

Film 231: History and Criticism of Film

Trimester 1 2009

(Monday 2 March – Friday 5 June 2009)

22 Points



STAFF

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To be notified

CLASS TIMES AND ROOMS**Lectures**

Tuesday	2:00-5:00pm	MCLT102
Thursday	2:00-5:00pm	MCLT101

Tutorials

Fridays, starting week 2. FILM 231 will be using s-cubed to enrol students into tutorials. Details on blackboard

COURSE CONTENT

FILM 231 is a survey of world film history and the principles underlying historical and critical approaches to the cinema, emphasizing an appreciation of international cinema as an aesthetic, economic, and social factor in the modern world. Weekly tutorials will provide an opportunity for discussion of films screened and lecture topics plus course reading assignments. By the end of the course, students should have a better sense of the nature and history of cinema in an international context, and a greater ability to write lucid and perceptive film criticism.

Film 231 is loosely organised into five areas of study:

Part One:	Early Cinema
Part Two:	Classical Hollywood Cinema
Part Three:	First/Second/Third Cinemas
Part Four:	World Cinema
Part Five:	Contemporary Cinema

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

The university anticipates that you should be able to devote about 15 hours per week to a 22-point course at 200 level. Therefore you should probably expect to spend, on average, about 8 hours per week (apart from class time) in reading, viewing films, writing assignments and preparing for classes.

COURSE TEXT

Kristen Thompson, David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction* (Second Edition), McGraw-Hill, New York, 2003.

ASSESSMENT

All assessment will be internal, and will consist of the following:-

Assessment Title	Due Date	% of Final Grade
In-class Group Presentation (10 minutes duration)	Fri. 3 April	20%
Film analysis essay (2500 words)	Mon. 27 April, 2 pm	30%
In-class Group Presentation (10 minutes duration)	Fri. 22 May	20%

Essay on film history or critical theory (2500 words)

Mon. 15 June, 2 pm

30%

Details of these assignments can be found at the end of this course outline.

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS

Important

Assignment cover sheets and extension forms can be found on Blackboard or outside the Programme office. Remember to fill in your tutor's name.

Note: Submit your written assignments into the drop-box at FT85. Do not hand these to the lecturer or your tutor. And keep a copy of your assignment for your own records.

PENALTIES AND EXTENSIONS

Work submitted late without an extension will be penalised two percent per working day. Except under exceptional circumstances, no work will be accepted more than two weeks after the due date unless specific prior arrangements have been made.

Extensions

If you require an extension, you must complete an extension request form (available on your course Blackboard site) prior to the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's certificate) where appropriate. Extension requests must be submitted to the Course Co-ordinator. Tutors cannot grant extensions.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible to pass the course you must complete all assignments and attend at least 7 tutorials (if on a particular week you are unable to be present at your scheduled tutorial you may, with the tutor's permission, attend another). Regular attendance is also expected at screenings and lectures, though there will be no roll calls.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet

- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such MATERIAL.

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

TURNITIN

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <http://www.turnitin.com>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material. At the discretion of the Head of School, handwritten work may be copy-typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted material on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions is not made available to any other party.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Any announcements and instructions relating to the course will be posted on Blackboard. Some additional readings may be placed here as well. Please ensure that you are familiar with this and that you regularly check the site to make sure that you do not miss any important information.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

A copy of the General University Statutes and Policies can be found on Blackboard.

COURSE PROGRAMME

Week 1	Week of 2 nd Mar.	Tuesday What does film 'mean', and how did we get 'here'? Primary Screening: <i>Sullivan's Travels</i> (Preston Sturges, 1942, USA) Thursday Pre- and Early Cinema Primary Screening: <i>Landmarks of Early Cinema</i> (various, 1886-1913) Readings from course text: 'The Invention and Early Years of the Cinema, 1880s-1904', pp. 14 -30. 'The International Expansion of the Cinema, '1905-1912', pp. 37-49.
Week 2	9 th Mar.	Tuesday Silent Cinema and Early Comedy Primary Screening: <i>The General</i> (Buster Keaton, 1927, USA) Readings: 'National Cinemas, Hollywood Classicism, and World War I, 1913-1919', pp. 68-76. 'Soviet Cinema in the 1920s', pp. 119-139. 'The Late Silent Era in Hollywood, 1920-1928', pp. 143-161.

Thursday

Cinema of the City

Primary Screening: *Collateral* (Michael Mann, 2004, USA)

Week 3 16th Mar.

Tuesday

German Expressionism

Primary Screening: *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927, Germany)

Readings: 'Germany in the 1920s', pp. 101-118.

Thursday

Technology I: The Coming of Sound

Primary Screening: *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly, Stanley Donen, 1951, USA)

Readings: 'The Introduction of Sound', pp. 193-212.

Week 4 23rd Mar.

FIRST GROUP ASSIGNMENT DUE THIS WEEK

Tuesday

The Dream Factory

Primary Screening: *Top Hat* (Mark Sandrich, 1935, USA)

Readings: 'The Hollywood Studio System, 1930-1945', pp. 213-238.

Thursday

Genre I: The Musical

Primary Screening: *Moulin Rouge!* (Baz Luhrmann, 2001, Australia)

Week 5 30th Mar.

Tuesday

Technology II: The Camera

Primary Screening: *Don't Look Back* (D.A. Pennebaker, 1967, USA)

Thursday

Italian Neo-Realism

Primary Screening: *Ladri di Biciclette (The Bicycle Thief)* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948, Italy)

Readings: 'Postwar European Cinema: Neorealism and Its Context, 1945-1959', pp. 353-372.

Week 6 6th Apr.

Tuesday

French New-Wave Cinema

Primary Screening: *Band à Part* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1964, France)

Readings: 'New Waves and Young Cinemas, 1958-1967', pp. 439-476.

Thursday

Questioning Art: Introducing Arthouse and Alternative Cinemas

Primary Screening: *The Cup* (Khyentse Norbu, 1999, Tibet)

Readings: 'Documentary and Experimental Cinema in the Postwar Era, 1945-Mid 1960s', pp. 489-506.

Note: No tutorials this week.

Mid Trimester Break: (Good) Friday 10 April – Friday 24 April 2009

- Week 7 27th Apr. **FIRST ESSAY DUE MON. 27TH APRIL, 2PM.**
Tuesday
The 1950s: Teenagers, Television and the Atomic Age
Primary Screening: *Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955, USA)
Readings: 'American Cinema in the Postwar Era, 1945-1960', pp. 325-352.
Thursday
Third Cinema
Primary Screening: *Chalte Chalte* (pt. I) (Aziz Mirza, 2005, India)
Readings: 'Politically Critical Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s', pp. 535-578.
- Week 8 4th May **Tuesday**
Bollywood: Indian Cinema
Primary Screening: *Chalte Chalte* (pt. II)
Readings: 'Other Studio Systems', pp. 256-257. 'Postwar Cinema Beyond the West, 1945-1959', pp. 407-410. 'Beyond the Industrialised West', pp. 640-643.
Thursday
Japanese Anime
Primary Screening: *Spirited Away* (Hiyao Miyazaki, 2001, Japan)
Readings: 'Beyond the Industrialised West', pp. 644-647.
- Week 9 11th May **Tuesday**
Antipodean Cinema
Primary Screening: *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Peter Weir, 1975, Australia)
Readings: 'Beyond the Industrialised West', pp. 663-665.
Thursday
Genre II: Science-Fiction (Identity and Alienation)
Primary Screening: *Sunshine* (Danny Boyle, 2007, USA)
- Week 10 18th May **SECOND GROUP ASSIGNMENT DUE THIS WEEK**
Tuesday
American Independents
Primary Screening: *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986, USA)
Readings: 'American Cinema and the Entertainment Economy, The 1980s and After', pp. 694-700.
Thursday
Censorship: Challenging the Taboo
Primary Screening: *Indie Sex: Censored* (Lisa Ades, Lesli Klainberg, 2007, USA)
- Week 11 25th May **Tuesday**
Hollywood Cinema: High Concept and the Neo-Baroque
Primary Screening: *Bad Boys* (Michael Bay, 1995, USA)
Readings: 'American Cinema and the Entertainment Economy: The 1980s and After', pp. 679-693.

Thursday

Digital Cinema

Primary Screening: *Russian Ark* (Alexander Sokurov, 2003, Russia)

Readings: 'American Cinema and the Entertainment Economy: The 1980s and After', pp. 701-702. 'Toward a Global Film Culture', pp. 720-722.

Week 12 1st Jun

Tuesday

Hollywood Cinema post 9/11: Redefining Evil

Primary Screening: *United 93* (Paul Greengrass, 2006, USA)

Thursday

Conclusion

Primary Screening: To be confirmed

SECOND ESSAY DUE 15TH JUNE AT 2PM..

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

Assignment One:

In-class Group Presentation Friday 3rd April (in tutorials) (20% of final grade)

Walking in the Cinema City

Brief

Whether you are new to Wellington or have lived your whole life in the area, you will probably never have considered its architecture, houses, streets, shops and clubs; its people, its sights, smells, and noises. All cities have emotional appeal. All cities have their own rhythms, textures and 'vision' regimes. Wellington has one too, and you will have already begun to get a sense of what the city is like and how you feel about it. As we have been discussing, Film often uses the city space to suggest a range of things. Sometimes the city is visualised as a brutal, de-humanising, alienating space and sometimes it is majestic and full of productive energy. The city comes alive on screen; it has emotive affect and poetic sensibilities. The city carries ideological meaning. *Suck it in and see.*

For this assignment you are being asked to capture the city (your impressions, senses, and feelings) on stills camera, found footage, film, video or DV (unfortunately, you will need to choose and supply the technology for this). The representation of Wellington that you capture must be *accompanied by words, poetry, music, dialogue etc.* It should be no longer than 3-5 minutes, and can be still or moving image based. The approach can be experimental, dystopian/utopian, gothic, impressionistic/expressionistic, horrific, abstract, metaphorical, or allegorical.

Once you have shown your work, you will need to talk for approx 5 minutes about the design of the film/presentation and a rationale for the approach that you have taken. This should be supported by academic ideas and supportive references. In total, the presentation should be no more than 10 minutes long.

Use the screenings to help you imagine Wellington in a cinematic way. Be inventive, be bold, be personal, and let this city get under your skin. Good luck!

In groups of four: Helpful tips....

1. Brainstorm your ideas about the brief. Talk through your senses of the city so far; the impressions (influences) that the screenings are having on you. Take a walk in the city, in daylight, at night-time, anytime and see and hear it afresh.

Ask these questions; do you want to produce a 'story' of the city, with a narrative; or a set of contradictory images; do you want to capture a 'moment' from the city (a specific place, at a specific time?) or particular types of people? Do you want music to accompany the images; do you want to talk over the images as you present them; do you want to recite poetry or rap or 'conversation'? Get your ideas down on paper and sift through.

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2. Produce drafts of the images/shots you would like to get. Pre-plan the project so that you have a strong sense of what you want to photograph or capture on film before you hit the streets. Use the camera like a paintbrush – think about angles, distance, framing, light, and focus – be experimental.
3. As you are out walking new ideas may come to light – take a chance with these. But also try to keep to your pre-production ideas so that your ‘theme’ will still have integrity when you come to view what you have filmed/shot.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

1. Creative and interesting use of the chosen technology. Evidence of aesthetic and design considerations. Imaginative use of location(s), light, space, sound, music, people and buildings.
2. Coherency and structure to the presentation as a whole. Evidence of teamwork and critical self-reflection and group evaluation.
3. Clear evidence of well directed research (periodicals, journals, books, magazines, screenings, database, Internet sites) on the cinema city.
4. Communication and rapport with peers/the audience.

Note: presentation notes and a bibliography of sources have to be handed to your tutor after your presentation

ASSIGNMENT TWO:

Film Analysis Essay due date, Monday 27th April by 2pm. 30% of final grade (2,500 words)

For this assignment you are being asked to undertake a close textual analysis of **one** film. The type of analysis that you will undertake depends upon the topic area that the film comes from. Below are suggestions and parameters for you to work to:

1. Analyse one short film in terms of its ‘primitive’ language, and/or the way it confirms or denies the ‘cinema of attractions’ argument put forward by Tom Gunning.
2. Analyse the conventions of comedy in one silent film of your choice.
3. Analyse the conventions of German Expressionism in one silent film of your choice.
4. Analyse one Hollywood film musical in terms of the way it attempts to produce a utopian version of American society.
5. Analyse one classical Hollywood film in terms of Adorno and Horkheimer’s comments on the mass production of cinema.
6. Analyse one Italian neo-realist film in the way that it captures post-war life in Italy.
7. Analyse one film from the French new wave in terms of how it both borrows and challenges the conventions of Hollywood genre cinema.
8. Analyse one experimental film in terms of why and how it is different (oppositional?) to Classical Hollywood.

Assessment Criteria

1. The essay needs to be well structured with a definite introduction and conclusion
2. There should be evidence of set reading and wider research. Essays need to be referenced, supportive quotations supplied (no more than 10% of overall word count) and completed with a bibliography of sources used.

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3. Essays should involve the close, textual analysis of at least one film, but wider contexts should be considered where relevant. Description should be avoided.
4. The 'language' of film studies should find its way into the essay – the key terms, concepts and critical ideas should be drawn upon to flesh out the reading of the film.
5. Critical autonomy is important: original idea and argument are important factors in the success of a film analysis essay.
6. Repetition should be avoided. The word count should be kept to. Essays should be double-spaced with a wide margin on both sides of the paper. A cover sheet with essay title, course title, student name, and tutor name should be included.

Essay writing is often challenging but it can also be exciting – if you get hold of an idea, a theme, an argument, a complexity, and run with it, the process can be really, really rewarding. If you let the arguments, the films, the debates, get under your skin, inside your head, then the desire to think about film, to write about film, will be as strong as the urge to make film. Go for it!

ASSIGNMENT THREE:

In-class Group Presentation Thursday 22nd May (in tutorials) (20% of final grade)

What is Art?

What is Art Cinema?

Brief

You are being asked to define art and art cinema specifically. Your group response should be both academic and creative (audio-visual, performative, challenging). You may want to bring in various examples of art/art film (including art that you have made/produced) and to explain why this constitutes 'art'. The group is being asked to define, illustrate and intellectualise the meaning and value of art and art cinema. This may involve deciding that there is no such thing as 'art' or 'art film' at all.... The brief encourages you to be provocative but also thoughtful. The presentation should be between 8-10 minutes long and each member of the group needs to contribute to the presentation.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

1. Creative and interesting use of examples of art and art film. Audio-visual, written, pictorial and performative examples can all be used.
2. Coherency and structure to the presentation as a whole. Evidence of teamwork and critical self-reflection and group evaluation.
3. Clear evidence of well directed research (periodicals, journals, books, magazines, screenings, database, Internet sites) on the cinema city.
4. Communication and rapport with peers/the audience.

Note: presentation notes and a bibliography of sources have to be handed to your tutor after your presentation

ASSIGNMENT FOUR:

Final Essay due date: Monday 15th June, 2pm, 30% of final grade (2,500 words)

Answer one of the following questions:

1. What was particularly unique or 'new' about the French New Wave? Explore the work of at least two filmmakers, paying particular attention to film form, technology and social context.
2. B-grade science fiction films of the 1950s examined the rise of science and the challenge to individuality and self-identity. Do you agree? Use examples of several films to illustrate your answer.

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3. Explore the authorship of one Antipodean (Australia and New Zealand) director that you are familiar with. Consider whether there is something distinctly 'Australian' or 'New Zealand' about their work. Use film examples to illustrate your answer.
4. *Metropolis* engages with decaying urban cultures and landscapes. Is this still a common theme in contemporary science-fiction? Or does recent sci-fi emphasise and examine other real fears and threats to humanity?
5. Using specific examples, examine how digital technology has changed the way in which film is used to tell stories.
6. Sam Neill once described New Zealand film as a 'cinema of unease'. He recently amended his opinion, based on films released in the 1990s and 2000s, describing it as a 'cinema of ease'. What did he mean by this, and do you agree? Use examples to help you illustrate your answer.
7. Using specific examples, examine a controversial cinematic representation in terms of how film either challenges outdated societal standards or commercialises the 'taboo' merely for profit. What do your examples do?
8. Explore Japanese Anime films in terms of the way they represent and critique modern Japan.
9. What is 'Third Cinema'? Use a 'national' example to help you define and explore your answer.
10. Popular Indian cinema is a spectacular visual feast and a vehicle for passing on the dominant values of Indian society. Discuss this statement, using examples to illustrate your answer.
11. Explore the reasons given for the rise of the American Independents. Illustrate your response with reference to specific films, film companies and directors.
12. American Independent Cinema deals with the political issues that mainstream Hollywood is unable to. How accurate is this statement?
13. Explore the argument that the 'new' Hollywood blockbuster film is destroying the art of storytelling and reducing the cinema experience to one that resembles a theme park ride.
14. Eight years on from the events of 9/11, has Hollywood commercial cinema undergone a permanent change in its methods of storytelling and filmmaking? Or has it reverted back to pre-9/11 techniques and conventions? Use specific examples to illustrate your response.

Assessment Criteria

1. The essay needs to be well structured with a definite introduction and conclusion
2. There should be evidence of set reading and wider research. Essays need to be referenced, supportive quotations supplied (no more than 10% of overall word count) and completed with a bibliography of sources used.
3. The essay needs to deal with the debates and arguments that circulate around the topic area. Textual analysis should be used but only to support the overall response to the question.. Description should be avoided.
4. The 'language' of film studies should find its way into the essay – the key terms, concepts and critical ideas should be drawn upon to flesh out the reading of the film.
5. Critical autonomy is important: original idea and argument are important factors in the success of a critical analysis essay.
6. Repetition should be avoided. The word count should be kept to. Essays should be double-spaced with a wide margin on both sides of the paper. A cover sheet with essay title, course title, student name, and tutor name should be included.