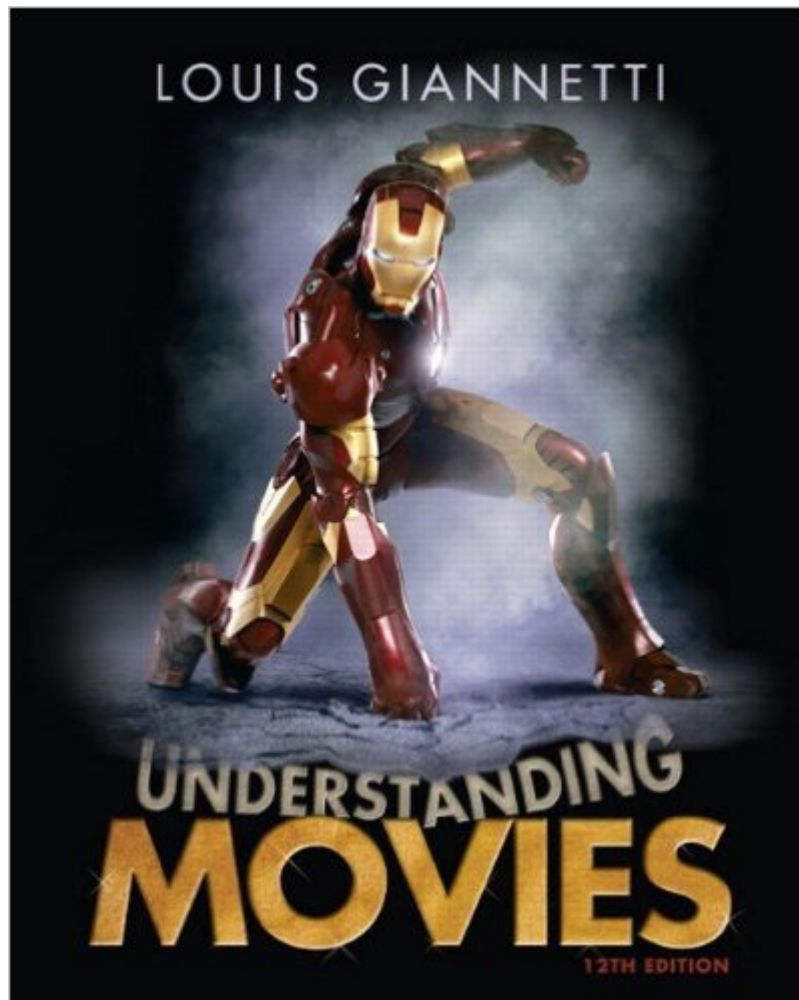


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# Understanding Movies (12th Edition)



## Synopsis

Updated in a new 12th edition, this book is organized around the elements of film and provides readers valuable insight into how movies communicate and convey meaning to their audiences. This book engages readers in the fascinating language of film and helps further their appreciation and understanding of why and how movie watchers respond as they do to different films. From Slumdog Millionaire to Transformers, this book provides readers with a new way of looking at films that are familiar to them through contemporary coverage

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Understanding Movies" is an excellent primer book for anyone starting to learn the art of film. It is not a book that tells you why certain films are great, or why some are inferior. Rather, its objective is for the readers to acquire a good awareness of film art so they will be able to form their own opinions about the films they see. The book is comprised of 11 chapters which can be read out of sequence: Photography, Mise en Scene, Movement, Editing, Sound, Acting, Drama, Story, Literature, Ideology, Theory. Every chapter begins with an short overview (abstract) that points out the key ideas in the chapter, then it proceeds to elaborate on them. Emphases are made not just on the technical aspects of film-making, but artistic ones as well. For instance, the chapter on photography discusses not only things like f/stop, aperture, and exposure, but also how photography can achieve certain dramatic and psychological effects. Without any hint of snobbery, the book uses examples from all kinds of films, from revered classics to recent box-office hits, to illustrate aspects of the art form. For instance, it cites James Cameron's TITANIC as an example of

a filmmaker's subtle use of different flesh tones to evoke a sense of optimism or doom. The chapter on "Ideology" was not available on some earlier editions. It provides a fascinating discussion on how movies often contain either implicit or explicit political leanings, religious beliefs, ethical values, and other allusions that reflect the attitudes of the filmmakers. It also includes a discussion on portrayals of gays and lesbians in films.

Hey, wanna make a bunch of money? Let's write a college text book! We've got a captive audience that has no choice but to buy our book. Then every two or three years we can release a new edition and eliminate that nasty habit students have of reselling used text books they no longer need. Too much work, you say? Okay, let's just slap a different picture on the cover and release the old edition again! Can't quite picture it? Need an example to emulate? Try this one: I've been using Louis Giannetti's *Understanding Movies* since the second or third edition. Over the years I've occasionally been pleased to see a new edition which boasts some major improvements. But in my opinion, there haven't been any since the seventh edition. Now here's the tenth edition and every film student in the country has to fork out for it rather than getting their roommate's 9th edition for a buck or two. So what do you get for that extra money? A new cover certainly. I don't know about you but I wouldn't be caught dead with a text book with *Gladiator* on the cover - that would be SO three years ago! And there's an entirely new chapter! That's worth paying an extra fifty bucks - no, wait. Same chapter that's been there since Clinton was president. They just renamed it. Did some technological revolution change the face of cinema, warranting a new version of the book to address it? Giannetti has added a new section on special effects to the chapter on photography. It's less than one page of text. I haven't read the entire book yet, but I've yet to see any reference to the fact that some films have been shot entirely on hi-def video rather than celluloid, or that this might be a significant trend in the future.

Has the beleaguered American student proletariat finally had Too Much of inflated textbook prices and planned obsolescence? At the time of this writing, the 12th (Transformer cover) edition of Louis Giannetti's *UNDERSTANDING MOVIES* has only had about a month on the shelves and has garnered only a few reviews, mostly quite negative, and mostly assaulting the ethics of releasing yet another updated volume as opposed to critiquing the text per se. This review may have a similar "meta" flavor but I hope to offer some potentially useful facts: -- The Eleventh Edition (Spiderman cover) has a retail price about the same as the new 12th. Yet discounts it more, making it significantly cheaper (alas, though, used copies are scarcer and selling for pretty close to new

prices). -- Nonetheless, the 12th edition has almost fifty FEWER pages than the 11th! Spend more, get less? I can't for the life of me understand why anyone would want the 12th. -- The textbook publisher may have pushed one time too often in this recessionary era because the prior (again, 11th) edition is not yet three full years old. -- I defy anyone to compare the 12th, 11th, 10th (Sean Penn cover) or even 9th (Russell Crowe/Gladiator) editions and tell me that the gap between new/latest and very good condition/several generations ago is all THAT significant that it justifies such a quantum increase in price. -- Frank Hoffman of Philadelphia, my Comment notwithstanding, made some very good points in 2007 about how contemporary students are captive audiences. But, I would add, only if the instructor insists that all students buy the utmost latest. Open up earlier options and the price will crash! E.g.

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