

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

READING VISUAL CULTURE



CAMF4002

2017-18

CAMF4002 READING VISUAL CULTURE

20 Credit Module

Room: TL10

Monday 9.00-12.00

Module Coordinator: Dr Susan Drake

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Office Hours: Monday 1.00-2.00

SYLLABUS

This module will provide an introduction to the critical analysis of film and other visual media texts. Through the close analysis of a variety of texts, we shall look at the ways in which form and content communicate meaning to audiences. Students will be introduced to the formal conventions of cinematography, mise-en-scene and editing, and the concepts of narrative and narrative realism. The ideological aspects of film and media texts will be addressed, alongside the cultural factors at play in film production and reception. Contemporary critical and theoretical approaches to the study of film will also be introduced, and by the end of the module students will have the conceptual, aesthetic and critical framework to analyse a variety of film and media texts.

The module will engage with a number of essential film texts (listed below) to illustrate a variety of techniques, ideological and aesthetic choices, and narrative forms. Students will be given an indication of which film texts are most relevant to each of the specific seminars, but it will be useful for students to familiarise themselves with the full list of films as they will be referred to on an ongoing basis throughout discussions. Students will always take more from seminars if they are able to offer their own views on the films under discussion, and preparation through familiarising yourself with the material is vital.

In addition to seminars that are largely based on film and television texts, there will be sessions on other media forms, such as digital animation and gaming.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this module students should be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of film representation and the formal elements of film aesthetics;
- analyse film and media texts from a variety of theoretical perspectives;
- demonstrate an understanding of the ideological implications of representational conventions and techniques.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Note-taking, giving presentations, research skills, writing essays, communication, evaluative and analytical skills. Recognition of formal techniques involved in the construction of visual media texts.

MODULE EVALUATION

At the end of the module you will be asked to complete a module evaluation form. Please refer to the learning outcomes when making your evaluation.

TIMETABLE

The course is taught over an eleven week period, starting in week one of Semester one. Each seminar will last for three hours. There will be a reading week in week six, during which presentations will be given by students; these will be timetabled outside of the normal seminar hours.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Essential

Bordwell, D. and Thompson, K. (2010) *Film Art: An Introduction* (9th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Corrigan, T. and White, P. (2009) *The Film Experience: An Introduction* (2nd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Recommended

Bateman, J. and Schmidt, K.H. (2011) *Multimodal Film Analysis: How Films Mean*. London: Routledge.

Bignell, J. (2012) *Introduction to Television Studies* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Braudy, L. and Cohen, M. (eds.) (2009) *Film Theory and Criticism* (7th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, B. (2011) *Cinematography: Theory and Practice*. Oxford: Focal Press.

Brown, S., Street, S. and Watkins, L.I. (eds.) (2012) *Colour and the Moving Image: History, Theory, Aesthetics, Archive*. London: Routledge.

Buchan, S. (ed.) (2013) *Pervasive Animation*. London: Routledge.

Buckland, W. (2007) *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Buckland, W. (2009) *Film Theory and Contemporary Hollywood Movies*. London: Routledge.

Buckland, W. (2012) *Film Theory: Rational Reconstructions*. London: Routledge.

Coates, P. (2010) *Cinema and Colour*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Cook, P. (ed.) (2007) *The Cinema Book* (3rd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Curtis, D. (2006) *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Dick, B.F. (2009) *Anatomy of Film* (6th ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Elsaesser, T. and Hagener, M. (2009) *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses*. London: Routledge.

Etherington-Wright, C. and Doughty, R. (2011) *Understanding Film Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Gaut, B. (2010) *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gibbs, J. (2001) *Mise-en-Scene*. London: Wallflower.

Hand, M. (2011) *Ubiquitous Photography*. Oxford: Polity.

Helsby, W. (ed.) (2006) *Understanding Representation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Kydd, E. (2011) *The Critical Practice of Film: An Introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Lehman, P. and Luhr, W. (2008) *Thinking About Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Lotz, A. and Gray, J. (2011) *Television Studies*. Oxford: Polity.

McDougall, J. and O'Brien, W. (2008) *Studying Videogames*. Leighton Buzzard: Auteur.

Murphy, R. (ed.) (2009) *The British Cinema Book* (3rd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Nelmes, J. (ed.) (2011) *Introduction to Film Studies* (5th ed.). London: Routledge.

Orpen, V. (2003) *Film Editing*. London: Wallflower.

Phillips, W.H. (2009) *Film: An Introduction* (4th ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Sanders, J. (2009) *The Film Genre Book*. Leighton Buzzard: Auteur.

Smith, G.M. (2007) *Film Structure and the Emotion System*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Walters, J. (ed.) (2010) *Film Moments: Criticism, History, Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Whitlock, T. (2009) *Metaphor and Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wickham, P. (2007) *Understanding Television Texts*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Journals

Cinema Journal
Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television
Quarterly Review of Film and Video
Screen
Sight and Sound
Studies in European Cinema

Websites

www.afi.com
www.bfi.org.uk
www.imdb.com

Students will be directed to appropriate online resources over the course of the module. Students should also use the library catalogue to source texts relevant to the study of individual films and filmmakers.

ESSENTIAL FILM AND TELEVISION TEXTS:

The Wizard of Oz (Haley, 1939)

North by North-West (Hitchcock, 1959)

Psycho (Hitchcock, 1960)

Die Hard (McTiernan, 1988)

Jurassic Park (Spielberg, 1993)

The Usual Suspects (Singer, 1995)

La Haine (Kassovitz, 1995)

O Brother, Where Art Thou? (Coen Bros., 2000)

The Proposition (Hillcoat, 2005)

Little Miss Sunshine (Dayton and Faris, 2006)

Moonrise Kingdom (Anderson, 2012)

Man of Steel (Snyder, 2013)

True Detective (Fukunaga, 2014)

All DVDs are available in the library.

COURSE OUTLINE

1. **Cinematography and Editing** (2nd Oct 2017)
Moonrise Kingdom; Jurassic Park; Little Miss Sunshine.
2. **Cinematography and Editing** (9th Oct 2017)
True Detective; North by Northwest; Little Miss Sunshine.
3. **Cinematography and Editing** (16th October 2017)
La Haine, Psycho, O Brother, Where Art Thou?
4. **Mise-en-scène** (23rd Oct 2017)
Psycho; The Proposition.
5. **Mise-en-scène & Visual Symbols** (30th Oct 2017)
Little Miss Sunshine; La Haine.
6. READING WEEK – STUDENT PRESENTATIONS
7. **Film Narration** (13th Nov 2017)
North by Northwest; Die Hard.
8. **Film Narration** (20th Nov 2017)
The Usual Suspects; True Detective
9. **Film and Ideology** (27th Nov 2017)
Little Miss Sunshine; True Detective.
10. **Film and Ideology: Narrative Closure** (4th Dec 2017)
The Wizard of Oz; The Usual Suspects; Die Hard.
11. **Digital Post-production** (11th Dec 2017)
Man of Steel; O Brother, Where Art Thou?; Jurassic Park.

Essential film titles other than those listed above for individual sessions will be referred to in seminar discussions; the listings above indicate films that will be given particular emphasis in seminars.

ASSESSMENT Coursework 100%

Assessment 1 (50%): Presentation (to the equivalent of 2000 words)

To take place during Reading Week, w/c 6th Nov 2017.

Presentation of 10-15 minutes, to comprise the close, formal analysis of a selected scene from one of the films or television series studied on the module. (This should evidence awareness of cinematographic and editing techniques, and appreciation of visual compositions and the use of mise-en-scène.)

Assessment 2 (50%): Essay (2000 words)

Assignment due: Noon, 11th Jan 2018.

To comprise critical and theoretical analysis of film and media texts studied on the module. Students should answer ONE of the following questions:

1. Discuss the concept of narrative closure in relation to TWO of the essential film or television texts. How does closure – or a lack of closure – affect the viewer's reading of the texts?
2. Discuss the manner in which TWO essential texts deploy, or play with, the conventions of narrative realism.
3. Discuss the representation of female AND male characters in ONE essential film or television text. What ideological meanings do these representations reveal?
4. Provide an analysis of the ideological content of ONE of the essential texts.
5. Discuss the function of new technologies and special effects in ONE of the essential texts.

You must avoid using the same texts and examples or the same subject matter in your two assignments.

Work should be labelled with your student number, module code, and assignment number and full title. The essay question being addressed should be reproduced in full.

Feedback will be given by 30th November 2017, and 1st February 2018 for Assignments one and two respectively.

All written work must be produced in a Microsoft Word compatible document, and submitted via Moodle and in hard copy to the staff office TL12 by the deadlines given above.

Presentations scripts must be printed out and submitted at the point of presentation.

Work should be double spaced, page numbered, and fully referenced according to the School's referencing booklet.

Filmographies and bibliographies must be included in the submission of all written work.

A word count should be supplied at the end of your work, which should not include filmographies and bibliographies.

Students will submit forms 1 (Assignment Specification) and 2 (Student Self Evaluation Form) below with their assignments. These forms are available on Moodle for you to access.

FEEDBACK

Feedback is an essential part of all education and training programmes. It helps learners to maximise their potential at different stages of training, raise their awareness of strengths and areas for improvement, and identify actions to be taken to improve performance.

Feedback can be seen as informal (for example in day-to-day encounters between teachers and students or trainees, between peers or between colleagues) or formal (for example as part of written or clinical assessment). However, there is no sharp dividing line between assessment and teaching in the area of giving feedback on learning. Feedback is part of the overall dialogue or interaction between teacher and learner, not a one-way communication.

During your studies you will therefore receive feedback in many ways, including the following:

- Dialogue between teachers and students in formal classes
- Direct questions and responses from tutors inside and outside formal classes
- Email correspondence between teachers and students
- Interactions between students and teachers using the module message board on Moodle
- Informal comments and responses to pitches and presentations in classes
- Comments and annotations added to written submissions, such as essays and reflective journals
- Formal written feedback in response to assignments recorded on the summative assessment module feedback forms

You will have the opportunity to discuss your feedback with your Module tutor.

Feedback will be returned on assessed work within three weeks of submission.

FORMS TO BE SUBMITTED WITH ASSESSED WORK

Each assignment has assessment specification forms that need to be signed and completed at the point at which assessments are handed in. Your module tutor will discuss these with you at the beginning of the module, and will show you where they can be found on the Moodle pages for the module.