

Eng 695: Film Theory

CRN 36678

Thursday 10 – 12:50 @PLC 448

Instructor: Sangita Gopal

Office: PLC 528

Office Hours: Tues from 11: 1:45 pm and by appt.

Email: sgopal@uoregon.edu

This course is a historical introduction to film theory. We will explore how the form and function of cinema was theorized at different temporal junctures from its beginnings at the turn of the 19th century to the present. It will be focused on the US and Europe for the most part. As we will see that questions like what cinema is, how it works, what it means, what it does have been answered variously in different cultural contexts and in response to diverse historical developments both within the institutions of cinema and in a broader cultural sphere. Thus our readings proceed roughly chronologically and are accompanied by film screenings that best exemplify and anchor particular ways of thinking about cinema. The course assumes that the various theories of cinema are in conversation certain kinds of films - that is to say that we must always hold theory and its object of contemplation in simultaneous and dialectical relation. Finally, as in any 10-week course, our survey is partial and selective but our hope is to journey on.

Readings

Are posted as PDFs on Canvas under “Modules” by week. Those items colored RED are required. The rest are for your reading pleasure. I tend to upload in two-week chunks. This allows me to be flexible to your needs and interests and the pace of the course. If you need to know in advance of two weeks, please get in touch with me.

Screenings

You will do on your own. Almost every film is widely available.

Requirements

Media Curation: You are required bring in a short clip from the screening for the day and analyze it in the context of the readings for the week that you choose to present in. The goal here is to treat the media clip as either illustrating/exemplifying or alternatively critiquing some of the concepts that are explored in readings for that week. We hope that these media clips will help generate discussion and dialogue and serve as an entry point into the readings. They will commence on Week 3 and end by Week 8. We will schedule these curations during Week 2 and there will be ideally 2-3 presentations a week. Some weeks we may end up with more.

A title of your final paper, a 100 word abstract and 5 item annotated

bibliography/filmography: This is due in the 6th week and is stage one in what will become your final paper for the course. The purpose of this is to identify the topic core of primary/secondary texts that will become the basis for your final paper. In addition to books and critical essays, you should list and briefly describe the media that you will be investigating in your final paper and provide a brief rationale for your choices. While there is no ideal number, this document should contain at least 5 items (readings and media). In order to compile this list, you will have needed to identify an area of research/contemplation/reflection as well as the questions/concerns that you are bringing to this topic. At this stage, your goal is to research the topic and get some sense of what is out there on the topic of relevance to you. This will enable you to shape your argument by first mapping the field and then identifying its deficits (that your future paper will then proceed to explore).

The first 4 pages of your research paper: This will become due on Week 8. These are essentially the first 4 pages of what will become your final 10-12 page paper. As in any paper of that length, the first 4 pages are required to set up the problem in an engaging way, identify the stakes and contributions of this paper (without spelling out the argument) and then provide a roadmap of the remainder of the paper to come. All of you will conference with me to go over this document during week 9 and 10. There will be no regular class during this week 9 since I am away at a conference. I will post a sign-up sheet outside my door.

And finally, a CONFERENCE PRESENTATION AND FINAL PAPER: On week 11, we will have a conference where you will present a 15 minute version of your final paper. You may choose to show clips, images, a powerpoint etc. At the end of the conference you will hand in your papers for me to grade. This is a research paper that needs to be well-argued and illustrated. Your goal is to make it of a quality and heft that will enable you to present it at an academic conference in your field, with an eye to future publication. We will need a 6 hour block (10 am to 4 pm with a 1 hour break for lunch) on Thursday June 15 to do this. If that is not feasible, we will have to spread it out over weeks 10 and 11. Not ideal since I think it will be great for you to use week 10 to write your papers.

Grade Distribution

Presentation: 20%

Abstract and Bibliography: 10%

Conference Presentation: 30%

Final Paper: 40%

Please acquaint yourself with guidelines pertaining to plagiarism as well as fair-use.

Please inform me about any accommodations you may need.

Please be aware that screenings include graphic content including sex and violence to humans and animals. If this presents problems, please see me.

Schedule (Subject to Revision and Modification)

Week One: Introduction and Elements of Film Analysis

Week Two: Early Cinema and its Theorists

Readings: Munsterberg, Yasunusuke

Screening: *Landmarks of Early Film*

Week Three: Early Cinema and The Formalists

Readings: Arnheim, Balazs, Epstein

Screening: *Sunrise: A Story of Two Humans* (F. W. Murnau, 1927)

Week Four: Early Cinema and Reality

Readings: Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Kuleshev, Vertov, Imamura

Screening: *Bronenosets Potyomkin* (The Battleship Potemkin, Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)

Cheloveks Kino-Apparatom (The Man with the Movie Camera, Dziga Vertov, 1929)

Week Five: Theories of Realism

Readings: Williams, Kracauer, Bazin, Ray

Screening: *Umberto D* (Vittorio de Sica, 1952)

Week Six: Psychoanalysis, Ideology and Apparatus Theory

Readings: Baudry, Metz, Mulvey, Althusser etc on PDFs

Screening: *Morocco* (Josef Von Sternberg, 1930)

Week Seven: Third Cinema and Decolonization

Readings: Solanas and Getino, Rocha, Rajyadaksha, Xavier, Espinosa

Screening: *Subarnarekha* (The Golden River, Ritwik Ghatak, 1964)

Week Eight: The Thought of Cinema

Readings: Cavell and Deleuze

Screening: *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959)

Week Ten: After Cinema

Readings: Manovich, Rodowick, Friedberg, Jenkins et al

Screening: *San Soleil* (Chris Marker, 1980)