

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, FILM, THEATRE AND MEDIA STUDIES – FILM PROGRAMME
2008 COURSE INFORMATION GUIDE

FILM 238 AUTEUR STUDY

CRN 9524

1st Trimester 2008



Teaching Staff

Course Coordinator: Dr Tim Groves
Room: 83 Fairlie Terrace, room 304
Telephone: 463 5410
Email: tim.groves@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: Monday, 2-4pm

Tutors: Mark Ellsworth 83FT room 101 (contact details will be posted)

Administrative Assistant: Richard Nichol ph: 463 5750

Lecture/Screening: **Monday and Wednesday** 10am-12.50pm
77 Fairlie Terrace, Room 306

Tutorials:
A: Thursday 10-10.50 am
B: Thursday 11-11.50 am
C: Thursday 12-12.50 pm
D: Thursday 1.10-2.00pm

All tutorials will be held in 85 Fairlie Terrace, room 108

Course Aims and Objectives:

This aim of this course is to explore film authorship in a critical manner through a comparison of the work of Michael Mann with directors such as Howard Hawks and Jean-Pierre Melville. After completing this unit, you should have acquired an understanding of some of the different approaches to film authorship. You should have gained specific knowledge of the films of Jean-Pierre Melville and Michael Mann, as well as some knowledge of the films of Howard Hawks, John Carpenter and Kathryn Bigelow. You should have developed the ability to recognize the stylistic traits and thematic preoccupations of a film author. You should be able to situate the work of a film author within other contexts such as genre or film history. The course will also enhance your analytical and critical skills. It will improve your proficiency at film analysis and independent research. It will develop your ability to write essays, make oral presentations, and work in pairs and small groups.

Course Content:

This course is organized into three main areas of study:

Weeks 1-4: We will examine some of the historically significant approaches to film authorship, including auteur criticism, Andrew Sarris and the auteur “theory”, structuralism, and feminism. We will also situate authorship within historical contexts such as the studio system of classical Hollywood and the “New Hollywood” cinema of the 1970s. In this phase of the course we will examine the films of Howard Hawks, John Carpenter and Kathryn Bigelow.

Weeks 5-7: We will explore the work of Jean-Pierre Melville. We will situate Melville in an historical context, consider the importance of the gangster genre in his films, discuss codes of masculinity, and examine the nature and importance of his filmmaking style.

Weeks 8-12: We will analyse the films of Michael Mann in detail. We will discuss different facets of masculinity, such as work and professionalism. We will explore race and otherness in Mann’s films. We will examine the key traits of his audio-visual style, such as colour and composition, and explore their narrative, thematic and affective functions.

Readings:

The required readings for each tutorial are listed at the end of this guide. They are contained in the Student Notes. You should purchase a copy of the Notes for your own use.

Workload:

The university expects that you should be able to devote about 15 hours per week to a 22 point unit across a 12 week trimester. If you attend 7 hours of classes per week, then you should expect to spend about 8 hours per week reading, watching films, preparing for classes, and working on assignments.

Group Work:

There will be some informal group work during lectures and tutorials. The informal group work in tutorials will form part of the assessment for assignment one.

Assessment Requirements:

There will be four assessment items for this subject. All assessment will be internal. Full details of each assignment will be given in classes, and posted on Blackboard. Assignments 3 and 4 will normally be returned within three weeks of the due date with written feedback. Additional verbal feedback is available upon request.

Assignment One: Tutorial Participation (10%)

Due Date: Tutorials in weeks 3-12

You will be assessed on the quality of your contributions to tutorials throughout the semester, starting in week 3. This assignment will enable you to demonstrate your knowledge of issues raised in the course, such as masculinity, genre, style, and approaches to authorship. It will also develop your critical skills, and enhance your verbal skills. Non-attendance at tutorials without a valid excuse (such as illness) will affect your grade.

Assignment Two: Reading Logs (10%)

Due Date: Tutorials in weeks 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10

In this assignment you will summarize an assigned tutorial reading in weeks 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10 in 150 words. This summary should identify the main points of the article and any questions you have about it. This assignment will develop your knowledge of key texts about the filmmakers you will study, as well as your analytical, critical and expression skills.

Assignment Three: Essay (40%) 3000 words

Due Date: Monday, April 28th, 2pm

This assignment will cover topics discussed in the first seven weeks of the course, such as auteur and feminist approaches to authorship, crime and gangster films, the codes of masculinity, and the films of Hawks, Carpenter, Bigelow, and Melville. This assignment will enable you to develop your textual analysis, critical and argumentation skills, as well as your written expression.

Assignment Four: (40%) 3000 words

Due Date: Tuesday, June 10th, 2pm

This assignment will cover the issues discussed in weeks 8-12 of the course, such as masculinity, genre, race, and audio-visual style in the work of Michael Mann. This assignment will enable you to develop your textual analysis, independent research, critical, argumentation and analytical skills. It will also enhance your written expression.

Handing in Assignments

Assignments should be placed in the drop box at the Film administrative office in 85 Fairlie Terrace. *Do not submit your essay to your tutor.* You are strongly advised to keep a copy of your assignment before submitting it.

Penalties:

Late work will be penalized at the rate of 2% per working day. Work submitted more than five working days after the date without a formal extension may not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with your tutor.

If you are having problems meeting a deadline for an assignment, then you should contact your tutor before the due date. Your tutor will consider any reasonable request for an extension, but please note that applications for extensions should be made at least two days before the due date.

Mandatory Course Requirements:

In order to pass this course, you must complete all assignments by the due dates. You must receive at least a 'C' grade overall. You must also attend at least eight (8) tutorials.

Communication of Additional Information:

Any additional information concerning the course, including changes, will be posted on Blackboard.

School Facilities:

The Green Room in 77FT is available to students working in the building. You are expected to clean up after yourself, including returning to the Green Room any mugs removed from there.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the Victoria homepage at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically under "Course Outline General Information" at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general>

- Student and Staff Conduct
- Academic Grievances
- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

Screenings and Weekly Topics

- Week 1:** **Monday:** Introduction to the Course; French and British Auteurs
Wednesday: Andrew Sarris and the Auteur “Theory”
- Screenings:** *Rio Bravo* (Howard Hawks, USA, 1959)
Only Angels Have Wings (Howard Hawks, USA, 1939)
- Readings:** Sarris, Andrew. “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962.” *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Fourth Edition. Eds. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. (4)
Poague, Leland. *Howard Hawks*. Boston: Twayne, 1982. 27-43 (44)
- Week 2:** **Monday:** Howard Hawks Case Study
Wednesday: Structuralist Approaches to Authorship
- Screenings:** *The Thing from Another World* (Christian Nysby, USA, 1951)
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Howard Hawks, USA, 1953)
- Readings:** Wood, Robin. “Retrospect.” *Howard Hawks: American Artist*. Ed. Peter Wollen. London: British Film Institute, 1996. 163-173. (53)
Wollen, Peter. “The Auteur Theory.” *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. 530-542. [extract] (7)
Arbutnot, Lucie and Gail Seneca. “Pre-text and Text in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.” *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*. Ed. Patricia Erens. Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1990. 112-125. (63)
Buscombe, Edward. “Ideas of Authorship.” *Theories of Authorship: A Reader*. Ed. John Caughie. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981. 22-34. [extract] (14)
- Recommended:**
- Week 3:** **Monday:** Authorship in “New Hollywood” Cinema
Wednesday: John Carpenter Case Study
- Screenings:** *Assault on Precinct 13* (John Carpenter, USA, 1976)
The Thing (John Carpenter, USA, 1982)
- Readings:** King, Geoff. *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. 85-97. (21)
Grant, Barry Keith. “Disorder in the Universe: John Carpenter and the Question of Genre.” *The Cinema of John Carpenter: The Technique of Terror*. Eds. Ian Conrich and David Woods. London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2004. 10-19. (70)
Muir, John Kenneth. “*Assault on Precinct 13*.” *The Films of John Carpenter*. Jefferson, NC: Macfarland, 2000. 63-71 (75)
Cumbow, Robert C. “Trust is a Tough Thing to Come by: *The Thing*.” *Order in the Universe: The Films of John Carpenter*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1990. 111-119. (80)
- Week 4:** **Monday:** Feminist Approaches to Authorship
Wednesday: Kathryn Bigelow Case Study
- Screenings:** *Blue Steel* (Kathryn Bigelow, USA, 1990)
Point Break (Kathryn Bigelow, USA, 1991)

Readings: Johnston, Claire. "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema." *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*. Ed. Bill Nichols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. 208-217. [extract] **(28)**
Lane, Christina. "Kathryn Bigelow." *Feminist Hollywood: From Born in Flames to Point Break*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000. 99-123. **(85)**

Week 5: **Monday:** NO CLASS (Easter Monday)
Wednesday: Introduction to Jean-Pierre Melville

Screening: *Bob le Flambeur* (Jean-Pierre Melville, France, 1955)

Readings: Vincendeau, Ginette. *Jean-Pierre Meville: An American in Paris*. [extract] London: BFI Publishing, 2003. 111-116. **(98)**

Week 6: **Monday:** Melville and the Gangster Film
Wednesday: Melville and Masculinity

Screenings: *Le Doulos* (Jean-Pierre Melville, France, 1962)
Le Samourai (Jean-Pierre Melville, France, 1967)

Readings: Vincendeau, Ginette. "'Autistic Masculinity' in Jean-Pierre Melville's Crime Thrillers." *Gender and French Cinema*. Eds. Alex Hughes and James S. Williams. Oxford: Berg, 2001. 139-155. **(112)**
McCarthy, Colin. "Mise-en-Scene Degree Zero: Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Samourai* 1967)." *French Film: Texts and Contexts*. 2nd Edition. Eds. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 189-201. **(136)**
Vincendeau, Ginette. *Jean-Pierre Melville: An American in Paris*. [extract] London: BFI Publishing, 2003. 145-153. **(102)**

Week 7: **Monday:** Film Screening
Wednesday: Melville's Visual Style

Screenings: *Le Circle Rouge* (Jean-Pierre Melville, France, 1970)
Un Flic (Jean-Pierre Melville, France, 1972)

Readings: Danks, Adrian "Together Alone: The Outsider Cinema of Jean-Pierre Melville." *Senses of Cinema* 22 (September 2002)
www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/02/meville.html
(121)
Vincendeau, Ginette. *Jean-Pierre Melville: An American in Paris*. London: BFI Publishing, 2003. 202-211. [extract] **(107)**

MID-SEMESTER BREAK MID-SEMESTER BREAK

Week 8: **Monday:** Introduction to Michael Mann
Wednesday: Codes of Masculinity in Mann's Work

Screenings: *The Jericho Mile* (Michael Mann, USA, 1979)
Thief (Michael Mann, USA, 1981)

Readings: Sharrett, Christopher. "Michael Mann: Elegies on the Post-Industrial Landscape." *Fifty Contemporary Filmmakers*. Ed. Yvonne Tasker. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 253-263. **(143)**
Smith, Gavin. "Mann Hunters." *Film Comment* 28.6 (November-December 1992) : 72-77. **(149)**

Combs, Richard. "Michael Mann: Becoming." *Film Comment* 32.2
(March-April 1996) : 10-17. **(152)**

Week 9: **Monday:** Film Screening
 Wednesday: *Heat* Case Study

Screenings: *Heat* (Michael Mann, USA, 1995)

Readings: Thoret, Jean-Baptiste. "The Aquarium Syndrome: On the Films of Michael Mann." Trans. Anna Dzenis. *Senses of Cinema* 19 (2001)
 www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/19mann.html **(167)**
Wrathall, John. "*Heat*." *Sight and Sound* 6.2 (1996) : 43-44. **(165)**

Week 10: **Monday:** Film Screening
 Wednesday: Race and Otherness in Mann's Cinema

Screenings: *Ali* (Michael Mann, USA, 2001)
 The Last of the Mohicans (Michael Mann, USA, 1992)

Readings: Edgerton, Gary. "'A Breed Apart': Hollywood, Racial Stereotyping, and the Promise of Revisionism in *The Last of the Mohicans*." *Journal of American Culture* 17.2 (June 1994) : 1-20. **(183)**
Rybin, Steven. "*Ali*." *The Cinema of Michael Mann*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007. 151-167. **(203)**

Week 11: **Monday:** Mann's Expressive Visual Style
 Wednesday: TBA

Screenings: *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, USA, 1986)
 Collateral (Michael Mann, USA, 2004)

Readings: Dzenis, Anna. "Michael Mann's Cinema of Images." *Screening the Past* 12 (2002)
 www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr0902/adfr14b.html **(209)**
Phillips, Kendall R. "Redeeming the Visual: Aesthetic Questions in Michael Mann's *Manhunter*." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 31.1 (June 2003) : 10-16 **(158)**
Anderson, Michael J. "Before Sunrise, or Los Angeles Plays Itself in a Lonely Place." *Senses of Cinema* 33 (2004)
 www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/04/33/collateral.html **(202)**
Olsen, Mark. "It Happened One Night." *Sight and Sound* 14.10 (October 2004) : 14-16. **(206)**

Week 12: **Monday:** Towards a Postclassical Cinema
 Wednesday: Towards a Postclassical Cinema (continued)

Screenings: *The Insider* (Michael Mann, USA, 1999)
 Miami Vice (Michael Mann, USA, 2006)

Readings: Thoret, Jean-Baptiste. "Gravity of the Flux: Michael Mann's *Miami Vice*." Trans. Sally Shafto. *Senses of Cinema* 42 (January-March 2007)
 www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/07/42/miami-vice.html **(238)**
James, Nick. "No Smoking Gun." *Sight and Sound* 10.3 (March 2000) : 14-17. **(234)**