

Literary Adaptation on Film: Theory and Practice

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AM-340.108, BBV-015-1

This is an introduction to filmic adaptations of texts taken from American literature primarily. While we interpret the individual movies and novels, our discussions will cover serious theoretical issues (the “fidelity” issue, the destabilized “original,” adaptation as over-writing and interpretation, etc.) as well. Films/novels discussed: *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*, *Beloved*, *Butterfly*, *The Human Stain*, *The Hours*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Music of Chance*, *The Shipping News*

Students are required to read ten novels throughout the course; these texts will serve as the basis for class discussions. It is assumed that all of the students will have watched the movies before class; room 356 will be reserved for these screenings for either 16:30-18:30, Thursday, or 14:30-16:30, Friday. The students giving the presentations will be responsible for showing the dvd. During the class sessions, the presenting students will show parts of the movie only, parts relevant to the claims they make in their presentations.

Grades will be based on

- (i) class participation,
- (ii) one presentation each student is required to give, and
- (iii) an in-class final test.

Attendance. It is assumed that everyone will attend the classes. You are required to attend the screenings even if you have seen the movie. Missed classes will show in your grades.

Reading the assigned texts. Students are required to come prepared for class by having read the assigned novels for each class. Actually, you are encouraged to read the assignments twice: once for “fun,” once “for class.” Not reading the assignments counts into your absences (missed classes) and will show in your grades.

Visibility, active participation. Be visible. Mere physical presence, even when you have read the assignments, is not enough: you have to prove your skills in reading, analysis, and argument in class discussions.

Oral presentation. Each student is required to give one short oral presentation, no longer than 15-20 minutes, introducing the novel/movie of that class session. Another slot of 15-20 minutes can be spent on showing parts of the movie (you have to come prepared for that, knowing the exact places in the movie where you want to start or finish the screening. Contextualize your topic as well as the views you cite. Give your sources in your presentation. Conduct scholarly research into the critical literature concerning the book and the film: read books and journal articles (those that have appeared since the 1980s only, if possible), not just the easier internet sources. You are advised not to read your presentation but speak without notes as much as possible.

In-class final test. This test will cover all the readings, discussions, and presentations.

Schedule of Topics and Presentations

February 10 **Orientation, theoretical issues**

February 17 **Ambrose Bierce, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” (1962)**
(in-class viewing of Roberto Enrico’s film adaptation)

Presentation:

February 24 **Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (2005)**
(Dir. Darnell Martin; teleplay by Susan Lori-Parks)

Presentation:

March 3 **Carson McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1991)**
(Dir. Simon Callow; Wr. Edward Albee and Michael Hurst)

Presentation:

March 10 **Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1998)**
(Dir. Jonathan Demme; Wr. Akosua Busia)

Presentation:

March 17 **David Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (1993)**
(Dir. David Cronenberg; Wr. David Henry Hwang)

Presentation:

March 24 **Philip Roth, *The Human Stain* (2003)**
(Dir. Robert Benton; Wr. Nicholas Meyer)

Presentation:

March 31 **Michael Cunningham, *The Hours* (2002)**
(Dir. Stephen Daldry; Wr. David Hare)

Presentation:

April 7 **Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (1993)**
(Dir. Wayne Wang; Wr. Amy Tan)

Presentation:

April 14 **No class (spring break)**

April 21 **Paul Auster, *The Music of Chance* (1993)**
(Dir. Philip Haas; Wr. Belinda Haas)

Presentation:

April 28 **Annie Proulx, *The Shipping News* (2001)**
(Dir. Lasse Hallström; Wr. Robert Nelson Jacobs)

Presentation:

May 5 In-class final test

May 12 Grade books signed

REQUIRED READINGS:

Ambrose Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"; Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; Carson McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*; Toni Morrison, *Beloved*; David Hwang, *M. Butterfly*; Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*; Michael Cunningham, *The Hours*; Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*; Paul Auster, *The Music of Chance*; Annie Proulx, *The Shipping News*