FILM STUDIES PROGRAM COURSES

Spring 2016

Core Classes

Film Studies/English 290 | Introduction to Film Studies

Andrew Martin
Section 001 | MW, 10:00 am – 11:50 am

This course introduces students to the basics of film analysis, cinematic formal elements, genre, and narrative structure and helps students develop the skills to recognize, analyze, describe and enjoy film as an art and entertainment form. To understand how films are constructed to make meaning and engage audiences, students will be introduced to the basic "building blocks" and formal elements (narrative, mise-en-scene, cinematography, sound and editing) that make up the film as well as some fundamental principles of analysis, genre, style, performance and storytelling. The class includes weekly readings, screenings, and short writing assignments.

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Film Studies 690 | Seminar in Contemporary Cinema and Media

Contemporary Media: Form/Content/Audience

Tasha Oren
Section 001 | F 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Building on your knowledge of film and/or TV theory, the course examines contemporary theoretical engagements with film and television as popular narratives. We will consider current work on media authorship, content, genre and reception that take account of digital technology, convergence, storytelling styles, and industrial and generic developments. In addition to exploring how stories are told in film and television, we will consider distribution, audience behavior, fan cultures, and what critics and scholars have made of our rapidly changing entertainment industry. The course will also serve as a workshop for students to conceive, research, develop and write their own capstone research essay (or multi-media project). All readings and out-of-class screenings will be available on D2L.
From cinema to cell phones, the multimedia context of contemporary life is rapidly changing; this course will examine some of those shifting and ubiquitous technologies and images. Entertainment Arts offers a general introduction to the critical study of film, television, and new media. While examining each technology individually we will also work in a state of persistent comparison, endeavoring to comprehend media culture as a larger phenomenon. Through readings, screenings, and discussions, students will develop sophisticated understandings of media culture in terms of technical properties, industrial practices, representation, cultural theories, social responses and more. This course counts towards the Digital Arts and Cultures Certificate.

This course is a global survey of cinema from the 1940s to the present. Topics include the demise of the American studio system in the 1950s, innovations in moving image technology, changes in film exhibition, the spread of international art cinema, filmmaking in the developing world, the contemporary Hollywood blockbuster, the rise of independent cinema and film festivals, and the structure of the contemporary global media industries. Films screened may include Rebel Without a Cause (USA), Bicycle Thieves (Italy), Wild Strawberries (Sweden), Pather Panchali (India), Memories of Underdevelopment (Cuba), Yeelen (Mali), Raiders of the Lost Ark (USA), and Chungking Express (Hong Kong).
**Film Studies/Women & Gender Studies 212 | Intermediate Topics in Film Studies**

Film, TV, & Masculinity  
Molly McCourt  
Section 001 | TR, 11:00 am – 12:50 pm

This course explores masculinity across different genres of U.S. film, television and media. Over the semester, students will study representations of the American man and how these portrayals connect to cultural beliefs concerning success, heroism, violence, failure, fatherhood, and national identity. In following these characters through Western plains, corner offices, city streets, and dinner tables, we will question the idea of a “self-made man” and what it means to “be a man” in contemporary society. Further, this course will focus on the recent rise of the morally ambiguous male protagonist in 21st century film and television and explore the origins of this dynamic character in earlier works. Screenings may include: *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, Jaws, Breaking Bad, Mad Men, The Wire, and Queer Eye for the Straight Guy.*

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**Comp Lit 233 | Literature and Film**

Africa Inside Out  
Daniel Haumschild  
Section 001 | MW, 11:00 am – 12:15 pm

Of all inhabited spaces on the earth, perhaps none is more misunderstood by Westerners than Africa. Many individuals have learned what they know about Africa from misguided stereotypes or sensationalized news stories that are provided by non-Africans. The lack of information does not halt our fascination with the continent. As a result, we heartily consume the reductionist or sensational representations that span from 19th century narratives about the ‘dark continent’ to modern Hollywood depictions of mutant silverback gorillas with automatic weapons. In this course we will examine such representations with a critical eye.

Aiding our analysis of these depictions from ‘outside’ will be works that come from ‘inside’. We will juxtapose each non-African work with one that has been created by an African author, poet, or and filmmaker. By examining these representations, we will gain a better understanding of the historical, social, political and cultural realities of various places within Africa. Furthermore, when we place these works in contrast to those from the ‘outside’ we will witness just how shameful some interpretations of the continent can be.

Ultimately, the course aims to generate a better sense of specific places within the continent and to challenge each student to reconsider the source of their information. In this course we will pay closer attention to the bias, ideology, intention, and commercial components of production. We will therefore be able to discern that not every ‘outside’ depiction is wrong and not every ‘inside’
representation is positive or even accurate. Along the way, however, we will begin to identify reliable sources of information as our critique of each work becomes more contextualized and nuanced through our heightened awareness of the realities facing Africa and Africans.

**Film Studies/English 291 | Introduction to Television Studies**

Jessica Johnston  
Section 201 | ONLINE

For decades, television has been an important fixture in our daily lives. Now, we also increasingly watch TV on the go--using computers, cell phones, DVRs, and DVDs to keep up with our favorite shows. This course provides an introduction studying television both by looking back and forward. We will watch a wide variety of TV shows, including: *The Twilight Show*, *West Wing*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Bob's Burgers*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, basketball games... sometimes you'll even be assigned to watch the commercials! We will learn more about TV's past and the factors shaping what television shows look like today. We will also discuss more recent technological changes, including the digitization of television, and how these things may affect what television looks like in the years to come.

**Upper Division**

**Film Studies/English 312 | Topics in Film Studies**

US Independent Film: Contemporary Realism  
Benjamin Schneider  
Section 001 | TR, 9:00 am – 10:50 am

Students in this course will investigate the style of Contemporary Realism in US Independent Cinema. For instance, when we say that a film was “realistic” or that something was “unrealistic” about a certain presentation, what do we mean? Is this the same as realism as a style? What is realism, then? What do we mean when we say “realistic” or “realism” in regard to the cinema? Can a reproduction even be spoken about in the same context or comparably as reality? We will explore these and more questions about realism in contemporary cinema in this course.

Films might include: *Wendy and Lucy*, *Good-bye Solo*, *The Return*, *Winter’s Bone*, *Funny Ha-Ha*, and more.
**Film Studies/English 316 | World Cinema**

British Cinema: New Wave to Post Punk  
Andrew Martin  
Section 001 | MW, 2:00 pm – 3:50 pm

The course will be a survey of British cinema from 1960 to the early 21st Century, with a mix of popular and lesser known films.


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**Film Studies/English 380 | Media and Society**

Special Effects  
Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece  
Section 001 | MW, 12:00 pm – 1:50 pm

In this course, we will study the development of special effects, from early camera tricks by Georges Méliès, to Ray Harryhausen’s stop-motion monster effects, to matte painting in science fiction and *Black Narcissus*, to the creature effects perfected by John Carpenter in films such as *The Thing*, to the cheap but effective blood and guts in 1970-1980s horror like *The Evil Dead*, to bullet time in *The Matrix*, to make-up in *Planet of the Apes*, to today’s motion capture and CGI in films such as *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* and *Lord of the Rings*. Since this class will be invested in questioning whether film can or should be a visceral medium, primary focus of the course will be on analog effects rather than digital. We will study the historical contexts of changing effects technologies, but will maintain a focus on theories of the body, gender, and sexuality, among others. We will continually ask the question of how special effects transform film, a visual and aural medium, into an illusion of depth, materiality, touch, and immersion. How do special effects reconfigure film’s relationship to bodies? How does that relationship change in the era of the digital? Is there an experiential difference between analog effects and digital effects, and how or should we define that difference?
Film Studies/English 383 | Cinema and Genre

The Western
Benjamin Schneider
Section 001 | TR, 1:00 pm – 3:50 pm

In this course, we will explore many iterations of the category called Western, which has been said to represent a distillation of the quintessential aspects of US character and sensibility and has entertained millions with its intense aesthetic and ideological pursuits. Throughout the semester, we will investigate ideas about genre, myth, stardom, industry, and authorship, all while attending to the ways in which the Western reflects engagements by filmmakers with their contemporary historical circumstances.

Films might include: The Searchers, Dead Man, No Country for Old Men, The Wild Bunch, and more.

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Film Studies/English 394 | Theories of Mass Culture

Trans-Media Narratives
Stuart Moulthrop
Section 201 | ONLINE

This course takes up stories of monstrosity, heroism, and self-creation, all of which loosely fit into the tradition of the fantastic, though each text also connects with other vital traditions as well. Our selections weave in and out of three media: novel, film, and digital text. In at least one case (Watchmen) we will consider direct adaptation; in others (Patchwork Girl) we will explore parody, pastiche, and re-invention; and in still others (Birdman, Tigerman) the crossing of media streams is even more subtle. You will have the occasion to study the works in question closely, to discuss them in depth in the online forum, and to summarize your thinking either in a traditional paper or (on one occasion) a creative project.

On the syllabus: Frankenstein (novel); Patchwork Girl (hypertext fiction); Promethea (graphic novel); Watchmen (graphic novel); Watchmen (film); Birdman (film); Tigerman (novel); Dys4ia (online game).
Comparative Literature 461 | Film and Fiction Interaction

Armageddon
Daniel Haumschild
Section 001 | TR, 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

The end of the world is a problem that we expect to face and for thousands of years we have been imagining what that might look like. In this course we will have the joy of looking at depictions of Armageddon that have been generated through both literature and film. Particularly, we will be looking at films that attempt to recreate the end of the world as it is portrayed in writing. By looking at both media, the course will provide an opportunity to address the capacities and limitations of each form. As we will see, in certain films, the concept of total annihilation comes off as campy or even comical compared to their literary counterparts. On the other hand, the realistic capacities of the moving picture can generate a morbid horror or fascination that may be difficult to replicate in print.

Each work underscores a different mode of destruction—from the return of God, to a zombie apocalypse, to the atom bomb. Along the way, we will thus be treated to depictions of the human that reveal some redeeming and some terrifying qualities. Different genres will give us alternate understandings of how we perceive both the spirit and the stupidity of people. In turn, we will be glancing at both the most sympathetic and the most cynical representations of humanity.

Disclaimer: fans of Ben Affleck will be heartbroken to note that the movie Armageddon is not listed below. However, the following books and films may be selected: The Bible/The Final Judgment, Noah, Deluge, The Body Snatchers/Invasion of the Body Snatchers, On The Beach, 2001: A Space Odyssey, The Andromeda Strain, Children of Men, The Road, World War Z.