ENG 407: SEMINAR ON FILM FESTIVALS  
Instructor: Richard Herskowitz  
Spring 2011

Times: MW 10-11:20am and festival  
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Course Description

This course probes the evolution of film and media arts festivals and their efforts to create a more active and participatory public sphere for the appreciation and discussion of media. Festivals will also be explored as centers of innovation for the entertainment and arts industries. The course surveys the histories of festivals in relation to their forms, functions, operations, marketing, curatorial missions, and social impacts.

During the first two weeks of the class, students will attend and go behind the scenes of the Cinema Pacific Film Festival (students must attend at least six festival programs from April 6-10). In the following weeks, students will learn the history of international film festivals and their diverse forms, including film markets and themed festivals that build community identity. A second film festival immersion will take place in late April during the DisOrient Film Festival. Students will engage in in-class conference calls with festival professionals and discuss current issues, including how film festivals are adapting to new media technologies and online audiences.

Requirements

1) Perform a case study of a festival through historical research and interviews (35%)  
See instructions at end of syllabus. This is both a class presentation and written document.

2) Attend and participate in class discussions on readings (20%)  
Come to the Monday class having read the week’s assigned readings and prepared to discuss and raise questions about the texts and the writer’s key arguments. Also, comb the IndieWire newsletter and keep up with developments in the festival world, which we will also discuss.

3) Maintain a diary of festival film going, with 2-4 paragraph entries on each film you see and other observations on the festival experience (20%)  
Diaries are due on Cinema Pacific (by April 17) and the DisOrient Film Festival (May 8). Respond to the films and any contextual presentation that was offered (i.e., filmmaker introduction and Q&A). Give your personal response, but also look up reviews of the film online and use these to help you understand and speculate why the film was chosen for
the festival. Extra credit will be obtained (a half-grade boost in your grade) if you turn in a diary on the Archeology Channel Film Festival and on *Memories of Overdevelopment* within a week of these events.

4) **Program a festival of online short films (25%)**
Your assignment is to program a festival of ten short films that are thematically related. The films can be drawn from YouTube or Vimeo. Write 1-2 paragraphs to accompany and contextualize each film and also an accompanying essay of 2-4 single-space pages on your choice of a theme, selection process, films that you considered but rejected (and why), the sequencing of the films, and other reflections on the programming process. On May 23 and 25, every class member will have 5 minutes to present their festival, including an excerpt from their selections. The festival links and accompanying texts should be turned in by May 25.

**Required Texts**

Marijke De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*

Kenneth Turan, *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made*

Newsletter to sign up for to stay abreast of developments in festival field, and for class discussions: [http://www.indiewire.com/newsletter/](http://www.indiewire.com/newsletter/)

**10 Websites on Film Festivals**

The following ten websites will give you a good overview of the importance of film festivals to filmmakers, academics, and fans.

- [http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/Medien/berichte/arbeiten/0091_08.html](http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/Medien/berichte/arbeiten/0091_08.html)
- [http://www.filmfestivalworld.com/](http://www.filmfestivalworld.com/)
- [http://www.filmfestivalsecrets.com/about/](http://www.filmfestivalsecrets.com/about/)
- [http://www.fiapf.org/intfilmfestivals.asp](http://www.fiapf.org/intfilmfestivals.asp)
- [http://festivalfanatic.com/home](http://festivalfanatic.com/home)

**Class Schedule**

**March 28, 30: Film Festival Studies/Cinema Pacific Behind the Scenes**
Read Thomas Elsaesser, “Film Festival Networks”
Review 10 Important Websites on Film Festivals (above)

Case study selection choices due to rbersk@uoregon.edu by April 2!

April 6-10: Cinema Pacific
No class meeting on April 4
Read Cinema Pacific website: cinemapacific.uoregon.edu
Attend at least six screenings in Cinema Pacific this weekend. Your names will be on a comp list at the theater box office. Arrive at least 15 minutes early to be assured admission. Email your festival diaries to rbersk@uoregon.edu by April 17.

April 11, 13: Geopolitical and Transnational Agendas
Read Turan: Introduction, Parts Two and Four
Read De Valck: Introduction and Part I
Read Lucy Mazdon, “The Cannes Film Festival as Transnational Space”
http://tinyurl.com/6dtan7k

April 13 festival reports:
VCU French Film Festival
Human Rights Watch Film Festival
DC Environmental Film Festival
Vancouver or Seattle or Portland Film Festival
Boston Palestine Film Festival

April 18, 20: Gender, Ethnic and Cultural Agendas
Read Dina Iordanova, “Mediating Diaspora: Film Festivals and Imagined Communities” (Blackboard)
Read Skadi Loist, “Queer Film and the Film Festival Circuit”

April 20 festival reports:
San Francisco Jewish
Portland Women’s Film Festival
Frameline or Vancouver Queer Film Festival
Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival
Pan African Film Festival or Urbanworld

April 25, April 29 – May 1: DisOrient Film Festival
No class meeting on April 29
Read DisOrient Film Festival website: http://www.disorientfilm.org/index/
Attend at least three DisOrient Film Festival films this weekend. Email your festival diaries to rbersk@uoregon.edu by May 8.
May 2, 4 Economic Agendas
Read De Valck, Part 2
Read Turan, Part 1
Read Dina Iordanova, “Notes on Film Festivals vs. Industry Events,”
http://www.dinaview.com/?p=1490

May 9, 11 Aesthetic Agendas/ Festival Curation
Read De Valck, Part 3 – conclusion
Read Turan, 147-56
Read Girish Shambu, “Film Festivals” (and comments)
Read Laura Marks, “The Ethical Presenter”
http://muse.jhu.edu.libproxy.uoregon.edu/journals/the_moving_image/v004/4.1marks02.html
Read Andrew Barker, “Musicians Rock Out With Silent Films”
http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118025306?refCatId=16

May 11 festival reports:
Bend Film Festival
Ashland Film Festival

Extra credit viewing May 11: Memories of Overdevelopment (7pm, JSMA)

May 16, 18: Aesthetic Agendas 2: Genre Festivals
Read Turan, 125-46

May 18 festival reports:
Full Frame or True/False
Maelstrom International Fantastic
Vancouver International Mountain Film Fest
Chicago Underground Film Festival
Los Angeles Animation Festival

May 23, 25: Short Film Festivals
Students will present their online short film festivals this week.

May 25 festival reports:
Aspen Short Film Festival
Ann Arbor Film Festival
Black Maria Film Festival

Extra credit viewing: May 24-28 Archeology Film Festival
June 1: The Future of Film Festivals
Read Christina Warren, “How Tribeca is Changing the Way We Think About Online Film Festivals” http://mashable.com/2011/03/21/tribeca-online-film-festival-2011/
Read Ted Hope, “More Thoughts on the New Film Festival Model” http://tinyurl.com/65ptohz

Film Festival Case Study Outline

For this assignment, you will select a film festival from the list of twenty festivals in the syllabus. Everyone should send me their top three choices by April 2, including one choice from April 13. You will have your assigned festival sent to you by April 3.

The case study will be presented as both a 10-minute class presentation on the assigned day and in a document sent to me by email. The class presentations given on April 13 and 20 are not due in writing until May 11. All class reports given on May 11 and later are due in document form within a week after the presentation.

Your case study should engage with the following primary sources:

- Thorough review of the organization’s website
- Historical analysis of stories in the press about your organization.

To obtain better than a “B” in the paper, I strongly encourage you to research your festival more deeply and obtain the following:

- Interview with one or two key players in the organization, at different levels and in different roles
- Primary documents from the organization, including press releases, planning documents, marketing strategies, marketing collateral

This is a case study and need not be organized as an academic paper. In your paper, cut and paste each of the sections below and then fill in your analysis. Most of the sections require at least one paragraph, some require more extensive writing (up to four paragraphs). This assignment is a report of your findings. Do the best job you can and gather as much of the following information as you are able. Not everything, I realize, will be easily obtainable.

1. Mission or Statement of Purpose of the Organization
2. History of the Organization and Why it was Started

3. Significance and Uniqueness of the Organization (connect and compare to Turan book, then tell a good story about your festival or organization along the lines of Turan)

4. Mapping of the festival in relationship to international festival history, functions, and impact as analyzed by Turan deValjk. Drawing on Turan and DeValjk, compare your organization to one of the festivals they describe. Analyse which festival model your organization fits in according to Turan’s models: business, geopolitics, aesthetics.

5. Scope and nature of the programming: analyze its curatorial mission, vision and choices and how they connect to and advance the mission. Analyze how this organization/festival has a unique curatorial vision that differs from other festivals/organizations. Explain conceptual models for curatorial process and elaborate examples of how curatorial mission is enacted. Connect to Turan and deValjk.

6. Region and location: specific attributes and characteristics of the region, and how the festival engages with it.

7. Community participation (analyze how the organization facilitates cross-sectoral interaction, how it engages new communities to participate, how people actually use the organization to connect with others and develop new ideas, how the organization reaches out beyond the arts communities—Chamber of Commerce, local youth, businesses, schools, etc)

8. Strengths and leadership capacity: who is running the organization and how do they do it? Is there a board of directors or advisory board, and what are its roles? If possible, provide a festival staffing chart or list.

9. What is the festival’s annual budget amount (i.e., $100,000), and what are its revenue sources (bullet list is fine).

10. Marketing and branding: describe how marketing style, collateral and approach is thought out and executed to stay on point with vision and mission.

11. Mapping organizational vision within the current economic crisis: Describe the impact of the current economic crisis on the organization. What has been the effect of the economic downturn to date? What challenges are your organizations leaders and stakeholders confronting at the moment? How are key players and stakeholders responding? What are their plans for survival? What new ideas have they developed to weather the economic storm?
12. Provide your overall assessment of the assets that your festival/arts organizations provides. Discuss how your ideas about this organization—and about festivals in general—have changed as a result of your work with the course materials and readings and their application to this case study.

13. References: proper citations for all primary and secondary sources used.