Professor: Neepa Majumdar
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30 to 4:30 pm and by appointment
Office: Cathedral of Learning 450
Email: nmajumda@pitt.edu
Phone: 4-5578 (412-624-5578)

ENGLIT 2451 (18792): Film History/Theory

Thursdays, 1:00 – 4:50 pm in CL 444

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course you will engage some of the most influential theoretical writings on cinema and its role in culture. The focus will be three-fold: (1) formal analysis of film texts (2) the technological and social history of cinema; and (3) philosophical questions pertaining to cinema and its relation to modernity, perception, and identity. Each week’s readings have been designed to stimulate your thinking in more than one of these three areas. A graduate seminar is a cooperative effort that depends for its success upon the active participation of its student members. You should be prepared to reflect on the readings and films in your weekly journal and to contribute your insights, questions, and views to the class.

REQUIREMENTS:
1) Active class participation: to be better prepared to speak in class and for your own future reference, I strongly recommend that you keep a brief, typed weekly reading journal in which you map out and respond to the main issues raised in each week’s readings. I will not be collecting your journal but will expect you to bring it in to class each week and to read from it when I call on you to do so.
2) An oral class presentation in which you synthesize the week’s readings, pose questions, and lead class discussion.
3) A 5 to 7 page formal analysis of a film sequence in relation to the film as a whole and in its cultural context. You can turn this in any time in the semester until March 30th.
4) A conference length (7 to 10 pages) midterm paper due on March 2 in my mailbox.
5) A final 20-page research paper that can, but need not, build on your conference-length paper, due on April 27 in class.
Feel free to talk to me at any point in the semester to discuss your paper topics.

COURSE TEXTS (boldface shows how they will be referred to in the syllabus):
* Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography (start reading this right away)
* RFS Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, eds. Reinventing Film Studies (London: Arnold, 2000)
* Pam Cook and Mieke Bernink, eds. The Cinema Book, 2nd edition (BFI, 1999)
* David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Film Art, 7th edition (McGraw Hill, 2004) Earlier editions will work fine, but you will have to find the correct page numbers.
X: Readings available in electronic reserves (go to PittCat, click on “Course Reserves,” check under my name or the course number, click on “e-reserves,” and use the password “06film”)

1
* Any books that I have placed on reserve in the library is marked by an asterisk in this syllabus; these include more books than just the course texts.
All films are available in the Hillman Library Media Resource Center.

Note: Total number of reading pages is approximate and includes notes and bibliography.

SYLLABUS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1: Jan 5
Topic: Mapping the Terrain of Film Studies
Readings (31 pages): RFS 8-17: Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, “How Films Mean…”
    X: Richard Dyer, “Introduction to Film Studies” (Film Studies: Critical Approaches (eds. Hill and Church Gibson) 1-8)
    RFS 53-75: Steven Cohan, “Case Study: Interpreting Singin’ in the Rain”
Screening: Singin’ in the Rain (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952, USA, 103 mins.)
Optional: Watch Ed Wood (Tim Burton, 1994, 127 mins.) and read Jeffrey Sconse, “‘Trashing’ the Academy” (FTC 534-553)

Week 2: Jan 12
Topic: Why Theory?
    RFS 76-95: Tessa Perkins, “Who (and what) is it for?”
    RFS 381-401: Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, “Film Theory and Spectatorship in the Age of Posts”
Screening: Chong qing sen lin/Chungking Express (Wong Kar Wai, Hong Kong, 1994, 102 mins.)
Optional: Bhaji on the Beach (Gurinder Chadha, UK, 1993, 101 mins.)

Week 3: Jan 19
Topic: Hollywood Paradigms: Narrative and Continuity Editing
    Pam Cook, 39-44
Screening: The Man Who Shot Liberty Va lance (John Ford, USA, 1962, 123 mins.)

Week 4: Jan 26
Topic: Montage and Modernity: Soviet Theories
Readings (59 pages): Film Art, “Alternatives to Continuity Editing” (333-343) and “Soviet Montage” (478-480)
    FTC 7-12: Vsevolod Pudovkin, “On Editing”
    FTC 13-40: S. M. Eisenstein, “The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram” and “A Dialectical Approach to Film Form”
X: S. M. Eisenstein, “The Montage of Film Attractions” (*The European Cinema Reader* 25-33)


X: Peter Wollen, “Eisenstein’s Aesthetics” (*Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* 19-73)

* X: David Bordwell, “Monumental Heroics: Form and style in Eisenstein's Silent Films” (*Silent Cinema Reader* 368-388)

Screening: *Bronenosets Potyomkin / Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925, 67 min.)

On your own: *Stachka / The Strike* (Sergei Eisenstein, U.S.S.R., 1925, 82 mins.)

**Week 5: Feb 2**

**Topic: Early Cinema and Modernity**

Readings (84 pages): *X: Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, “Imperial Imaginary” (*Film Cultures Reader* 366-378)


X: Wolfgang Schivelbusch, excerpt from *The Railway Journey* (25-31 and 41-50)

FTC 862-876: Tom Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment”

Recommended: *Film Art*, “Early Cinema” (464-468) and 422-425

Pam Cook, “Early Cinema After Brighton” (93-97)

Screening: Lumiere shorts

*Trip to the Moon* (Georges Melies, 1902, 10 min.)

*Great Train Robbery* (Edwin Porter, 1903, 10 min.)

*Sherlock Jr.* (Buster Keaton, 1924, 45 min.)

*Mest’ Kinematograficheskogo Operatora / The Cameraman’s Revenge* (Wladislaw Starewicz, Russia, 1912, 12 mins.)

Optional: *The General* (Buster Keaton, 1927, USA, 75 mins.)

**Week 6: Feb 9**

**Topic: Modernity and Perception**


X: Jacques Aumont, “The Variable Eye, Or the Mobilization of the Gaze” (*The Image in Dispute* 231-258)


Further Reading: X: Rene Descartes, “Optics” (*Visual Culture Reader* 116-121)


RFS 332-350: Miriam Hanson, “The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular
Modernism”
X: David Bordwell, “Convention, Construction, and Cinematic Vision” (Post-Theory 87-107)
X: Anke Gleber, “Women on the Screens and Streets of Modernity: In Search of the Female Flaneur” (The Image in Dispute 55-86)
Screenings: Sunrise (F. W. Murnau, Germany, 1927, 95 mins.)
Optional: The Crowd (King Vidor, 1928) and Metropolis (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1927)

Week 7: Feb 16
Topic: The Mobilized Gaze
Readings (104 pages): Film Art, “Framing” (252-277) and “Experimental Film” (146-161)
*X: Anne Friedberg, “Cinema and the Postmodern Condition” (Viewing Positions 59-83)
F TC 199-205: Stan Brakhage, From Metaphors on Vision
X: Dziga Vertov, “Provisional Instructions to Kino-Eye Groups” (The European Cinema Reader 34-38)
X: Dziga Vertov, “Kinoks: A Revolution” (Technology and Culture: The Film Reader 99-104)
*X: Murray Smith, “Modernism and the Avant-gardes” (Oxford Guide to Film Studies 395-412)
Further Reading:
X: Mary Ann Doane, “Technology’s Body: Cinematic Vision in Modernity” (Feminist Reader in Early Cinema, 530-551)
X: Martin Jay, “The Disenchantment of the Eye” (Visualizing Theory 173-201)
F TC 914-926: Anne Friedberg, “The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change”
Screening: Un chien Andalou/The Andalusian Dog (Luis Bunuel, France, 1929, 16 mins.)
Entr’acte (René Clair, France, 1924, 22 mins.)
Stan Brakhage films
Chelovek s Kino-Apparatom / Man with a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, USSR, 1929)

Week 8: Feb 23
Topic: Sound and Mise-en-Scene
Readings (78 pages): Pam Cook, “Sound and Colour” (45-49)
F TC 183-186: Rudolph Arnheim, “The Complete Film”
*X: Steve Neale, “Colour and Film Aesthetics” (The Film Cultures Reader 85-94)
*X: Richard Dyer, “Lighting for Whiteness” (The Film Cultures Reader 95-106)
F TC 366-369: Christian Metz, “Aural Objects”
F TC 386-394: John Belton, “Technology and Aesthetics of Film Sound”
X: Donald Lastra, “Sound Theory” (Sound Technology and the American Cinema 123-153)
Recommended: Film Art, “Mise-en-scene” (176-220) and “Sound” (347-360)
*X: Gianluca Sergi, “A Cry in the Dark: The Role of Post-Classical Film Sound” The Film Cultures Reader 107-114
F TC 154: Siegfried Kracauer, “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari”
Screening: *M* (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1931)
On your own: *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari / The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, Germany, 1920)

**Week 9: Mar 2**
NO CLASS

**********Midterm Papers due in my mailbox on March 3rd by 5 pm**********

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10: Mar 16**

Topic: Photography and Film: Presence/Absence
Readings (163 pages): Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

**FTC 166-173**: Andre Bazin (1946), “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” and “The Myth of Total Cinema

X: David MacDougall, “The Fate of the Cinema Subject” (*Transcultural Film* 25-60)
**FTC 598-605**: John Ellis, excerpt from “Stars as a Cinematic Phenomenon”

Screening: *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, France, 1962, 28 mins.)

*Nuit et Brouillard / Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, France, 1955, 32 mins.)

On your own: *Les Quatre cents coups/ 400 Blows* (François Truffaut, France, 1959, 94 mins.)

**Week 11: Mar 23**

Topic: Theories of Realism
Readings (82 pages): *Film Art*, “The Long Take” (284-288)

X: Raymond Williams, “Realism, Naturalism, and their Alternatives” (*Explorations in Film Theory* 121-126)

**FTC 174-182**: “De Sica: Metteur en scène” (Bazin)
X: “Umbrerto D” (Bazin)

**FTC 303-313**: Siegfried Kracauer, “Basic Concepts,” “The Establishment of Physical Existence”

**FTC 322-331**: Rudolph Arnheim, “Film and Reality” and “The Making of a Film”
X: Cesare Zavattini, “Some Ideas on the Cinema” (*Vittorio De Sica: Contemporary Perspectives* 50-61)

X: Brian Henderson, “Two Types of Film Theory” (*Movies and Methods* 1 388-400)

Pam Cook, “Deep Focus” (51)

Further Reading: X: Brian Henderson, “The Long Take” (*Movies and Methods* 1 314-324)
X: Mark Betz, “Art, Exploitation, Underground” (*Defining Cult Movies* 202-222)

Screening: *Umbrerto D* (Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1952, 91 mins.)

On your own: *Ladri di biciclette / Bicycle Thief* (Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1948, 93 mins.)

*Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, USA, 1941)
Week 12: Mar 30
Topic: Politics, Ideology, and Meaning: French New Wave and Discontinuity
Readings (64 pages): Film Art, “The French New Wave” (486-489) and “Narrative Alternatives to Classical Filmmaking” (428-433)
FTC 54-64: Brian Henderson, “Towards a Non-Bourgeois Camera Style”
FTC 525-533: Peter Wollen, “Godard and Counter Cinema”
X: Colin MacCabe, extract from “Realism and the Cinema: Notes on some Brechtian Theses” (The Film Studies Reader 201-206)
FTC 513-624: Kristin Thompson, “The Concept of Cinematic Excess”
FTC 812-819: Commoli and Narboni, “Cinema/Ideology/Criticism”
X: Louis Althusser, extract from “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (Visual Studies Reader 139-141)
X: Barbara Klinger, “Film History Terminable and Interminable” (The Film Studies Reader 299-302)
Further Reading: *X: Colin MacCabe “Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure” (Narrative Apparatus Ideology 179-197)
Screening: Week-End (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1967, 105 mins.)
On your own: À bout de soufflé/ Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1960)
**********Final due date for scene analysis paper**********

Week 13: Apr 6
Topic: Media Transformations
X: Lev Manovich, “What is Cinema?” (The Language of New Media 287-333)
Further Reading: Texts link on http://www.manovich.net/
Screening: Selections from Soft Cinema (Lev Manovich and Andreas Kratky, 2004)
student choice

Week 14: Apr 13
Topic: Colonialism and Third Cinema
Readings (90 pages): *X: Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Realism, Modernism, and Post-Colonial Theory” (Oxford Guide to Film Studies 413-425)
X: Glauber Rocha, “An Esthetic of Hunger” and “The Tricontinental Filmmaker” (Brazilian Cinema 68-71 and 76-80)
*X: Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Towards a Third Cinema” (Stam and Miller’s Film and Theory 265-286)
*X: Julio Garcia Espinosa, “For an Imperfect Cinema” (Stam and Miller’s Film and Theory 287-297)
*X: Ismail Xavier, “Historical Allegory” (Stam and Miller’s Companion to Film Theory, 333-362)
X: Michael Wang, “The Critical Practice and Dialectics of Third Cinema” (The Third Text Reader 211-225)

Further Reading: X: Stam and Johnston, “The Cinema of Hunger: Nelson Pereira dos Santos’s Vidas Secas” (Brazilian Cinema 120-127)


Screening: Vidas Secas/Barren Lives (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1963, 115 min.)

On your own: La Battaglia di Algeri/Battle of Algiers (Gillo Pontecorvo, Italy, 1965, 117 mins.)

Week 15: Apr 20

Topic: Debates in Race, Gender, and Cinematic Representation


* X: bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze” (Stam and Miller’s Film and Theory 510-523)


X: Angela McRobbie, “Post-Feminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime” (Media and Cultural Theory 59-70)

* X: Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation” (Stam and Miller’s Film and Theory 704-714)

X: Tommy L. Lott, “Aesthetics and Politics in Contemporary Black Film Theory” (Film Theory and Philosophy 282-302)

Further Reading: * X: Laura Mulvey, “Afterthoughts” (Feminist Film Theory: A Reader Ed. Sue Thornham vailable on netlibrary)

X: Claire Johnston, “Women’s Cinema as Counter Cinema” (Feminist Film Theory in netlibrary)

* X: Masilela Ntongela, “The Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers” (Black American Cinema)

Screening: Nice Coloured Girls (Tracey Moffatt, Australia, 1987, 16 mins.)

Bush Mama (Haile Gerima, U.S.A., 1976, 97 mins.)

Optional: Black Girl (Ousmane Sembene, Senegal 1965, 60 mins.)

Illusions (Julie Dash, U.S.A., 1982, 34 mins.)

Week 16: Apr 27

Topic: Film History, Memory, and Cinematic Time

Readings (116 pages): X: D. N. Rodowick, “A Short History of Cinema” (Gilles Deleuze’s Time Machine 3-17)

* X: Gilles Deleuze, “Montage: the American school and the Soviet school” (Movement-Image 29-40) and “Recapitulation of Images and Signs” (Time-Image 25-43)

FCT 240-269: Gilles Deleuze, extracts from Time-Image and Movement-Image

X: Mary Ann Doane, “The Afterimage, the Index, and the Accessibility of the Present” (The Emergence of Cinematic Time 69-107)

Screening: Hiroshima mon amour (Alain Resnais, France, 1959, 90 mins.)

Passage à l’acte (Martin Arnold, Austria, 1993, 12 mins.)

OR
Topic: Final Thoughts
X: Sean Cubitt, “Virtual Realism: Machine Perception and the Global Image” extract (Digital Aesthetics 29-44)
X: Scott McQuire, “Pure Speed: From Transport to Teleport” (Visions of Modernity 183-190)
Screening: student choice