# ARTSSCI 4MN1 – Local Explorations (2024-25, Term 1) “Film, Genre, Politics”

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| Course Description Why do some film genres (e.g., horror, rom-com, science fiction, the musical) become popular in particular contexts? What are the potential social and political effects of repeated engagement with genre films? This experiential module will engage students in considering such questions through collective reading, screening, and discussion. The course will largely be structured as a mini ‘Genre and Politics’ Screening Series; following an introductory session in which we will discuss existing scholarship taking up the socio-political function(s) of genre film, students will be expected to take part in four screenings to be held during class time, and to co-lead one of these screenings by selecting the film to be shown (in partnership with the course instructor) and working in a team to facilitate discussion of it. They will also be asked to reflect on and analyse their own out-of-class viewing of genre films. | Class Times Th 5:30-8:00pm  19 September  3, 24 October  7, 21 November  Location TBA InstructorDr. Beth Marquis LRW-3038  905.525.9140 x24656  [beth.marquis@mcmaster.ca](mailto:beth.marquis@mcmaster.ca)  *Office Hours:*  F 2:30-4:30 or by appointment |  |  |

## Objectives

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

1. Analyse and engage meaningfully with scholarly and popular arguments about the socio-political function(s) of genre film.
2. Develop persuasive, insightful, and effective analyses of genre films and their politics.
3. Apply an understanding of genre film analysis to facilitate an engaging and effective screening event.
4. Navigate complexities – both conceptual and practical – involved in screening genre films and engaging others in critically exploring their socio-political work.
5. Reflect critically and with nuance on their interactions with genre film in their lives.

## Required Texts:

There are no texts to purchase for this course; all readings will be accessible through online channels such as public websites and McMaster’s eBook collections and journal databases. See the schedule below for initial reading assignments. Additional readings may be assigned as we move through the term.

## Assignments and Evaluation:

This course is assessed on a Pass/Fail basis. You must receive a passing grade on ALL assessments to pass the course.

Genre Reflections Due between 19 September-5 December (student choice)

Screening Facilitation To be scheduled on one of 3, 24 October; 7, 21 November

Facilitation Plan and Reflection Due by the Thursday following your facilitation

Participation Throughout term

## Assignment Descriptions & Evaluation Criteria:

### Genre Reflections

This assignment gives you an opportunity to monitor and reflect on your own interactions with genre films and to consider these interactions in relation to the ideas, discussions, and examples taken up in the course. Over the course of the term, you’ll need to prepare TWO brief (~300-400 word) entries that discuss a genre film (or TV/web series) you’ve recently watched outside of class. If you *haven’t* recently watched a genre film/program, you might also choose to take up another experience of relevance to genre film and culture (e.g., a trailer you recently saw for the latest superhero film; a conversation with friends about a sci-fi TV show they’re watching). In each case, you should analyse and reflect on the specific example/experience you take up in relation to the concepts we’re discussing (e.g., you might consider how the example illustrates or complicates ideas from the literature and/or how your engagement with it demonstrates/raises questions about the social role of genre), and gesture to what you’re learning from this process. These entries can be informal (though they should be clear, and written in complete sentences) and do not need to offer complete arguments, but they should demonstrate careful thinking about course themes and related ideas, and about the examples you take up. You can choose the weeks in which you’d like to submit reflections, but cannot submit more than one reflection per week. Both reflections need to be uploaded to Avenue by the final day of classes for the Fall term (5 December 2024).

### Screening Facilitation

**Working in a group of ~4-5 (depending on class size) you will be expected to select a genre film for one of the class sessions, and to lead discussion of it on the relevant date (3 October, 24 October, 7 November, or 21 November). This will involve selecting a film that is rich and generative AND available for legal screening, reading relevant scholarly work about genre and politics, preparing a brief introduction that introduces the class to the scholarly formulations you’d like us to apply to the film, developing meaningful questions for consideration, and facilitating a post-screening discussion that both makes clear your collective analysis of the film and engages others in developing their own readings. You are also welcome to speak with me (in advance) about proposing novel screening/engagement strategies. The screening should be structured such that all group members participate actively in some way in the facilitation, and should run no longer than 2.5 hours total (including the screening).**

### Facilitation Plan and Reflection

**The week following your screening facilitation, you will submit (individually) a brief reflection (~750) words that describes your plans for your facilitation, and reflects on how the screening unfolded in practice. As part of this reflection, you should indicate how your plan aimed to apply and build on ideas from relevant scholarship and from class discussions and assess the extent to which your choices had their desired effects. For example, you might unpack what you wanted us to consider about the film and how it demonstrates/complicates ideas from the literature, as well as how the discussion affirmed, enriched, or challenged your analysis. Moreover, you are encouraged to work from this experience to consider more broadly what it suggests about the social and ideological functioning of genre films.**

### Participation

Participation will be assessed by considering your engagement (throughout the term) during class meetings. You will be expected to attend class regularly (though isolated absences due to illness, religious observances, etc. are understood), complete and work actively with the assigned readings and other course materials, contribute to class discussion (while also making space for others’ contributions), take part in class activities, listen actively and respectfully, and engage with others’ comments to further our shared understanding of issues. If you wish, you may also demonstrate your engagement by submitting brief written reflections on course readings or class discussions (via Avenue).

## Course Schedule

**Week 1 (September 19): The Social and Political Work of Genre Film**

* + **Required Screening (in class):**
    - Jackson, L. (2009). *Savage.* Canada. 6min.
    - Selected clips from Horror (e.g., *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night; Get Out; Train to Busan; Rhymes for Young Ghouls*); Sci-Fi (e.g., *Wakening; M.A.M.O.N.*; *Mad Max: Fury Road; District 9*), and Romantic Comedy films (e.g., *The Big Sick; Love, Simon; Crazy Rich Asians*)
  + **Required Reading:** 
    - Grant, B. (2023). Selection from “Who are genre films for?” In *Film Genre: The Basics* (pp. 86-105). Routledge.
    - Aston, J. & Feng, L. (2020). Introduction. In *Renegotiating Film Genres in East Asian Cinemas and Beyond* (pp. 1-11). Palgrave Macmillan Cham.
    - Hess Wright, J. (2012). Genre films and the status quo. In B.K. Grant (ed). *Film Genre Reader IV* (pp. 60-68). University of Texas Press.
  + **Recommended Reading:**

**\**Note: there is no expectation that you read all of the following pieces. They are included here as additional, rich sources that relate to the topics we’ll take up in class, and intended to provide you with some initial in-roads to further genre scholarship of the sort you might draw on in structuring your screening. A longer list of further recommended work will also be shared on Avenue (and you’re welcome to add to this if/as you find interesting sources over the term).***

* + - Sim, G. (2023). The idea of genre in the algorithmic cinema. *Television & New Media, 24*(5), 510-523.
    - Tasker, Y. (2021) Genre in action: The impossibility and value of genre analysis. In I. Ritzer (ed.) *Media and Genre. Dialogues in Aesthetics and Cultural Analysis* (pp. 37-58). Palgrave Macmillan.
    - Lowenstein, A. (2022). A reintroduction to the American horror film: Revisting Robin Wood and 1970s horror. In *Horror Film and Otherness* (pp. 19-44). Columbia University Press.
    - Brooks, K.D. (2017). Introduction: Searching for Sycorax. Black women and horror. In *Searching for Sycorax: Black Women’s Hauntings of Contemporary Horror* (pp. 1-15). Rutgers University Press.
    - Chaudhuri, S. (2014). Uninvited visitors: Immigration, detention, and deportation in science fiction. In *Cinema of the Dark Side: Atrocity and the Ethics of Film Spectatorship* (pp. 115-134)*.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
    - White, K.P. (2018). Indigenous science (fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space, 1*(1-2), 224-242.
    - San Filippo, M. (2020). Radical rom-com: Not an oxymoron. *New Review of Film and Television Studies, 18*(1), 3-7.
    - King, D. (2014). Utopian futurity and evental love. Toward a new theorization of 1990s Queer Cinema and the rise of the Queer rom-com. *Cinephile, 10*(2), 33-39.

**Week 3 (October 3): Screening Series – Student Facilitation**

* + **Required Screening (in class; as part of the Screening Series):**
    - TBD (Student selected)

**Week 3 (October 24): Screening Series – Student Facilitation**

* + **Required Screening (in class; as part of the Screening Series):**
    - TBD (Student selected)

**Week 4 (November 7): Screening Series – Student Facilitation**

* + **Required Screening (in class; as part of the Screening Series):**
    - TBD (Student selected)

**Week 5 (November 21): Screening Series – Student Facilitation**

* + **Required Screening (in class; as part of the Screening Series):**
    - TBD (Student selected)

## Course Policies

Assignment Deadlines & Missed/Late Work:

Students are expected to hand in all assignments on the specified due dates. **Submissions more than 7 days late (for which approved accommodations have not been made via the relevant policies) will not typically receive a passing grade.** Due to the nature of the screening facilitation assignment, it will not be possible to reschedule your facilitation. If you are unable to participate in your screening facilitation for an unexpected and unavoidable reason, please follow the policies about missed work and academic accommodations below, and we will determine an appropriate alternative.

*Please note that ALL assignments must be completed and passed to earn a passing grade in the course.*

Sustainable Written Work Submission Guidelines

All written work should be submitted in the following format: double-sided pages, reduced line spacing (1.5 lines), exclusion of title page, sans-serif font. Most work will also be submitted and returned online.

## SENATE-APPROVED ADVISORY STATEMENTS

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [*Academic Integrity Policy*](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy-1-1.pdf)*,* located at [https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures- guidelines/](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-%20guidelines/).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

* plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
* improper collaboration in group work.
* copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION

**Some courses may** use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., online search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](https://mcmasteru365-my.sharepoint.com/personal/rbishop_mcmaster_ca/Documents/www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

COURSES WITH AN ONLINE ELEMENT

**Some courses may** use online elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses online elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

**Some courses may** use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [*Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities*](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Code-of-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities.pdf) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [*Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Academic-Accommodations-Policy.pdf) policy.

REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the [*Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work*](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Requests-for-Relief-for-Missed-Academic-Term-Work-Policy-on.pdf).

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Academic-Accommodation-for-Religious-Indigenous-and-Spiritual-Observances-Policy-on.pdf) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors. The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done either by the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

NOTES FOR ALL ARTS & SCIENCE COURSES

1. Some of the statements above refer to a “Faculty Office”; please note that the Arts & Science Program Office serves in this capacity.
2. It is the responsibility of students to check their McMaster email regularly. Announcements will be made in class, via A2L, and/or via the course email distribution list.
3. For additional information regarding requests for accommodation, relief for missed term work (e.g. MSAF), deferred examinations, etc., students should read carefully the [Requests](https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/current-students/requests-2/) and [Resources](https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/current-students/resources/) pages on the Arts & Science Program website.