

Diving Into the Movies  
Harry Chotiner

Hello and thanks for your interest in our film group. The last time we did this, I was new to zoom teaching, and I was inept- at best. After having taught a few more classes, I'm only slightly less inept. But what remains a constant is the thoughtful and heartfelt comments of students in our discussion.

The format will be: you'll know in advance what film to see and where you can stream it. And I'll give you some things to think about as you watch it. When we meet, I'll give a lecture on it and we can then discuss it.

Whenever I've taught film, I've never decided in advance which films to show. That decision is always based on our experience together- and what kind of films I think will work best with you. This isn't just a question of themes but also things like levels of violence or graphic sex. Every class is different, and I do my best to determine which films will make for a satisfying watching and discussing experience. I'm pretty sure that some of the films we'll be seeing this semester are: Parasite (South Korea) Mr. Deeds Goes to Town (1935 version), and Separation (Iran)/ I'm also thinking about Shoplifters (Japan), The Inheritance (Sweden), and Capernaum (Lebanon)- I mention these to give you an idea of the kind of films that I'd like us to explore together.

For next week we'll be seeing Lone Star. It's a 1996 film directed by John Sayles. Some things to watch for are:

--the acting. This put Chris Cooper on the map and was a boost for Matthew McConaughey....but note all of the performances.

--the camera- where it's placed and when it moves...and when it's stationary.

--the use of music

--what's it saying about the relationships between fathers and sons: mothers and daughters?

--whose story is this?

--what's it doing with borders and boundaries?

--what is the film saying about corruption?

--who are the heroes and villains?

--what is the film doing with class?

--what is the film doing with race?

--what's the film doing with history and the past?

--how would you characterize the moral framework of the film?

--what is the nature of politics in medium-sized town America?

--what do you make of the ending?

--what happens five years after the movie ends?

Note: the film is almost twenty-five years old. Inevitably some of its political perspective will seem dated. But what, if anything, still feels relevant?

Thanks for diving into this and I'm looking forward to seeing you at our first meeting.....Harry

