

## Film Terms

\*Taken and/or adapted from Timothy J. Corrigan's *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (2007)

**angle**: The position of the camera or point of view in relation to the subject being shown. Seen from above, the subject would be shot from a "high angle"; from below, it would be depicted from a "low angle."

**cinematography**: the technical term for the various stages of motion picture photography, from the manipulation of the film in the camera to the printing of that film.

**close-up**: an image in which the distance between the subject and the point of view is very short, as in a "close-up of a person's face."

**composition**: the arrangement and relationship of the visual elements within a frame.

**cutting**: changing from one image to another; a version of this linkage is sometimes referred to as *montage*.

**fade-in or fade-out**: an editing transition whereby an image gradually appears out of (fade-in) a different screen or disappears into (fade-out) a different screen.

**flashback**: an image, scene, or sequence that appears in a narrative to describe a past action or event.

**focus**: the clarity of detail of an image.

**frame**: the borders of the image within which the subject is composed.

**ideology**: an analytical approach that attempts to unmask the stated or unstated social and personal values that inform a movie or group of movies. \*Prof. Bishop's note: think about ideology like this—it's the underlying system of beliefs or values that governs the film's composition or of what the film might be unconsciously or unintentionally trying to convince you\*

**jump cut**: a cut within the continuous action of a shot, creating a spatial or temporal jump or discontinuity within the action.

**long shot**: an image in which the distance between the camera and the subject is great.

**mise-en-scene**: the arrangement of the so-called theatrical elements of a film, including sets, lighting, costumes, and props.

**montage**: a specific kind of editing in which objects and figures are linked in a variety of creative or unexpected ways. Usually this kind of editing aims to generate certain effects or ideas.

**narrative**: the way a story is constructed through a particular point of view and arrangement of events.

**pan**: a shot that pivots from left to right or right to left without camera changing its position.

**point of view**: the position from which an action or subject is seen, often determining its significance.

**reaction shot**: a shot that cuts from an object, person, or action to show another person or persons' reaction.

**scene**: a space within which a narrative action takes place; it is composed of one or more shots.

**sequence**: a series of scenes or shots unified by a shared action or motif.

**set**: the place or location used for specific scene or shot in a film.

**shot**: a continuously exposed and unedited image of any length.

**shot/reverse shot**: a series of shots that follows the logical movement of a conversation—similar to reaction shots.

**tracking shot**: the movement of the image through a scene, photographed by a camera mounted on tracks. A dolly shot creates the same movement with a camera mounted on a mechanical cart, while a hand-held camera is mounted on a cameraperson's shoulder.

**voice-over**: the voice of someone not seen in the narrative image who describes or comments on that image.