Filmmakers have adapted short stories into feature-length motion pictures ever since D. W. Griffith made *The Avenging Conscience* (1914), an early example of the horror film genre based on Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843). However, despite the prevalence of such adaptations over the past century, they have not received as much attention as motion pictures that are based on novels, suggesting the critical disregard or neglect that characterizes our reception of so-called "small" literary forms (i.e., those supposedly lacking the breadth or depth of "larger" forms). This course encourages students to take a different perspective and showcases a variety of published pieces from the twentieth century that have served as the basis for several notable U.S. and international film productions. In addition to exploring the ancient roots of the modern short story as well as the industrial and societal changes that contributed to the rise of magazine print culture in the 1800s and early 1900s (eras when the first great short story writers in North America and Europe, such as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Anton Chekhov, revealed the artistic potential of literary "miniatures"), we will trace out the history of cinematic adaptations from the early 1900s until the early 2000s.

Through in-depth discussions of selected case studies, including *All About Eve* (1950), *Rashomon* (1950), *A Face in the Crowd* (1957), *3:10 to Yuma* (1957), *The Swimmer* (1968), *Don't Look Now* (1973), *Smooth Talk* (1985), *The Fly* (1986), *Smoke Signals* (1998), *Jesus' Son* (1999), *In the Bedroom* (2001), *Minority Report* (2002), *Away from Her* (2007), and *Burning* (2018), students will learn about the challenges involved in adapting short stories for the big screen. By comparing the original text and the cinematic adaptation, students will furthermore come to appreciate the distinctiveness of each medium as well as their similarities. Because a short story “can be read at one sitting” (to borrow Poe's basic definition), this uniquely circumscribed, concentrated literary form lends itself to a four-week course in which the only assigned readings are those that inspired the assigned screenings. Students will also have the opportunity to watch and discuss films that are based on plays (*A Raisin in the Sun* [1961]), comic books/graphic novels (*American Splendor* [2003], *Ghost World* [2001]), and children's picture books (*Where the Wild Things Are* [2009]), so as to further understand why ostensibly "small" works are of considerable cultural value.