

# **SEQUELS, PREQUELS, REMAKES, AND REBOOTS: INTERTEXTUAL CONTINUITY IN AMERICAN CINEMA**

**CTVA 395X** **FALL 2020**

**Instructor:** Matthew T. Price

**Email:** matthew.price.865@csun.edu

**Class:** Thurs 7:00 PM - 9:45 PM. Manzanita Hall room 113.

**Office hours:** Tues/Thurs 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM; or by appointment. MZ room 167.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Writing an original screenplay is certainly a challenge for any budding screenwriter. But just like most TV writers will spend their careers writing for series they didn't create, most screenwriters will have to work on a franchise if they want to be a part of the Hollywood A-list.

"Franchise" can be a dirty word for writers who want to express themselves creatively and with originality. But it doesn't have to be the sole province of hacks and philistines.

In this class, you will not only gain an understanding of, but also an appreciation for the craft of writing sequels, prequels, remakes, reboots, and so forth. You will also develop your own multi-part stories, as well as help your classmates improve their writing in a supportive, creative environment. And, hopefully, you'll have some fun along the way, too.

## **STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this class, you should:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the technical and aesthetic issues related to writing films with intertextual continuity.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental principles of narrative fiction screenwriting.
3. Demonstrate proficiency in creating and expanding story worlds of previous works.

This course addresses CTVA Departmental Student Learning Outcomes:

- #1 Identify and critically analyze the fundamental components and aesthetics of audio-visual storytelling.
- #3 Demonstrate knowledge of historical, cultural, critical, theoretical and emergent aspects of media arts.
- #4 Develop the skills necessary to produce, research and/or present an entertainment industry or other media project.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Assembling the Marvel cinematic universe : essays on the social, cultural and geopolitical domains*, edited by Julian C. Chambliss, William L. Svitavsky and Daniel Fandino
- *Cycles, sequels, spin-offs, remakes, and reboots : multiplicities in film and television*, edited by Amanda Ann Klein and R. Barton Palmer.

## RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- *The memory of Tiresias : intertextuality and film*, by Mikhail I<sup>^</sup>Ampol'skiĭ
- *99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style*, by Matt Madden

## ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

We will be writing in a variety of formats throughout the semester, but the following holds true for every assignment:

- All assignments are to be turned in electronically, via Canvas, unless otherwise specified in class.
- All written work turned in is expected to be completely original. Any material written for this class found not original will be severely dealt with, as dictated by the department and the university.
- Every assignment must have a title page, which includes the title of the work, your name, and the date of completion.
- Every page, except the title and first page, should be numbered.
- Assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments will be penalized 10% for every day late.
- Every assignment must be turned in using the proper formatting, as discussed in class. Everything you turn in should be proofread for spelling and grammatical errors, as well.
  - If I find 6 or more errors on a single page, the assignment will be returned without grading. If you choose to re-write the assignment, it will be accepted for **half credit**.

I strongly suggest you have a friend or roommate proofread your assignments. You can also find help at the University Writing Center, which is free to all students.

Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services agreement each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. Students who are approved for test taking accommodations must provide a proctor form to their faculty member signed by a counselor in the Center on Disabilities prior to making testing arrangements. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110. Staff can be reached at (818) 677-2684.

## ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

We will be working in a collaborative, supportive classroom. As such, your attendance and *attention* are of utmost importance. This will be reflected in your grade (see grading below). If you miss a class, you are still responsible for any assignments given in class that day. A missed class is one point off your grade, unless you have an appropriate doctor's note or similarly valid excuse.

Cell phones are to be put on silent, and put away during class. Use of laptops is encouraged for in-class writing exercises, but should not be used for non-class related activities. Distracting yourself or others will count against your participation grade.

## GRADE BREAKDOWN

Attendance and Participation	30 points
Midterm	15 points
Franchise Intertextual Analysis	15 points
Sequel/prequel/remake/reboot Presentation	20 points
Sequel/prequel/remake/reboot Pitch & Outline	20 points

At the end of the semester, your points will be totalled and converted to a letter grade using the scale below.

A = 91-100 ; B = 81-90 ; C = 71-80 ; D = 61-70 ; F = 0-59

## WHAT TO EXPECT

Intertextual continuity, by its very nature, requires viewing many films to understand the depth and breadth of the narrative connections between them. You're not going to like all of the movies on the required viewing list; / don't like of the movies on the required viewing list. But we can learn just as much from a bad film as a good one, maybe more.

Even when you do enjoy an assigned film, we're not watching them simply for entertainment. You will be expected to closely watch the films, both in and outside of class, think critically and analyze them carefully.

But don't let that ruin the fun! Whatever opinions I or the class have of a certain film, your reactions are your own, and just as valid. My hope is that you'll be entertained as well as educated by the story worlds we're exploring in this class.

# CLASS SCHEDULE

(subject to change)

## Week 1

8/29 - Introduction to Intertextual Continuity

*Meet the professor • The ceremonial reading of the syllabus • Assumptions about the course • What is continuity? • What is intertextuality?*

**In Class Viewing:** *Halloween* (1978)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *Halloween II* (1981) ; *Halloween: 20 Years Later* (1998)

## Week 2

9/5 - Continuing the Story - Sequels

*Why do studios finance sequels? • Why do creators make them? • When does the next movie start? • Fabula & syuzhet*

**In Class Viewing:** *Halloween* (2018)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) ; *Return of the Jedi* (1983)

**Assignment:** Choose three possible franchises (with at least 5 theatrically-released entries) to analyze.

## Week 3

9/12 - The Two Part Trilogy

*The larger story • Planning ahead • Multi-part structure*

**In Class Viewing:** *Star Wars* (1977)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997)

## Week 4

9/19 - Negative Continuity

*Fabula without Continuity • Starting over*

**In Class Viewing:** *Goldeneye* (1995)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *The Evil Dead* (1981)

**Assignment:** Begin research and franchise viewing for paper. **(DUE OCT 17)**

## Week 5

9/26 - Sequel as Remake

*Revisiting the original • Recaps & retcons • Budget and audience awareness*

**In Class Viewing:** *Evil Dead II* (1987)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *The Godfather* (1972) ; *The Godfather Part II* (1974)

**Reading:** *Cycles* Chapter 18 - Serialized Killers: Prebooting Horror in Bates Motel and Hannibal, by Andrew Scahill

## Week 6

10/3 - What Came Before - Prequels

*Knowing • Doom • Audience expectations*

**In Class Viewing:** *Rogue One*

**Post-Class Viewing:** *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934)

**Reading:** *Cycles* Chapter 16 - Retro-Remaking: The 1980s Film Cycle in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema, by Kathleen Look

## Week 7

10/10 - One More Time - Remakes

*A talented amateur and a professional • Bigger budgets • Advanced technology • Changes in social context*

**In Class Viewing:** *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *The Birth of a Nation* (1915)

## Week 8

10/17 - Spiritual Successors

*Responding to critics • Responding to critics • Responding to yourself*

**In Class Viewing:** *Intolerance* (1916)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *Three Colors: Blue* (1993) ; *Three Colors: White* (1994)

**Assignment:** Choose three possible franchises to pitch an installment for.

## Week 9

10/24 - Thematic Trilogies

*Art house franchise • Cameo connections*

**In Class Viewing:** *Three Colors: Red* (1994)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *Batman & Robin* (1997)

## Week 10

10/31 - Starting Over - Reboots

*Remake or reboot? • Marketing & audience knowledge*

**In Class Viewing:** *Batman Begins* (2005)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) ; *The Wolf Man* (1941)

**Reading:** *Assembling* - Section I "In order to form a more perfect union": The Cultural Context of the Transmedia Universe

**Assignment:** Begin writing presentation and pitch for approved franchise.

## Week 11

11/7 - Out of Ideas - The Crossover

*X meets Y • Unplanned universes*

**In Class Viewing:** *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1943)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *Iron Man* (2008) ; *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011)

## Week 12

11/14 - From Many, One: Cinematic Universes, Part I

*You've become part of a bigger universe • Slow build • What comics teach us*

**In Class Viewing:** *The Avengers* (2012)

**Post-Class Viewing:** *Captain America: Civil War* (2016)

## Week 13

11/21 - From One, Many: Cinematic Universes, Part II

*Increasing complexity • Audience memory • Continuity in broad strokes*

**In Class Viewing:** *Spider-Man: Homecoming* (2017) ; *Black Panther* (2018)

**Post-Class Viewing:** TBD. (relevant films for presentations next week)

**Assignment:** TAKE HOME MIDTERM. **(DUE DEC 5)**

## Week 14

11/28 - Thanksgiving!

*Turkey • Stuffing • Not attending class*

## Week 15

12/5 - Final Presentations (for Half of the Class)

*Half of the class will be chosen at random to present their continuing story pitch.*

**Post-Class Viewing:** TBD. (relevant films for presentations next week)

**Assignment:** If you didn't present today, you're presenting next week.

## Week 16

12/12 - Final Final Presentations

*Whoever didn't present last week will present this week.*

**Assignment:** Final project: pitch and story outline. **DUE DECEMBER 19**