

ENG 1131: Writing Through Media— Adapting the “Unfilmable”

Section 4841
MWF, 4; T, E1-E3
WEIL 408D; ARCH 116

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Office Hours: (by appointment)

Course Description

In our culture of translatability, the novel lives to become the film adaptation. Narratives are mediated and remediated across multiple forms, to the point that the original textual artifact may be eclipsed. Standing apart, however, are those books said to “unfilmable”—the texts that inhabit the medium of print in such controversial and compositionally innovative ways that they cannot make the shift from page to screen. That is, until they do.

In this course, we will read and watch high profile examples from the tradition of “unfilmable” film adaptations, to consider what it is that is transformed when media are translated. In addition to adapted texts, we will contrast what cannot be replicated from print to film by reading as-of-yet still “unfilmable” literature. We will also cover problems in adaptation theory such as elision, censorship, and medium-specific analysis, as we read critical scholarship and film reviews.

Our weekly screening times will be devoted to viewing the films and introducing the major “writing through media” projects we will be embarking on through tutorials and workshops with required software and print craft. You should thus gain appreciation of just how adaptable our transmedia culture really is.

Required Texts

All required print texts for this course will be available through the UF Bookstore in the Reitz Union, or online via www.uf.bkstr.com.

Abrams, J.J. and Doug Dorst. *S*. New York: Mulholland Books, 2013. ISBN: 0316201642.

Burroughs, William S. *Naked Lunch*. New York: Grove Press, 2013. ISBN: 0802122078.

Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* New York: Del Rey, 1996. ISBN: 0345404475.

Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. New York: Random House, 2004. ISBN: 0375507256.

Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen*. New York: DC Comics, 2014. ISBN: 1401245250.

Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lolita*. New York: Vintage, 1997. ISBN: 0679723161.

Other assigned readings will be made available via Sakai

Assignments

(1000 total points possible)

150 Re-Print Adaptation

You will write a short narrative adapting some aspect of David Lynch's film *Mulholland Drive* into a format best expressed through print. The adapted scene should demonstrate that a written story can go conceptual and compositional places new media cannot go. It must be at least **1000** words.

200 "Unadaptable" Composition

You will create an immersive text through the hypertext editor Twine (twinery.org) that should aim to be "unadaptable" into another medium through both its complexity of content and composition. The text should make a case for textual media as a narrative platform suited for genres of meaning-making distinct from film. Your work should engage the equivalent effort of **1500** words.

250 Academic Paper

You will compose an academic paper that takes up an issue discussed in our critical texts and demonstrated in our literary texts. Your paper should present an original argument that engages larger critical conversations by citing at least *two* theoretical essays assigned in class and at least *three* other scholarly sources found through your own research in its discussion of one of our assigned novels and/or films. It must be at least **1500** words.

300 Group Film Project

You and two group members will create a short film adapting some aspect of Abrams and Dorst's "unfilmable" novel *S.* to the screen. Your film should demonstrate what must be altered in translating content between media through a scene lasting at least

seven minutes. It will be accompanied by a short written rationale and a class presentation explaining your adaptation process. The entire project should engage the equivalent effort of **2000** words.

100 Participation

You must be an active and engaged part of each day's class to not only earn participation credit but to ensure that our course will be an academically fruitful experience. This grade will be gauged by group activities and larger class discussions. **To guarantee receipt of a full grade, you must contribute to class meaningfully at least once a class period.**

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week 1:

1/4 (Holiday Break)

1/5 (Holiday Break)

1/6 Course Introduction

1/8 "What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (and Vice Versa)", Seymour Chatman

Week 2:

1/11 *Lolita* (1955), Vladimir Nabokov

(1/12) "Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest", André Bazin; *Adaptation* (2002), Spike Jonze

1/13 *Adaptation* (2002), Jonze

1/15 *Lolita* (1955), Nabokov

Week 3:

1/18 (Martin Luther King Day)

(1/19) *Casablanca* (1943), Michael Curtiz

1/20 *Casablanca* (1943), Curtiz; “You Must Remember This”, Robert Coover

1/22 *Lolita* (1955), Nabokov

Week 4:

1/25 *Lolita* (1955), Nabokov

(1/26) *Lolita* (1962), Stanley Kubrick

1/27 *Lolita* (1962), Kubrick; Reviews, Bosley Crowther and Pauline Kael

1/29 “Untranslatability and the Transposition of Media” (excerpt), Friedrich Kittler

Week 5:

2/1 *Naked Lunch* (1959), William S. Burroughs

(2/2) “Film (Adaptation) as Translation: Some Methodological Proposals”, Patrick Cattryse; *American Psycho* (2000), Mary Harron

2/3 *American Psycho* (2000), Harron

2/5 *Naked Lunch* (1959), Burroughs

Week 6:

2/8 *Naked Lunch* (1959), Burroughs

(2/9) *Naked Lunch* (1991), David Cronenberg

2/10 *Naked Lunch* (1991), Cronenberg; Reviews, Roger Ebert and Janet Maslin

2/12 “Converting the Controversial: Regulation as ‘Source Text’ in Adaptation”, Richard Berger

Week 7:

2/15 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), Phillip K. Dick

(2/16) “Storyworlds Across Media” (excerpt), Marie-Laure Ryan & Jan-Noël Thon;
Mulholland Drive (2001), David Lynch

2/17 *Mulholland Drive* (2001), Lynch

2/19 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), Dick

Week 8:

2/22 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), Dick

(2/23) Twine tutorial

2/24 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), Dick

2/26 “Materializing Adaptation Theory: The Adaptation Industry”, Simone Murray -
Re-Print Adaptations **DUE 2/26**

Week 9:

2/29 (Spring Break)

(3/1) (Spring Break)

3/2 (Spring Break)

3/4 (Spring Break)

Week 10:

3/7 *S.* (2013), J.J. Abrams & Doug Dorst

(3/8) *Blade Runner* (1982), Ridley Scott

3/9 *Blade Runner* (1982), Scott; Reviews, Janet Maslin and Pauline Kael

3/11 *Watchmen* (1987), Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons

Week 11:

3/14 *S.* (2013), Abrams & Dorst

(3/15) “Rematerializing Adaptation Theory”, Kyle Meikle; *Blow-Up* (1966), Michelangelo Antonioni; *Blow Out* (1981), Brian DePalma (scenes)

3/16 *Blow-Up* (1966), Antonioni; *Blow Out* (1981), DePalma; “The Devil’s Drool”, Julio Cortazar

3/18 *Watchmen* (1987), Moore & Gibbons
- “Unadaptable” Compositions **DUE 3/18**

Week 12:

3/21 *Watchmen* (1987), Moore & Gibbons

(3/22) *Watchmen* (2009), Zack Snyder

3/23 *Watchmen* (2009), Snyder; Reviews, Roger Ebert and David Edelstein

3/25 *S.* (2013), Abrams & Dorst

Week 13:

3/28 *Cloud Atlas* (2004), David Mitchell

(3/29) “Intermediality in Film: A Historiography of Methodologies,” Ágnes Pethő;
Video Production tutorial

3/30 *Cloud Atlas* (2004), Mitchell

4/1 *S.* (2013), Abrams & Dorst

Week 14:

4/4 *Cloud Atlas* (2004), Mitchell

(4/5) “Adaptation as Reception: How a Transnational Analysis of Hollywood Films Can Renew the Literature-to-Film Debates”, Anne-Marie Scholz; Video Production troubleshooting

4/6 *Cloud Atlas* (2004), Mitchell

4/8 *S.* (2013), Abrams & Dorst
- Academic Papers **DUE 4/8**

Week 15:

4/11 *Cloud Atlas* (2004), Mitchell

(4/12) *Cloud Atlas* (2012), Tom Tykwer & the Wachowskis

4/13 *Cloud Atlas* (2012), Tykwer & the Wachowskis; Reviews, Roger Ebert and Mark Kermode

4/15 “The Ends of Adaptation” (excerpt), Nico Dececco

Week 16:

4/18 Group Film Project presentations

(4/19) (no screening)

4/20 Course Conclusion

4/22 (Reading Day)
- Group Film Projects **DUE**