

Trafficking in the Absurd: The Films of the Coen Brothers

A Film Education Course for the Bryn Mawr Film Institute (October 2008)

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Bunny: Uli doesn't care about anything. He's a Nihilist.

The Dude: Ah, that must be exhausting.

---*The Big Lebowski*

Brothers Joel and Ethan Coen form a most unique partnership, collaborating on both the scripting and the direction of films that are among the most distinctive and witty in contemporary American cinema. The Coens' display an uncanny ability to capture perfectly the language, the look, and the feel of a time and place—from the Depression-era South, to the frozen plains of Minnesota, post-60s Los Angeles, and the desolate landscapes of rural Texas. Hand-in-hand with this extraordinary appreciation for how people thrive and sometimes wither in their element is the Coens' recognition of the comic absurdities inherent in how we all make our way through a world we do not fully understand. This course will explore the Coens' impressive body of work, which was recently capped with Oscars for *No Country for Old Men*. In addition to *No Country*, we will pay special attention to *O Brother Where Art Thou?*, *The Big Lebowski*, and the Coens' latest, *Burn After Reading*.

Schedule of Meetings and Readings

Monday, October 6, 6:30PM

Readings: Readings for week 2 will be distributed.

Screening: *Burn After Reading* (2008)

Monday, October 13, 6:30PM

Reading: Tony Schirato and Jenn Webb, "Technology, Reason and Globalization?—*O Brother!*"

Screening: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000)

Monday, October 20, 6:30PM

Readings: Jonathan Silverman, "Up Close and Distant: The Coen Brothers' Sense of Place"

Screening: *The Big Lebowski* (1998)

Monday, October 27, 6:30PM

Reading: Geoffrey O'Brien, "Gone Tomorrow: The Echoing Spaces of Joel & Ethan Coen's *No Country for Old Men*"
Philip Brophy, "Blast of Silence: Listening to Nothing in *No Country for Old Men*"

Screening: *No Country for Old Men* (2007)

