

FILM STUDIES COURSES

WINTER QUARTER 2015

FILM 3000-01
TTH 1:30-3:35/ LOYA 202

ART OF FILM

GEORG KOSZULINSKI

The purpose of this introductory course is to provide a working knowledge of film vocabulary and to develop these analytic tools through writing. We will examine the style and structure of film and develop a rigorous analysis of the medium. Our analyses will incorporate a dual social-formal approach in which we investigate both the formal components of any given film (all the elements we see and hear) and their ideological implications (how these films operate on social, historical, and political levels).

FILM 302
TTH 10:15-12:20/EGRN 305

HISTORY OF FILM

CATHERINE CLEPPER

Since the late 1890s, films have helped document, reflect, and challenge the social contexts of their making. Filmmakers of every age have given us cinematic iterations of a) what *can* be shown (a matter of technology and economics), b) what *should* be shown (a matter of style and narrative) and c) what *must* be shown (a matter of politics or ethics). This class takes a cultural studies approach to film history, meaning that we will treat films and filmmakers as products of their historical age and cultural milieu. In other words, we will try to connect the dots *between* film and history, rather than treating these fields as isolated or incompatible. Just as modern moviegoers would understand, say, a film like *Gravity* (Cuarón, 2013) as an showcase for innovative digital effects as well as introspective thriller, and *The Hunger Games* trilogy (Ross, 2012; Lawrence, 2013; et al.) as equally parts a pre-sold franchise and an ironic reflection on “Occupy Wallstreet” sentiments, in this class we will look closely at the context in which canonical films like *Metropolis* and *Bonnie & Clyde* were produced. These films, however great (and, therefore, to a certain extent timeless), are similarly bound to the cameras that made them, the minds that conceived them, and logic of their times.

The design of this course has two major emphases: first, we will briefly survey many (but not all) of the major movements and developments in film history from the early silent era through the 1970s; intermittently, we will also examine changes in the criticism and theory that coincided with those periods. Each movie, text, and aesthetic movement we study in the course is intended to not only tell part of the story of film’s development as both an art form and cultural/industrial process, but to teach students how to interpret film history using theoretical essays and primary documents (that is, sources produced in the same historical moment as the film being studied). Through various short papers and research assignments, students will learn that understanding film history is a complex process, in part, because historical “facts” cannot always be distinguished from discourse; public opinion is often as important as facts, figures, and tech specs. Historical topics covered the course include (but are not limited to): the development of the feature film format, conversion to color and sound, economic shifts in the global film marketplace, international trends and national cinemas, and the emergence of new waves and avant-gardes.

FILM 3910-01
MWF 10:55-12:20/ADM 222

INTL FILM: ITALIAN CINEMA

JUSTINE BARDA

Despite its relatively brief tenure and lack of structure, few movements in film history have had the impact of Italian neorealism, which influenced other film movements from film noir to the French New Wave as well as directors from around the world. Neorealism emerged in the mid 1940s out of the political chaos and economic hardship that defined Italy in the wake of Fascism. Often by necessity, directors shot on location, improvised scripts, used nonprofessional actors, and made the most of very small budgets in the production of a realist aesthetic. Their stories focused on the poor and working class and the struggles of ordinary life. The result was a collection of indisputably major works of art that captured the spirit of postwar Italian culture and revolutionized the possibilities of cinema. The course will provide an introduction to the movement, its directors, including Vittorio De Sica, Roberto Rossellini, Luchino Visconti, and Michelangelo Antonioni, and its films, including *Ossessione*, *Rome, Open City*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *The Earth Trembles*, *Nights of Cabiria*, *Umberto D.*

FILM 3270-01
TTH 10:15-12:20/EGRN 312

DOCUMENTARY: SOCIAL JUSTICE & NON-FICTION CINEMA

BENEDICT STORK

When NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden decided to step forward with revelations about the government's digital dragnet surveillance, he contacted documentary filmmaker Laura Poitras. In doing so Snowden recognized a fundamental aspect of documentary cinema: beyond recording events and telling stories, documentaries attempt to change the world they document. And, at the same time, Poitras's acceptance and dissemination of Snowden's leaks brought the filmmaker into contact with the very real consequences of abetting treason. (Her film about the NSA's data gathering program, based on conversations with Snowden, *Citizen Four*, is now in theaters.) This is just one very recent example of documentary's rich tradition of engaging with social problems and social justice, extending from at least the state sponsored films of the early 20th century to post-9/11 documentaries in the age of the "war on terror." Examining documentary's combining of the journalistic impulse to record events with a call to action intended to move audiences from in front of the screen and into the streets, FILM 3270 will concentrate on the genre's explicit and implicit relation to social justice. The course will foreground debates around documentary ethics, objectivity and subjectivity, persuasion and propaganda, and the relationship between politics and aesthetics by exploring how we analyze and evaluate the effects of a film like Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which was a tremendous commercial success but failed to produce the electoral results it openly advocated (the defeat of George W. Bush in the 2004 presidential election). Students will leave the class with a solid grasp of documentary film history, in the context of the major events of the 20th century and beyond, through screenings of such films as Dziga Vertov's *Man with the Movie Camera*, Frank Capra's *Why We Fight*, John Huston's *Let There Be Light*, Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*, Barbara Koppel's *Harlan County, USA*, and Errol Morris's *Standard Operating Procedure*. Graded work will include two short papers and a final project discussing how we evaluate documentaries in terms of social justice.

Benedict Stork holds a Ph.D in Comparative Studies in Discourse and Society from the University of Minnesota. His work on documentary focuses on the use of found and appropriated images and the relationship between aesthetics, politics, and non-fiction.

FILM 3910-03 FILM GENRES: MELODRAMA
9:20-10:45/ ADM 222

ERIN SCHLUMPF

Melodrama is too easily discounted as emotionally overwrought, as mindless spectacle prompting geysers of tears, or as fodder for viewers of afternoon television. But to ignore the seriousness of melodrama is to overlook its monumental impact on global culture. Since the nineteenth century, the melodramatic mode has provided a structure of feeling to popular entertainment and to social discourse. For this reason, it is sometimes pernicious: erecting and permitting a discourse of racism from D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) to the O. J. Simpson Trial (1994-95). However, melodrama also has the potential to sabotage social norms: piercing the volatility of stoic masculinity in "male weepies" (such as Richard Donner's *Lethal Weapon* series) and revealing the inherent performativity of all gendered identities in Pedro Almodóvar's *Talk to Her* (1999). Peter Brooks writes of the melodramatic mode: "Nothing is spared, because nothing is left unsaid." With his words in mind, this class will develop a historical and theoretical framework for studying melodrama, attentive to the many lessons the genre has for us today. We will start from the evolution of early film melodrama and its relationship to popular theater, and trace the generic conventions of the mode as they change through the century: in silent film melodramas, classical Hollywood formulas, "women's movies," and contemporary revisions found in associated genres (action and disaster films, global queer dramas, and popular television series).

FILM 3910-02
MW 3:40-5:45/ ADM 222

TRAUMA ACROSS MEDIA

ERIN SCHLUMPF

The paradox of trauma lies in the fact that it is deeply felt, but difficult to express in language. In fact, the victim often suppresses the traumatic event, making its "truth" hidden, and allowing it to "speak" only through the symptoms of suffering. Of this condition, Sigmund Freud writes, "I am not aware ... that patients suffering from traumatic neurosis are much occupied in their waking lives with memories of their accident. Perhaps they are more concerned with *not* thinking of it." In this class, we will unearth the secrets of traumatic experience. By looking at film and media representations of twentieth and twenty-first century national traumas from around the world, we will see how shock and loss are expressed on screen. This course will introduce culturally specific vocabularies that preserve each nation's particularities, while still gesturing toward a general theory of trauma. We will begin by studying two groundbreaking documentaries, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and Max Ophüls' *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1971), and ask how filmmakers might ethically treat the subject of the Nazi extermination of European Jews. We will then turn to fiction film narratives of communal suffering during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-76) such as Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Blue Kite* (1993) and Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), and contemporary artistic representations of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre by a Chinese soldier-turned-painter. We will look at video of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1996-1998), and conclude by examining various forms of 9/11 memorialization. As we move through these materials, we will see how national trauma forms (and deforms) collective memory and alters the fabric of history.

FILM 4512-01
TTH 6:00-8:05 /ADM 222

GREAT DIRECTORS: HITCHCOCK

ROBERT CUMBOW

The Master of Suspense. The film director as pop culture celebrity and household word. The familiar theme song, the hand-drawn self-portrait, the cameo appearances in each of his films,

“Good eeeeevening.” Producer of movies, television, and a mystery magazine. The Maguffin, “actors are cattle,” “my films are slices of cake.” More so than any other director, Alfred Hitchcock is the stuff of cinematic and cultural legend.

Though always foremost a consummate commercial entertainer, Hitchcock is consistently chosen as the greatest film director of all time. This course showcases 20 of his greatest and most self-revealing films. We’ll talk about the topics and images that weave their way through his career, as well as his stylistic and technical approaches to cinematic storytelling. The objective of the course is to impart an understanding and appreciation of Hitchcock’s vision and work as an enduring critique of human nature, society, art, and culture—and of the darker purposes of what some call “entertainment.” Along the way, we pick up a few new keys to the unique vision of this most beloved and honored of film directors. You’ll be responsible for obtaining and watching the required films on your own. Several papers and a journal will be required.

FILM 3400-01
MW 3:40-5:45/ EGRN 312

FILMMAKING I

EVAN BRIGGS

Film 341 is an introduction to telling stories through moving images. Creating, viewing, and critiquing will be the foundation for gaining the fundamental skills of filmmaking. Students, individually and in groups, will conduct weekly projects, to explore experimental, documentary, and fictional modes of filmmaking. In addition to creating their own films, students will view a range of material, from classic narrative features to new media projects; keep a weekly visual journal; and, through class critiques, learn and practice how to formally evaluate their own and each other’s work. The course will culminate in an on-campus screening of the students’ films.

FILM 3350-01
TTH 8-10:05 / ADM 308

SCREENWRITING I

DAN THORNTON

This practice-based course approaches screenwriting craft through the foundations of students developing narrative stories through plot, character, dialogue, conflict and resolution. Using our own lives as jumping off points in exploring character and narrative, students work on weekly assignments that are critiqued regularly in the class workshop. Emphasizing the uses of the narrative screenplay in developing films, students will learn how to write character biographies, treatments, narrative outlines, log-lines, and how to breakdown scripts for production. All students will produce a final short film screenplay that will be written and prepared professionally according to current industry standards and specifications. These final scripts will be finished with an intent to producing the scripts in a subsequent film production course, such as FILM 4420 Narrative Filmmaking.

FILM 4420-01
TTH 3:45-5:50 / EGRN 305

NARRATIVE FILMMAKING

GEORG KOSZULINSKI

Building on the foundations of Filmmaking I, this course expands upon the technical skills, dramatic principles, and cinematic methodologies relevant to the narrative film form. Focusing primarily on scene work, students will work in production teams to produce a series of dramatic scenes. Emphases of the course include screenwriting, identifying genre elements, directing actors for the screen, executing basic lighting schemes, and directing scenes in both formalist and realist traditions. The course culminates in the production of a narrative short film.