

CORE 200: Liberal Arts Reading Salon**Dr. Michael Petitti**

W 5-6:50 pm 63568D

“The Book was Better”: Literature, Film, and Merit

Since its inception, film has turned to literature for narrative inspiration. For instance, *A Christmas Carol* and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* were both adapted into countless films before movies even had sound. When we envision the audiences at this moment in primitive cinema, we can almost hear the obvious retort as they leave the storefront Nickelodeons: “The book was better.” Why do people so frequently argue that cinematic adaptations fail the literature being adapted? Is it something essential to adaptation, or the medium (visual versus tactile)? What standard or litmus of merit are people operating from, and why? Working from these questions and more, we will examine a handful of adaptations in order to discuss issues of taste, value, judgment, and art connected with an assortment of literary-cinematic bundles.

CORE 200 lasts for twelve weeks (instead of the usual fifteen) and meets once each week for two hours in a seminar setting. The Salon encourages the sharing of ideas and thoughts, highlights common themes and interdisciplinary connections as they emerge from discussion. Discussions that grow out of reading groups can become the starting point for future research. The two-unit Salon is an integral part of the Thematic Approaches to Humanities and Society minor. A special feature of the Reading Salon is that some of the books to be read by the participants will be selected by the students. These will supplement the readings listed below. The course is graded Credit/No Credit.

Readings (others to be added by class vote)Orlean, Susan. *The Orchid Thief*.Williams, Gordon M. *The Siege of Trencher’s Farm*.**Films (others to be added by class vote)***Adaptation*. Dir. Spike Jonze.*Straw Dogs*. Dir. Sam Peckinpah.