(3/6)</td>
<td>III. Including the Excluded: Whose Voice Speaks?</td>
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<td><em>Twelve Angry Men</em></td>
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<td>W.R. Fisher, Argument in Drama and Literature (CR)</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>The Accused</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>(3/20)</td>
<td><strong>Midterm Examination</strong>: Tuesday, 20 March 2012, 18:00-20:45 (in class, HGH 223)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>(3B)</td>
<td><strong>Spring Break</strong> (26-30 March 2012)</td>
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0 (4/3) To Kill a Mockingbird

Individual face-to-face tutorials with the instructor to discuss draft/outline of individualized research paper begin during this week (Schedule TBA)

1 (4/10) Philadelphia
J.S. Ettema & T.L. Glasser, Narrative Form and Moral Force: The Realization of Innocence and Guilt through Investigative Journalism (Journal of Communication, Vol. 38, No. 3 [1988], pp. 8-26; available electronically through the database Wiley Interscience)

2 (4/17) IV. Other Times, Other Places
The Advocate
M.O. Sillars & B.E. Gronbeck, Narrative Analysis: Reading Culture Through Stories (CR) (11/3)

3 (4/24) V. Law and Politics: Narrating Issues
Inherit the Wind
A. Weinberg (ed.), You Can’t Teach That! (CR) (11/17)

4 (5/1) VI. Military Justice: Is it Like Military Music?
A Few Good Men

Individualized Research Paper Due (Tuesday, 1 May 2012)

5 (5/8) Final Examination: Tuesday, 8 May 2012, 18:00-20:45 (in class, HGH 223)
COMM 145I: Analytical Questions for Films

In studying and reviewing the assigned films, as well as in writing your engagement unit individualized research paper, you will find it helpful to consider questions such as the following:

- How is the narrative of this film used rhetorically to argue about lawyers and law, and to contribute to the communicational constitution of our legal culture?
- How do narrative conventions interact with persuasive intentions in this film: how are persuasive messages enhanced, modified and limited by being embedded in narratives?
- How is legal argumentation used and portrayed in the film’s narrative?
- How are popular cultural images of lawyers and law used/affirmed and/or questioned/criticized/reshaped in the fictional portrayal of lawyers and law in this film?
- How does this film reflect on lawyers’ ethics?
- How are filmic depictions of women’s participation in the legal process in this film related to general cultural perceptions of women’s social roles?
- How does this film portray, comment upon, or ignore the way in which legal processes systematically assign and deny the right to speak on one’s own behalf, to voice one’s concerns within or against legal definitions of legitimate interests?
- How does this film use the trial situation to raise or assuage concerns about uncertainties in the process of ascertaining and assessing legal facts, how does this film problematize or veil social/cultural constructions of reality?
- How does this film use the trial situation to raise or assuage concerns about uncertainties in the process of ascertaining and interpreting legal rules, how does this film problematize or veil social/cultural constructions of law as a system of established norms?
- How does this film raise or assuage concerns about possible conflicts between legal and societal values?
- How does the film’s narrative depict and continue the process of translating social issues into legal problems presumably amenable to judicial solutions?
- Overall, how does this film use narrative and visual rhetorical techniques in order to provide elements of cultural critique by promoting the acceptance and/or rejection by the audience of certain notions about lawyers and law and their (positive and/or negative) contributions to our culture?

Please note that not every film will give occasion to discuss all of these questions in equal measure and depth. In your analysis, please focus primarily on those questions to which the film you are currently considering speaks most strongly, for which it proves most illuminating. But you should at any rate pay particular attention to the final overall question on this list, concerning issues of the rhetorical analysis of the cultural critique embodied in and promoted by the film at hand. You will be able to refine your analytical skills as we discuss in detail over the course of the semester the films and readings listed on this syllabus.