

Film and Media Studies 1  
Fall 2014  
Class TTh 9:55-11:20 K115  
Screening T 7-10 LPAC Cinema

Patricia White  
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ofc hrs: M 11-2, TTh 11:30-  
12:30, and by appointment

## Introduction to Film and Media Studies

From the invention of cinema at the end of the 19th century to the proliferation of digital media today, moving-image technology has definitively shaped our world. As art, text, technology, industry, psychological experience, and social practice, film and media demand interdisciplinary critical responses. This course explores the formal elements, history, and social role of moving-image media, with a focus on cinema.

This lecture/discussion course, intended as a general introduction and the required entry course for majors and minors in Film and Media Studies, has four basic goals. First, it will develop skills in audiovisual analysis. You will become fluent in the vocabulary of film form and learn to construct an argument about *how* as well as *what* sounds and images mean. Second, you will learn how to write about film and other media texts in the academic context, incorporating formal analysis, secondary sources, and clear argumentation. Third, it will provide an introduction to the theories, methods, concerns and scope of the discipline of film and media studies. Fourth, it will orient you to world histories of moving-image media that can be explored in more depth in other classes in the department.

The first unit of the class on form will also present strategies for writing effectively about film. We then study narrative, documentary, and avant-garde modes of production before turning to approaches to media convergence, historiography, and theory. Readings will introduce key concepts and authors in film and media studies.

### Screenings:

Attendance at evening screenings is *mandatory*, and you are expected to take notes. Copies of most films are on overnight reserve at McCabe library for repeat screenings, papers and projects, but please make sure these materials are available when they might be needed for class.

### Required Texts:

Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White. *The Film Experience*. NY: Bedford St. Martin's.  
Amy Taubin, *Taxi Driver*. London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2000.

### Recommended texts:

Timothy Corrigan, Patricia White, and Meta Mazaj, eds. *Critical Visions in Film Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Bedford St. Martin's, 2011. (CV on syllabus)  
Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ed. *Oxford History of World Cinema*. Oxford UP, 1996.

### Moodle:

Course site will be used for announcements, journals, and weekly readings not in the textbook, as well as supplementary clips and readings. The syllabus is subject to change, please check Moodle for announcements.

## Requirements:

1. Regular attendance, including at all screenings, and regular and respectful class participation (more than three absences will affect your grade) 10%
2. Journals, informal, no more than 1 double-spaced page, covering the topics below and possibly others 15%
  - Movie experience that “changed your life” (Week 2)
  - 3 posts on films screened for class (rotating responsibility by group, post on Moodle in week’s folder by Wed at 8pm)
  - Documentary, experimental, or festival film (post on Moodle, Week 10)
  - Thanksgiving media journal (post on Moodle, Week 12)
3. 5-6 page shot-by-shot analysis paper (Week 6) 20%
4. Take-home midterm exam (Week 8) 15%
5. Group work: facilitate twenty minutes of class discussion on the week’s film or films through the presentation of least one clip, with each member contributing contextualizing information or a discussion question. Time limit will be strictly enforced; practice and cue media in advance. Produce a 3-minute video essay on the film your group worked on, accompanied by a short paper including discussion of how you researched the film’s production or reception context, used formal evidence, and responded to secondary sources in the video essay (Week 13) 20%
7. Final exam 20%

Specifics of each assignment will be posted on Moodle. One assignment can be a class period late without consultation. Other late work will be graded down one half grade per day late unless arrangements have been made with me in advance.

**Mechanics for written work:** Familiarize yourself with the citation practices of college writing; plagiarism will result in a failing grade (see *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed.). Proofread: spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors will affect your grade. Use a one-inch margin all around, double spacing, and a readable typeface. Number all pages. Film titles should be underlined or in italics. After the first mention of a title, include in parenthesis the film’s director and year of release. Similarly, when you introduce a significant character’s name, include the actor’s name in parenthesis. Quoted dialogue need not be footnoted.

### Disability accommodations

If you require accommodations for a disability, please contact Leslie Hempling in the Office of Student Disability Services (lhempli1) to set up an appointment. For details visit <http://www.swarthmore.edu/x7687.xml>.

**Turn off all cell phones during class. I reserve the right to ban tablets & laptops if used inappropriately. No electronic devices during evening screenings.**

## Introduction to Film and Media Studies

### WEEK 1      **Screening Experience**

**9/2**            Introduction; clip from *Sherlock, Jr.* (Buster Keaton, 1924, 44 min.)

*Gravity* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2013, 91 min.)

*Aningaaq* (Jónas Cuarón, 2013, 7 min.)

**9/4**            Focus on one of the following readings:  
 André Bazin, “Myth of Total Cinema”  
 Scott Bukhatman selections from *Matters of Gravity*  
 Lev Manovich, “What Is Digital Cinema” CV  
 David Bordwell, “Beyond the Blockbuster”  
*The Film Experience*, skim ch. 1

Journal 1: “The Movie that Changed My Life” prompt on Moodle, post by Wed. at midnight

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### UNIT 1: Questions of Form

### WEEK 2      **Mise-en-scène**

**9/9**            *The Film Experience*, ch. 2, ch. 12 (skim)  
 Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions”  
 Films by Georges Méliès and the Lumières in class

*Superstar* (Todd Haynes, 1987, 30 min.)

*Written on the Wind* (Douglas Sirk, 1946, 99 min.)

**9/11**          Thomas Elsaesser, “Tales of Sound and Fury” CV  
 Interview with Todd Haynes

Group 1 post

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### WEEK 3      **Cinematography**

**9/16**          *The Film Experience*, ch. 3  
 Roland Barthes, excerpt from “Rhetoric of the Image” (optional)  
 Peter Wollen, “Introduction to Citizen Kane”  
 Pauline Kael, “Raising Kane” (skim)

*Meshes of the Afternoon* (Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid, 1943, 18 min.)  
*Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941, 119 min.)

**9/18**      **no class**

**WEEK 4**      **Editing: Continuity and Montage**

**9/23**      *The Film Experience*, ch. 4  
 Raymond Bellour, “The Obvious and the Code”  
 Jacques Aumont from *Montage*

Kane shot analysis due  
 Group 2 post

4:15      “Between Fiction and Essay” visiting filmmaker Guo Xiaolu

7pm      *She, A Chinese* (Guo Xiaolu, 2009, China, 103 min.)

**9/25**      stream before class: *Lonedale Operator* (D.W. Griffith, 1911, 17 min.)  
 and *Tout va Bien* (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, 1972, 95 min.)  
 Dziga Vertov from *Kino-Eye*  
 Lev Manovich, “Visualizing Vertov” online  
 Sergei Eisenstein, “Problems of a Materialist Approach to Film”  
 Jean-Luc Godard from *Godard on Godard*

Group 3 post

**WEEK 5**      **Sound Politics**

**9/30**      Rick Altman, selections from *Sound Theory/Sound Practice*  
*The Film Experience*, ch. 5

*Illusions* (Julie Dash, 1983, 45 min.)  
*Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952, 103 min.)

**10/2**      bell hooks, “Black Looks”  
 Jane Feuer, “The Self-Reflexive Musical and the Myth of Entertainment”

Group 1 post

## Unit 2: Modes and Methods

### WEEK 6      **Narrative and Nation**

- 10/7            *The Film Experience*, ch 6  
Vladimir Propp, from *Morphology of the Folktale*
- 4:15            Filmmaker visit: *Golden Gate Girl* (Louisa Wei, 2013, Hong Kong, 90 min)
- 7pm             *The Host* (Bong Joon-ho, 2006, South Korea, 119 min.)
- 10/9            Stephen Crofts, “Concepts of National Cinema” CV

### FILM ANALYSIS PAPER DUE

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## OCTOBER BREAK

### Philadelphia Film Festival October 16-26

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### WEEK 7      **Indie Auteurism**

- 10/21**            Michael Newman, selections from *Indie*  
Ted Hope, selections from *Hope for Film*  
Jose Muñoz, “Dead White”  
Watch: *Safe* (Todd Haynes, 1995, 119 min.) and at least one more Killer film
- 4:15            Christine Vachon LPAC Cinema: attendance required unless arranged with me  
7pm            Todd Haynes LPAC Cinema
- 10/23**            Christine Vachon selections from *Shooting to Kill*  
Interview with Todd Haynes  
browse Indiewire, Filmmaker, Keyframe, Mubi

Group 2 post

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### WEEK 8      **Auteurs and Genres**

- 10/28**            *The Film Experience*, ch. 9  
Andrew Sarris, “Notes on Auteur Theory in 1962”  
Tim Corrigan, “The Commercial Auteur” CV
- Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976, 113 min.)

*Detour* (Edward G. Ulmer, 1945, 65 min.)

**10/30** Amy Taubin, *Taxi Driver*  
Steve Neale, “Theories of Genre”

MIDTERM DUE

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**WEEK 9**      **Documentary Deconstructed and Reconstructed**

**11/4**      *The Film Experience*, ch 7  
John Grierson, “The Principles of Documentary” CV

*Seven Songs for Malcolm X* (John Akomfrah, 1993, 52 min.)  
*Reassemblage* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1982, 45 min.)

**11/6**      Trinh T. Minh-ha, “When I Project it is Silent”  
John Akomfrah interview

Group 3 post

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**WEEK 10**      **Experimental Film and New Media**

**11/11**      *The Film Experience*, ch. 8  
selection of manifestos

*Ballet mécanique* (Ferdinand Leger, 1924, 11 min.)  
*Mothlight* (Stan Brakhage, 1963, 4 min.)  
*Screen Tests* (Andy Warhol, 1963-4, 15 min.)  
*La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962, 28 min.)  
*Migration* (Bill Viola, 1976, 7 min.)  
*Gently Down the Stream* (Su Friedrich, 1981, 14 min.)  
Selections on Rhizome

**11/13**      Raymond Bellour, “The Film Stilled”  
Holly Willis from *Digital Cinema*

Group 1 post

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**WEEK 11**      **Global/Art Cinema**

**11/18**      *The Film Experience*, ch. 10  
Thomas Elsaesser, “Film Festivals”

*Borom Sarret* (Ousmane Sembene, 1963, Senegal, 30 min.)

*Persepolis* (Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, 2007, France, 97 min.)

**11/20** Hamid Naficy from *An Accented Cinema* CV

Group 2 post

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**WEEK 12**     **Second Screens**

**11/25**     Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine from *Legitimizing Television*  
William Uricchio, “Film, Cinema, Television...Media?”

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**Thanksgiving Break**

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**WEEK 13**     **Theorizing Media**

**12/2**     *The Film Experience*, ch. 11  
Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological  
Reproducibility” CV

*Pandora’s Box* (G. W. Pabst, 1929, 109 min.)

**12/4**     Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” CV

Group 3 post

Thanksgiving media journal (post to blog)

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**WEEK 14**     **Conclusion**

**12/9**     Video essay presentations

Final exam TBA