

SAMPLE SYLLABUS – SUBJECT TO MINOR CONTENT CHANGES BASED ON INSTRUCTOR

COURSE SYLLABUS

ESL 23: AMERICAN CULTURE THROUGH FILM

Instructor:

Office:

Office Hours:

E-mail Address:

Class Meeting:

Location:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a specialized four-unit course designed to help non-native speakers of English improve their oral/aural skills and their understanding of American culture through an examination of film. This particular section will focus on the theme “doing humor/comedy.” In this way we will examine how humor is “done” in American culture, exploring various genres of comedy, while contextualizing these genres through their relationship with American aesthetics and sensibilities. The language focus of this course varies depending on the saliency of the material seen in the selected films, but predominately centers around developing an understanding of idiomatic language, expanding one’s vocabulary, and recognizing dialect differences which reflect the diversity of the American population. These language features are necessary components for understanding and doing humor in English, just as are the cultural discussions that will precede and ensue from each individual viewing. Because of this, students will improve their listening skills through film observation and assignments designed to test oral/aural comprehension, while also improving their overall understanding of the American people through reflections on cultural similarities and differences.

CLASS MATERIALS

Materials will be made available in class or through email (so make sure that you check your email regularly). These will include links for background on film content, as well as handouts for analyzing the humor and culture in the films. You will need to purchase 2 Blue Books from the campus bookstore (1 for the Midterm, and 1 for the Diary).

ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING

Attendance/Participation	15%
In-Class Discussion Assignments	15%
Mid-Course Film Critique Assignment	25%
Reflection Diary	15%
Final Presentation	30%

COURSE COMPONENTS

Attendance/Participation – Attendance, participation, and punctuality are essential for this course, as in-class activities CANNOT be made up outside of class. Students need to be on time, prepared to learn, and willing to participate. Film screenings start promptly; therefore, to avoid disruption, you must be on time. Missing class or arriving late will affect your overall course grade.

In-Class Discussion - These assignments will focus on the day’s film, including the cultural theme, various language components, and the comedic content genre. Students are expected to actively engage in all discussions, as it is through these discussions that we will work together to process the cultural information explored within the selected films. Instructor made discussion handouts will be provided.

Mid-Course Film Critique Assignment - The mid-course film critique will take place during class, and will consist of a series of prompts that you will evaluate, select from, and write about in a bluebook (which will

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be submitted for a grade). You will be given 4 prompts total, of which you will choose 1 to explore in depth. For the first half of class you will write your response. At the midway point, your response will be collected and redistributed to a peer (in class). The peer will then write a response to your critique. This response can agree or disagree, but must be substantiated through supporting evidence from the films. Each prompt response will be a minimum of 2 pages double-spaced (for a total of 3 written pages in class, 2 for your critique and 1 for your response). Do note that Blue Books can be purchased at most UCLA stores on campus (just ask the clerk).

Blue Book Diary - AFTER each film-watching class, you must reflect on the film that you have viewed in a Blue Book diary entry. You may draw from the film itself, from information on Wikipedia, or from information from IMDB (as well as class discussions). Reflections should be a minimum of 2 pages double-spaced in your Blue Book, and must explore a cultural point that you learned, that you were surprised by, that you had never understood before the discussion, etc. The reflection must also include a comparison of this point with your own culture, exploring the similarities or differences between the two perspectives. I will check the Books each day (at the beginning of class) to ensure that the assignment has been properly completed (so do not forget or fall behind on this...you need to stay alert). Bluebooks will be submitted at the end of the quarter.

Final Presentation - The last day of class will be dedicated to oral student presentations. This will be on a comedic, American film (from any cultural theme) that has been viewed outside of class. Guidelines will be given out in class, but keep in mind this will be a short, paired presentation (exact time to be determined based on enrollment), which will be followed by student questions and discussion. Please plan in advance, and confirm your film selection with the instructor well in advance. Note that the PowerPoint that you make must be submitted at the end of WEEK 5, COMPLETE WITH VIDEO CLIPS, IN ONE FILE.

POLICIES

1. Please respect each other and your instructor. Surfing the internet, texting, or interacting with any electronic device is strictly prohibited. Likewise, acting or communicating in an inappropriate manner is also prohibited. If this occurs you will be asked to leave, but you will still be responsible for the content that you miss (which may ultimately reflect poorly on your grades).
2. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of section. This will help me to better gauge who is and who is not making a concerted effort to learn the content of the course.
3. Emails will almost always be answered within a 24-hour window. Questions that require extensive development in response will not be answered via email. For these questions, you will be asked to come to office hours so that they may be addressed appropriately. However, I do not want to discourage you from asking questions, so please use your judgment as to what can and cannot be answered through each medium, and act accordingly. As a general rule, specific questions can typically be answered via email in a timely manner; however, general/broad questions typically cannot and you should plan on attending office hours to address these types of questions.
4. E-mailing: Please include “**ESL 97A**” in the subject line of all emails if you want them answered.
5. Late work will not be accepted. In the event of a documented emergency, you will be given extra time given the conditions of the documentation.
6. You will not be provided with make-up notes for films viewed, lectures, or discussions. You are responsible for getting the contact information of two fellow students to help you catch up (at their discretion) if you have to miss lecture or discussion.

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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Neither plagiarism nor cheating will be tolerated. UCLA's policy on academic integrity is available online at <http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/>. Students caught engaging in either of these activities will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Course Schedule

Week	Monday August 3 rd	Wednesday August 5 th
1	Syllabus Review Course Introduction Lecture on Forms of Humor	Theme: Sports and Competition Topics: The “Get Rich Quick” Model; Capitalism & How Money Conquers All; Gym Culture; We Must Win Mentality Film: Dodgeball
2	August 10 th Theme: School Issues, Clicks, & Bullying Topics: High School Identities; Belonging & Otherness; Women’s Friendship Groups; Teen Talk; Teen Issues; Bullying Film: Mean Girls	August 12 th Theme: Buddy Relationships Topics: Gendered Friendship Expectations; Men’s Friendship Groups; Masculinity, Closeness, & Distance Among Men in the US; Slacker Culture Film: I Love You, Man!
3	August 17 th Theme: Regional and Social Types Topics: Differences Based on the Regions of the US; Regional Stereotypes; Dialect Differences; Differences Stemming from Social Class; Pet Culture in the US Film: Best in Show DUE: Cinematic Exp. Report On CCLE	August 19 th Theme: Traditional Family Values Topics: American Family Dynamics; Visions of the Ideal Family; Western Traditions of Marriage; Spending Beyond One’s Means Film: Father of the Bride
4	August 24 th Theme: Suburbia and Normalcy Topics: Suburban Life Versus Inner City Life; American Ideals on Lifestyle; White Flight; White Privilege; Violence, Justice, and the Media-Crazed Status of the Nation Film: Serial Mom DUE: Submit Film Critique to Turnitin.com	August 26 th Theme: Mental Health & Siblings Topics: Depression and America’s Overall Mental Health Profile; An Over Medicated Society; Leading Health Issues in the US; Mental & Physical Health Connections; Sibling Dynamics; The Dark Side of the American Family Film: The Skeleton Twins
5	August 31 st Theme: Personal & Familial Issues Topics: Age and the Realization of Married Life; Raising Children; Pregnancy; Reflections on What Might Have Been; The Looming Threat of Divorce; Working Things Out to Overcome Family Threats Film: “This is 40” DUE: Home Viewing Report On CCLE	September 2 nd Student Presentations Culture through Comedic Film Analysis
6	September 7 th NO CLASS - HOLIDAY	September 9 th Student Presentations Culture through Comedic Film Analysis