

FMST 20
Spring 2014
TTh 9:55-11:10 Lang Music Bldg 204
Screening T 7-10pm LPAC 101

Professor Patricia White
K111A, x8148
Office hrs: T Th 11:30-12:30
and 2-3, also by appointment

Critical Theories for Film and Media

This class will introduce and examine key authors, debates, texts, and contexts in critical and cultural theory as a basis for work in film and media studies. Film was one of the principle innovations of a rapidly modernizing and globalizing world at the turn of the last century, and artists and intellectuals were attracted to the new medium as a prism of technological modernity. In the wake of World War II and in the context of decolonization, film and television were interrogated as ideological mechanisms of domination on the one hand and tools for historical evidence and self-representation on the other. Finally, at the end of the 20th century, digital technologies offered new experiences and ways of understanding connectivity, human intelligence, and forms of social control.

This class links important currents of 20th-century thought—including psychoanalysis, Marxist cultural theory, semiotics and structuralism, poststructuralism, feminist and queer theory, and postcolonial and critical race studies—with the history, aesthetics, and theory of film and media. We will address the “linguistic turn” in critical theory and the consequent status of the visual as well as the role of representation and ideology in constructing subjectivity, difference, and our access to reality. Film texts will help us to explore the media’s simultaneous status as art, industry, and popular culture and serve as our primary example of ways that power is imbedded in institutions. Debates important to the history of classical and contemporary film theory—including medium specificity, the status of the author, montage vs. realism, the place of narrative—will be positioned in relation to interdisciplinary theories of signification, national identity and postmodernism.

We will seek to understand how paradigm shifts—from the legacies of Marx and Freud to poststructuralism, feminism, multiculturalism, and the society of the spectacle—have affected forms of knowing and/in the academy. Reading closely and critically and placing theoretical work in historical and social context, we will discuss how various theories are connected, productively in tension, or even incompatible, as well as what traditions they presume or challenge. At the same time we will engage film texts deeply as objects of aesthetic analysis and provocations to thought. Our goals in bringing attention to the history of critical theory from the perspective of film and media studies are to foreground questions of the visual, technology and consumer culture in theorizations of modernity and postmodernity; root students’ work in film and media studies within knowledge of influential theories and methods; and elucidate concepts in critical theory through film texts.

This class will be demanding and sometimes unsettling. You will not be expected to master all the material and your classmates are in the same position you are. But the ideas will make more sense as we go along, and I am counting on the concept of montage to generate understanding from disparate source materials.

Required texts available at the bookstore:

Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, with Meta Mazaj, eds. *Critical Visions in Film Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Bedford St. Martin's (2011). (CV) on syllabus

Thomas Leitch, et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2 ed. (N) on syllabus

Please read relevant section introductions and all headnotes in the anthologies. If you find any errors in or otherwise have suggestions about *Critical Visions*, please let me know, as this will be most valuable for the second edition.

Required readings that are not marked as to be found in these anthologies will be posted on the class Moodle site. Please be advised that readings may be changed, dropped, or adjusted based on class pace and emphasis. I will try to give advance notice, but please check Moodle for updates. Please print out and bring all texts to class for ready reference.

Screenings:

Tuesday evening screenings of one or two films are mandatory and you should be prepared to take notes for writing assignments and class discussion. Please silence and dim all electronic devices. Please do not distract your classmates with noise or smelly food and clean up after yourselves. If you need to miss a screening or two because of conflicts with sports performances or other classes, please watch the film on your own. If you have conflicts more than three times during the semester, please consult with me at the beginning of the semester. There will be one or two additional required lectures or screenings during the semester; if you have a legitimate conflict with these, we will arrange a substitute activity. Films listed as "clips" on the syllabus will be shown in class. Copies of all films are on overnight reserve at McCabe until Tuesday morning of the screening, and I will keep them until Thursday's class. If you need a film during this period, please contact me.

Recommended general texts:

Neil Badmington and Julia Thomas, *The Routledge Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*.

Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 3rd ed.

Pam Cook, et al, eds., *The Cinema Book*, 3rd ed.

Tim Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience*. Bedford St. Martins, 3rd ed.

John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson, eds. *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*

There will be supplementary resources posted on Moodle and you can consult the bibliographies in the reading or stop by office hours with questions about the materials or your projects.

Class format:

Please read the texts for the day indicated. Tuesday will be a mix of lecture and discussion and Thursday's discussion will frame the films or other audiovisual texts within the context of the week's reading. Please be prepared to discuss the previous class meeting's texts.

Requirements:

Take home midterm. Due week 6. 20%

Final paper. 12 pages, topics to be developed in consultation with me. Preliminary annotated bibliography and abstract due week 12. Paper due during exam week. 40%

Presentation and film commentary. Each week at the Thursday meeting, two students will select and show a clip from the week's assigned film and facilitate 20 minutes of class discussion in terms of the week's topic. These students will later produce a voiceover commentary for a 3-5 minute clip from that film and present it to the class. Details to be given in class. 15%

Response papers. Students will be assigned to groups and given responsibility to post a brief (1-page, single-spaced) response to the course materials four times during the semester. Please post by Wed. at 8 for Thursday's class. Responses may focus on one or more readings for Tuesday's or Thursday's class, or a film screened—as long as the film is discussed in terms of the theories addressed that week. Please make concrete reference to passages in one or more readings in your post. You might question the argument, outline a confusion about or elaborate on context, comment on writing style, or connect a reading to a debate or to the film. Come to class prepared to discuss your own and your classmates' posts. 15%

Mandatory attendance, including at screenings, and active, respectful participation. 10%

Writing guidelines

Please double-space all printed assignments, using 12-pt font and 1-inch margins all around, numbering your pages. MLA citation style is preferred; please reference the guide to Plagiarism and Citation at the Dept. of English Literature website: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/x10027.xml>. Please include director and year of release in parenthesis after the first mention of a film title, and names of major actors after first mention of a character's name. Credits and release dates can be found at IMDB.com. You do not need to cite dialogue from a film.

Disability Accommodations

If you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Leslie Hempling in the Office of Student Disability Services to set up an appointment. <http://www.swarthmore.edu/x7687.xml>.

Critical Theories for Film and Media
Syllabus

I. SIGNIFICATION AND SOCIAL FORMATION

Week 1. Death of the Author/Birth of Film Studies

1/21 “Auteur Theory Revisited” (CV)
Peter Wollen, “The Auteur Theory” (CV)
Optional: Timothy Corrigan, “The Commercial Auteur”

Touch of Evil (Orson Welles, 1956, 95 min.)

1/23 Francois Truffaut on *Touch of Evil*
Roland Barthes, “Death of the Author” (N)
Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?” (N)

Optional: The Film Experience, 3rd ed., ch. 11 (Moodle)

Week 2. Structuralism, Narratology and Genre Theory

1/28 Tzevan Todorov, “Structural Analysis of Narrative” (N)
David Bordwell, “Classical Hollywood Narration”
Roland Barthes, “Myth Today”
Richard Dyer, “Entertainment and Utopia” (CV)

Clips: *That’s Entertainment III*

The Lonely Villa (D. W. Griffith, 1909, 8 min.)
My Darling Clementine (John Ford, 1946, 97 min.)
Gigi (Vicente Minnelli, 1958, 115 min.)

1/30 Thomas Schatz, “Film Genre and the Genre Film” (CV)
Rick Altman, “Semantic/Syntactic/Pragmatic Approach to Film Genre” (CV)
Claire Johnston, “Women’s Cinema as Counter Cinema”
Raymond Bellour, “To Segment/To Analyze”

Optional: Claude Levi-Strauss, “The Structural Analysis of Myth”
Claude Levi-Strauss, “The Principles of Kinship”
Robert Altman, “A Semantic/Syntactical Approach to Film Genre”

Week 3. Interrogating Nation and National Cinema

2/4 Benedict Anderson from *Imagined Communities* (CV)
Frantz Fanon, from *Black Skin/White Mask* (N)
Stephen Crofts, “Reconceptualizing National Cinemas” (CV)

Raoul Peck visit at International House 6pm, optional Master Class at Scribe 4pm

Measures of Distance (Mona Hatoum, Palestine/Canada, 15 min.) on Moodle
Battle of Algiers (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1965, Italy/Algeria, 123 min.) on Moodle

2/6 Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino, "Towards a Third Cinema" (CV)
Hamid Naficy, from *An Accented Cinema* (CV)

Optional: Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, "Third Worldist Cinema"
Ella Shohat "Post Third Worldist Culture"

Week 4. Modernity and Montage

2/11 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological
Reproducibility" (CV)
Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament"
Miriam Hansen from *Cinema and Experience*

Man with a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929, USSR, 68 min.)
Battleship Potemkin (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925, USSR 69 min.)

2/13 Sergei Eisenstein, "Beyond the Shot" (CV)
Dziga Vertov, "Film Directors: A Revolution" (CV)
Clips: *The Crowd, People on Sunday*

Week 5. Rethinking Realism

2/18 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas" (N)
Gyorgy Lukacs, "Realism in the Balance"
Andre Bazin, "Evolution of the Language of Cinema" (CV)

The Gleaners and I (Agnes Varda, 2000, France, 82 min.)
Bicycle Thieves (Vittorio De Sica, 1948, Italy, 93 min.)

2/20 Siegfried Kracauer, "The Establishment of Physical Existence" (CV)
Andre Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image" (CV)
Timothy Corrigan from *The Essay Film*

Week 6. Culture Industry

2/25 Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry" (CV)
Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message"

Mad Men episodes

2/27 No Class-Midterm due

Week 7. Poststructuralism and Narrativity

3/4 Friedrich Nietzsche, "Of Truth and Lying in an Extra Moral Sense" (N)
Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text" (N)
Jacques Derrida, "Difference"
David Bordwell, "Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice" (CV)

Last Year at Marienbad (Alain Resnais, 1961, France, 94 min.)
Mayhem (Abigail Child, 1987, US, 16 min.)

3/6 Gilles Deleuze from *Cinema 2* (CV)

Spring break

Week 8. Semiotics and Ideology

3/18 Ferdinand de Saussure from *Course in General Linguistics* (N)
Roman Jakobson from "Two Aspects of Language" (N)
Emile Benveniste, "Subjectivity in Language"
Peter Wollen, "Semiology and Cinema" (CV)

Two or Three Things I Know About Her (Jean-Luc Godard, 1966, France, 90 min.)
Zorns Lemma (Hollis Frampton, 1970, US, 60 min.)

View online: Nathalie Bookchin, *Zorns Lemma 2* (12 min.)

3/20 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (N)
Jean-Luc Godard, interviews
Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism" (CV)

II SUBJECTIVITY AND SOCIAL FIELD

Week 9. Psychoanalysis

3/25 Meet in Language Resource Center for Voiceover Commentary Instruction

Peeping Tom (Michael Powell, 1960, UK, 101 min.)
Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954, 112 min.) 9pm recommended

3/27 Plato, "Allegory of the Cave" (CV)
Jean Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" (CV)
Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier* (selections) (CV)
Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I" (optional)

Week 10. Spectatorship and Sexual Difference

4/1 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (CV)
Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism" (CV)

In the Mood for Love (Wong Kar-wai, 2000, 98 min.)
Dottie Gets Spanked (Todd Haynes, 1993, 30 min.)

4/3 Sigmund Freud, from *Interpretation of Dreams* (N) and
"A Child Is Being Beaten"
Richard Dyer, *Stars* (CV)

Clip: *Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (Sophie Fiennes, UK, 2006, 150 min.)

Optional: Judith Mayne "Paradoxes of Spectatorship" (CV)

4/3 at 7pm LPAC Cinema, Chinatown Film Project screening (attendance optional)

4/4 at 7pm in Lang Concert Hall *The Yellow Ticket* (Germany, 1918, starring Pola Negri) with Alicia Svigals and Marilyn Lerner performing Svigals' original score. FMST's Kaori Kitao Endowment for Cinema History Inaugural Event (attendance optional)

Week 11. Queer Theory

4/8 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (N)
Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble* (N)

Maedchen in Uniform (Leontine Sagan, 1931, Germany, 87 min.)

4/10 B. Ruby Rich, "From Repressive Tolerance to Erotic Liberation"
Eve Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet" (N)

4/11 4:30 pm SC 101 Independent Producer Karin Chien lecture (attendance optional)

Week 12. Cultural Studies

4/15 Bob Stam and Ella Shohat, "Stereotype/Realism" (CV)
Pierre Bourdieu from *Distinction* (N)
Antonio Gramsci, "The Formation of the Intellectuals" (N)
Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding" (CV)
Dick Hebdige, from *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (N)

Paris Is Burning (Jennie Livingston, 1990, 71 min.)

4/17 Kobena Mercer, "Dark and Lovely" (CV)
B. Ruby Rich, "New Queer Cinema"
Jose Muñoz from *Cruising Utopia*

Week 13. Postmodernism and Globalization

4/22 Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra” (N)
 Jean-Francois Lyotard, “Defining the Postmodern” (N)
 Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”

The World (Jia Zhangke, China, 2004, 143 min.)

4/24 Dudley Andrew, “An Atlas of World Cinema” (CV)
 Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” (CV)

paper topics and preliminary bibliographies due

Week 14. Conclusion

4/29 Timothy Corrigan from *The Essay Film*, visit Audiovisualcy

5/1 Voiceover presentations, please upload to Swatfiles before class

Final paper due date May 15 at noon on Moodle