

# Otis College of Art and Design

Liberal Arts and Sciences

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## MOVIES THAT MATTER IL 400I

**Class meets:** Thursdays, 19:00 – 21:45 AHM 308

**LAS phone number** (310) 665-6920

**Mailbox location:** Liberal Arts and Sciences, Ahmanson Room 303

**Course description:** A good story well told can truly make a difference in how one sees the world. This course will present cinema about real issues that shape our lives. We will encourage dialogue and exchange, while examining the processes and creative possibilities the art of film has presented through stories that attempt to make a difference in how we see the world around us.

As artists, budding artists and citizens, our students have a responsibility to the greater good – it is important that they understand that art can inspire and educate as well as entertain. It is also important for them to gain a historical perspective to understand the past and present in order to visualize the future.

The site partner for this Integrated Learning course is FilmAid International, a global humanitarian refugee relief organization whose mandate is "*Projecting hope and changing lives through the Power of Film.*" Founded in 1999 to help people in Macedonia who had fled their homes in Kosovo, FilmAid has expanded its reach into Afghanistan and Africa with the encouragement of the United Nations.

**Course learning outcomes:** This course will analyze past as well as current films and domestic as well as international films. Through compelling and entertaining stories, these films have depicted social, political, cultural, gender, racial and ethnic inequities. Some of the films include *Schindler's List*, *Coming Home*, *The Killing Fields*, *Philadelphia*, *Sophie's Choice*, *Paradise Now*, *No Man's Land*, *Gentlemen's Agreement*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Color Purple*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Silkwood*, *Norma Rae* and *Water* to name a few.

In addition to the classic and contemporary films we screen, FilmAid International has provided our students with short films from their participatory community-based productions in which refugees shoot films about subjects that have impacted their lives including stories about forced early marriage, child abuse, involuntary resettlement and repatriation. In these participatory productions, FilmAid International aims to engage the minds of those who have suffered the effects of war and poverty in the hope of promoting well being and alleviating trauma.

Students will research and write a series of papers analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating the films presented and assigned. Through interdisciplinary teams, students will demonstrate, apply, and synthesize the critical thinking, reading, writing and information literacy skills they have acquired from English, Art History, and Social Science classes to evaluate the social context of the assigned readings and the assigned movies. Assigned papers will demonstrate the student's ability to realize the following course objectives:

1. To pursue excellence in reading, writing, and speaking.
2. To hone critical thinking skills in defining and solving problems.
3. To develop the ability to locate, evaluate, and critically use library and electronic resources for research.
4. To use multidisciplinary methods of thought and inquiry
5. To investigate visual culture, its historical origins, and its influence on cultural, intellectual and artistic structures.

Students will be encouraged to devise artful strategies to reach the public about FilmAid and its mission through social networking sites linked to FilmAid as well as through writing about FilmAid for possible publication.

There will be opportunities for students to speak and interact with FilmAid International representatives (see below – participation is confirmed but dates may be subject to change):

Week 1 Thursday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
Week 7 Thursday, October 9, 2008  
Week 15 Thursday, December 11, 2008

Movies that Matter will look at films as agents of change, critically and aesthetically and pose questions about the cultural and social implications that each story reveals and examine the power of the medium to educate and enrich lives.

As Robert Redford stated at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival, this course will "...celebrate the kinds of films that stretch the limits of our imagination and expand our understanding of the world" .

**Prerequisites:** No prerequisites but you must have passed English 104 or 106 with a C or better.

**Important dates:** Course add deadline: Tuesday September 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Course drop deadline: Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>

**Required texts/materials:**

*A Political Companion to American Film*, Gary Crowdus, Lake View Press, ISBN 0 941702-37-5

*1000 Films to Change Your Life – Time Out* – ISBN 10 1904978-73-8

Supplemental handouts will be distributed in class.

Guest speakers are confirmed however dates may be subject to change.

Relevant images, documentaries, feature films and television programs are available in the Otis Library - <http://otis.edu/library>

**Course requirements:** Students will be required to read the assigned texts and handouts, view weekly screenings, work in interdisciplinary teams, prepare 4 assigned critical essay paper and actively participate in question and answer sessions.