



Duke University Talent Identification Program

1121 West Main St.  
Durham, NC 27701

Rolin Moe  
Academic Instructor

Dear Students and Parents,

Welcome to Duke TIP's e-Studies Film Workshop! I am very excited about leading you on a creative trek for the next eight weeks, destination film appreciation. This letter accompanies your four texts for the course: *How to Read a Film*, a classic look at film interpretation; *The Story of Film*, one of the most comprehensive histories of filmmaking to-date; *The 100 Most Powerful Film Conventions Every Filmmaker Must Know*, to bridge the critical and technical sides of the business; and *Filmmaking for Teens*, designed to help see the relationship between film as a concept and film as a practice. These readings have been carefully chosen to motivate you with ideas and advice, and I know you will enjoy how they assist our journey.

Besides our intensive work in studying cinema, we will also strive to be active viewers, readers and critics who can offer discerning and thoughtful commentary on the work we examine. I would like to discuss the films you will encounter in this course. These movies will present you with stimulating and surprising frontiers for filmmaking, their perspectives ranging the gamut of race, class and gender. Their tales convey this range of human experience, and in so doing, will confront the evil as well as the good. Because the root of all narrative is conflict, many of the stories will expose the ugliness of human nature, including the inappropriate actions and desires that make for such clashes.

If in some cases you are offended by a character's behavior, that reaction is likely the place from which to begin your film analysis. I hope you share such impressions in Discussion Board postings and Chats. When you react strongly, it is likely you have responded precisely as the author was hoping. Great movies, much like great fiction, should move you, not leave you cold! Good films with a clear social or moral vision will often reveal emotions, thoughts, or actions that redeem the wicked; that is, the tale will show the soul, conscience or the emotions of an evildoer, or it will show the heinous behavior with cold, clinical journalism, encouraging us to react to what we see. I will challenge you to investigate potential motives of films which present such characterizations and plot situations. We will explore such questions as, *Why does this character use certain language? What is the filmmaker's attitude toward such a character? How does cinema create characters who plausibly represent human desires and their consequences?*

In the storytelling tradition, a dynamic character is one who changes. This course will encourage you to think about your responses in dynamic rather than stagnant fashion. Likewise the course and its instructor need to evolve along with you: therefore I will formally solicit your feedback at midterm so you can vote on your favorite and least-favorite films, identify the most engaging discussion topics, offer suggestions about my pedagogy, and evaluate weekly activities.

In addition, we will be dynamic critics who constructively support one another in the mission of being better learners. We will devote quality time to developing quality critiques. Many of you understand the importance of and truly seek honest praise and criticism from the members of your community and an instructor, and well as helping others improve. Therefore we won't just learn from the professionals in our texts; we'll learn from the community around us.

**Orientation Week** begins June 8, a "Week Zero" which gives you seven days to log on and get acquainted with course procedures and materials before the course begins. You don't have to officially submit **Assignments** until the week of June 15th, but I do encourage you to post during Week Zero to our **Orientation Discussion Boards** ("My Pedagogy" and "Personal Narrative – A Day in the Life"), to take the **Orientation Survey**, and to survey the Week One assignments. If you get these housekeeping details out of the way, you can fully dive into e-learning Week One. Questions may arise as you tour the course or the texts, so please feel free to contact me by e-mail or by phone (though remember that I am on Pacific Standard Time, so don't call me at 8am Eastern Standard!). If you run into technical problems with usage of the Blackboard Web site, Duke's Office of Information Technology (OIT) Help Desk staff can help you resolve them (919-684-2200). I will be calling you soon to see how you're faring with getting started.

I anticipate an invigorating journey through not only superb films but also an exploratory analysis, one that will surprise you when you discover just how much creativity and how many stories lie within you! I look forward to our meeting in cyberspace soon.

Sincerely,

Rolin Moe