

Introduction to Film
CMST 10100 – Section 3
Spring 2015

Lecture: TR 10:30–11:50 AM, Cobb Hall 307

Screening: T 3:30–6:30 PM, Logan 201

Instructor: Ian Jones, Department of Cinema and Media Studies
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Office Hours: R 12:00–2:00 (by appointment), Cobb Hall 324

additional sessions T 12:00–2:00 weeks 9 and 10 (by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the basic terminology of film form and concepts of film analysis. Film screenings cover a wide variety of national cinemas, historical time periods, and genres – from classics of the international art cinema and the avant-garde to Hollywood hits. Emphasis is placed on film form and style, but we also will see film as an industrial system of production, distribution, and exhibition and as a popular medium that both reinforces and challenges social and aesthetic norms. Organized primarily by topics related to film style, major interventions in film theory will supplement formal analysis of films, such as issues of materiality, realism, gender, and film as a political tool.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

None.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Chalk** (all required readings listed on this syllabus will be posted in PDF form, or linked to if already online)
- The **Yale Film Analysis** website (<http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis>) is a terrific and convenient guide for familiarizing yourself with key terms
- The **Film Studies Center** (<http://filmstudiescenter.uchicago.edu>) holds video copies of most films shown within this course, which can be checked out and watched on-site. See website for hours of operation (be forewarned that these can shift somewhat during the late weeks of the quarter).

SCREENINGS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance at weekly screenings is **mandatory**. If you are unable to attend the screenings for this class, you *should not take it*. Attendance will be taken, and if you do not attend the screenings for this course, you will fail it. Period. The films to be viewed in this course are the primary texts of this course.

Cinema is a medium designed for collective viewing on a large screen; when at all possible, *this* should be the mode of experience one engages a film with. For this reason, independent viewing with video copies is not an adequate substitute for screening attendance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

- 1) Attendance and class participation. Students are expected to attend all classes and screenings, and to participate in class discussion. Unexcused absences at 2 or more class sessions *or* screenings will significantly lower your final grade; continued absences will be considered reason for failure. (20% of final grade.)
- 2) Shot description assignment, due week 4, Thursday, April 23. (10% of final grade)
- 3) In-class vocabulary test, conducted week 5, Tuesday, April 28. (10% of final grade)
- 4) Scene analysis assignment, due week 8, Tuesday, May 19. (25% of final grade)
- 5) Final project: Analytical blog post—written analysis with visual accompaniment (this can be frame grabs, analytical video essay portion, etc.), due week 11 (exact date and details of assignment possibilities TBA). (35% of final grade.)
- 6) Extra credit: Cinema is a socio-cultural practice as well as an industrial and artistic one. Accordingly, students are encouraged to supplement their studies by attending theatrical screenings at select local theaters, and submitting a 1-2 pg report. (1% of final grade; can be completed three times.)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Introduction to Film Form and the Film Industry

Tuesday, March 31

Course introduction.

Week 1 Screening, Tuesday, March 31:

Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show (Edwin S. Porter, 1902)

The Music Lover (Georges Méliès, 1903)

The Red Spectre (Segundo de Chomon, 1908)

Holy Motors (Leos Carax, 2012)

Thursday, April 2:

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, Ch. 1: “Film as Art: Creativity, Technology, and Business,” pp 2-29

Week 2 – The Shot, *Mise-en-Scène*, Staging

Tuesday, April 7:

Bordwell and Thompson, Ch. 4: “The Shot: *Mise-en-Scène*,” pp 112-154

Week 2 Screening, Tuesday, April 7:

PlayTime (Jacques Tati, 1967)

Thursday, April 9:

Kristin Thompson, “*Play Time*: Comedy on the Edge of Perception,” from *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis*

Week 3 – Cinematography and Camera Movement

Tuesday, April 14:

Bordwell and Thompson, Ch. 5: “The Shot: Cinematography,” pp 165–186

Week 3 Screening, Tuesday, April 14:

In the Mood for Love (Wong Kar Wai, 2000)

Thursday, April 16:

Bordwell and Thompson, Ch. 5: “The Shot: Cinematography,” pp 186–217

Week 4 – Editing I: The Classical Continuity System

Tuesday, April 21:

Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An Introduction*, Ch. 4: “Relating Images: Editing,” pp 133-159

Week 4 Screening, Tuesday, April 21:

Sherlock, Jr. (Buster Keaton, 1924)

The Blood of Jesus (Spencer Williams, 1941)

Thursday, April 23:

Karel Reisz and Gavin Millar, “Editing the Picture” (selection), from *The Technique of Film Editing*

Shot description assignment due.

Week 5 – Editing II: Alternatives to Continuity Editing: Experimental/Avant-Garde Cinema

Tuesday, April 28:

James Peterson, “Acquired Taste? The Problem of the Viewer” (selection), from *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-garde Cinema*

Scott McCloud, “Blood in the Gutter,” from *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*

In-class vocabulary quiz.

Week 5 Screening, Tuesday, April 28:

A Movie (Bruce Conner, 1958)

Schmeerguntz (Guvnor Nelson and Dorothy Wiley, 1965)

Passage à l'acte (Martin Arnold, 1993)

Take the 5:10 to Dreamland (Bruce Conner, 1976)

Alpsee (Matthias Müller, 1995)

The Exquisite Hour (Phil Solomon, 1994)

Thursday, April 30:

James Peterson, “The Logic of the Absurd: The Assemblage Strain” (selections), from *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order*

Phil Solomon, “Why I Am Drawn to Using Found Footage”

Giovanna Fossati, “Found Footage Filmmaking, Film Archiving and New Participatory Platforms”

Week 6 – Sound

Tuesday, May 5:

Michel Chion, “Points and Lines: Horizontal and Vertical Perspectives on Audiovisual Relations” (selections), from *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*

Week 6 Screening, Tuesday, May 5:

Is This What You Were Born For?, pt 7: Mercy (Abigail Child, 1989)
Opus 1 (Walther Ruttmann, 1921)
Gravity (Alfonso Cuarón, 2013)

Thursday, May 7:

Sergei Eisenstein, “Form and Content: Practice” (selections), from *The Film Sense*

Week 7 – Narration and Narrative

Tuesday, May 12:

Corrigan and White, Ch. 6: “Telling Stories: Narrative Films”

Week 7 Screening, Tuesday, May 12:

Clueless (Amy Heckerling, 1995)

Thursday, May 14:

Kristin Thompson, “Modern Classicism,” from *Storytelling in the New Hollywood* (selections)

Week 8 – Genre

Tuesday, May 19:

Corrigan and White, Ch. 9: “Rituals, Conventions, Archetypes, and Formulas: Movie Genres,” pp 315-350 (selections)

Scene analysis assignment due.

Special session devoted to logistics of final assignment, including overview of any necessary software requirements.

Week 8 Screening, Tuesday, May 19:

Blacula (William Crain, 1972)

Thursday, May 21:

Rick Altman, “Where Do Genres Come From?,” from *Film/Genre*

Week 9 – Nonfiction Film

Tuesday, May 26:

Carl Plantinga, “What Is a Nonfiction Film?,” from *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film*

Week 9 Screening, Tuesday, May 26:

Land Without Bread (Luis Buñuel, 1933)
Anselmo and the Women (Chick Strand, 1986)
The Subconscious Art of Graffiti Removal (Matt McCormick, 2001)
Waltz with Bashir (Ari Folman, 2008)

Thursday, May 28:

Vivian Sobchack, “Synthetic Vision: The Dialectical Imperative of Luis Buñuel’s *Las Hurdes*”
David Bordwell, “Showing What Can’t Be Filmed”

Week 10 – Animation and the Future of the Cinematic Image

Tuesday, June 2:

Lev Manovich, “What Is Digital Cinema?”
Sergei Eisenstein, *On Disney* (selections)

Week 10 Screening:

Hummingbird Wars (Janie Geiser, 2014)
Adventure Time, S1 E6, “The Jiggler” (Larry Leichliter, 2010)
The Lego Movie (Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, 2014)

Thursday, June 4:

Officially, there is no class today.

**We may have an optional discussion section to discuss animation.
(This would be casual, and treats would be provided)**

Week 11

No class.

Final blog post assignment due

(Due dates TBA. Please note: will be earlier for graduating seniors).

This syllabus has been tweaked and improved somewhat since I taught it in Spring 2015 at the University of Chicago.