

FILM 401 Film Theory Goes to the Movies

Trimesters 1 + 2 2010

1 March –13 November 2010

30 Points



TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching dates:	1 March 2010 to 15 October 2010
Mid-year break:	7 June to 11 July 2010
Study week:	18 October to 22 October 2010
Last piece of assessment due:	26 October 2010

WITHDRAWAL DATES

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at
<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

STAFF CONTACT DETAILS

Tim Groves (Course Coordinator)

Email: tim.groves@vuw.ac.nz

Room: 83FT 303

Phone: 4635410

Office Hours: These will be posted

CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Seminars and Screenings

Tuesday 10.00am-12.50pm, 85FT 108

COURSE DELIVERY

The course will consist of a weekly three-hour session that will involve a film screening and seminar discussion. The seminar discussion may include short informal lectures.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All additional information will be posted on Blackboard.

COURSE CONTENT

This course will explore different theoretical approaches to the affects and emotions viewers experience while watching films. The first phase of the course will examine the work of cognitive theorists such as Murray Smith, Noel Carroll and Carl Plantinga, and how they deal with such issues as character and sympathy, the horror film, and the viewer's body. In weeks 6-9 we will consider how the theories of Gilles Deleuze have been used to theorise affectivity in the cinema, as well as genres such as melodrama and horror. Weeks 10-12 will focus on phenomenological approaches to the viewer's body. In weeks 13-16 we will look at the work of the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in relation to horror, touch, and his links with the director Claire Denis. Weeks 17-18 will focus on deconstructive approaches to affectivity. Weeks 19-24 will deal with the relationships between cinema, affect, cinephilia genre, and memory.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The aim of this course is to examine different theories of cinematic affects and emotions. Students who successfully complete the course should possess a broad knowledge of contemporary critical debates in Film Studies about affect and emotion. They should have acquired specific knowledge of cognitive, Deleuzian and phenomenological approaches to affect and emotion. They should have also gained specific knowledge of the work of Jean-Luc Nancy, Claire Denis, and some aspects of cinephilia. Students should have developed knowledge of the relationship between film form and viewer responses. The course will enhance the analytical and critical skills of students. It will improve their proficiency at film analysis and independent research. It will further develop their written and oral skills.

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

This is a 30 point course so the University expects you to devote about 300 hours to it. In addition to attending classes, you should spend about 7 hours per week during the teaching period on reading, watching films, preparing for seminars and working on assignments.

GROUP WORK

Students will undertake informal group work during seminars. This will count towards your assessment for Assignment One.

READINGS

There are no set texts for this course. A list of recommended weekly readings will be made available before semester begins. These will be accessible via Electronic Closed Reserve in the Library and the list will be linked to Blackboard.

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

All assessment for this course will be internal. There will be four assignments. Further information about assessment will be distributed during the course and on Blackboard.

Assignment One: Seminar Participation (10%)

Due Date: Seminars in weeks 2-22

Description:

You will be assessed on the quality of your contributions to seminars throughout the course, commencing in week 2. Non-attendance without a valid excuse (such as illness) will affect your grade.

Assessment Criteria:

- Fulfilling the set task in a clear, direct, relevant and complete manner
- Quality and quantity of seminar participation
- Evidence of preparation for seminars
- Evidence of engagement with course issues and materials, including screenings and readings

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- Originality of contributions to learning activities
- Quality, fluency and coherency of expression
- Respect for other students and their ideas

Relationship to Learning Objectives:

This assignment will enable you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of issues and topics raised in screenings and readings. It will also develop your critical skills, and enhance your verbal skills.

Assignment Two: Seminar Presentation (20%)

Due Date: Any seminar in weeks 2-22

Description:

In this assignment, you will deliver a seminar presentation on some aspect of the weekly topic. You will also be expected to lead the class discussion. The seminar presentation will be 20-25 minutes long, and you will provide a written summary of your presentation (500-1000 words).

Assessment Criteria:

- Fulfilling the set task in a clear, direct, relevant, complete, and timely manner
- Clear evidence of your engagement with the ideas and materials discussed in FILM 401
- The originality and quality of your presentation. This will include your ability to conduct independent research from reputable academic sources, synthesise research materials, engage in textual analysis where relevant, and develop and express your ideas
- Coherency, structure and argumentation of your seminar
- Quality and fluency of your verbal and written expression
- Ability to lead the ensuing class discussion
- Understanding and correct application of terms and concepts used in film analysis
- Quality of any audiovisual aids, such as powerpoint slides and film clips
- Technical ability in this use of any audiovisual elements
- Accurate and complete referencing of all sources, including a bibliography and filmography

Relationship to Learning Objectives:

This assignment is designed to improve your research, argumentation, analytical, and oral presentation skills.

Assignment Three: Critical Essay (30%)

Length: 2800-3000 words

Due Date: Monday, July 14

Description:

This assignment will cover topics discussed in the first twelve weeks of the course, such as character and sympathy, cognitive approaches to horror, cognition and the body, Deleuze and affectivity, faciality, Deleuzian approaches to horror and melodrama, and phenomenological approaches to affect and emotion.

Assessment Criteria:

- Fulfilling the set task in a clear, direct, relevant and complete manner
- Clear evidence of your engagement with the ideas and materials discussed in FILM 401
- The originality and quality of your findings. This will include your ability to conduct independent research from reputable academic sources, synthesise research materials, engage in textual analysis, and develop and express your ideas
- Coherency, structure and argumentation of your essay
- Quality and fluency of written expression

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- Understanding and correct application of terms and concepts used in film analysis
- Accurate and complete referencing of all sources, including a bibliography and filmography

Relationship to Learning Objectives:

This assignment will improve your knowledge of one of the topics studied in the first twelve weeks of the course. It will enable you to develop your textual analysis, independent research, critical and argumentation skills. It will also improve your written expression.

Assignment Four: Research Essay (40%)

Length: 3500-4000 words

Due Date: Tuesday, October 26

Description:

This assignment will require you to design and research your own research topic, with a particular emphasis on the material covered during second trimester.

Assessment Criteria:

- Fulfilling the set task in a clear, direct, relevant and complete manner
- Clear evidence of your engagement with the ideas and materials discussed in FILM 401
- The originality and quality of your findings. This will include your ability to conduct independent research from reputable academic sources, synthesise research materials, engage in textual analysis, and develop and express your ideas
- Coherency, structure and argumentation of your essay
- Quality and fluency of written expression
- Understanding and correct application of terms and concepts used in film analysis
- Accurate and complete referencing of all sources, including a bibliography and filmography

Relationship to Learning Objectives:

This assignment will improve your knowledge of one of the topics studied across the course, and particularly those dealt with in second trimester. It will enable you to develop your textual analysis, independent research, critical and argumentation skills. It will also improve your written expression.

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS

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

PENALTIES AND EXTENSIONS

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2 percent deduction from your total mark per work day or part work day, starting from the hour the work is due. This means late work will drop one 'grade-step' every second day—i.e. from C+ to C, or A- to B+. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

Extensions

Extensions will be granted only in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Issues of workload do not constitute exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. 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. Tutors cannot grant extensions.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To gain a pass in this course you must:

- Submit all of the written work specified for this course, on or by the specified dates (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of work)

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- Complete the seminar presentation specified for this course on the date agreed to with the course coordinator
- Attend at least eighteen (18) seminars.

CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

STATEMENT ON LEGIBILITY

You are expected to present work that meets appropriate standards. Work submitted during the course

(i. e. work that is internally assessed) should be typed or prepared on a computer. Work submitted in the final examination will obviously be handwritten. You are expected to write clearly. Where work is deemed 'illegible', you will be given a photocopy of the work and asked to transcribe it to an acceptable standard (preferably typed) within a specified time frame.

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>

GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES

You 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 or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC (Academic) website also provides information in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcademic/Publications.aspx

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COURSE PROGRAMME

The following schedule is provisional and subject to change depending on the availability of films.

Week 1: Introduction; Thinking about Affect and Emotion

Screening: *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophuls, USA, 1948)

Week 2: Cognition and Emotion

Screening: *Groundhog Day* (Harold Ramis, USA, 1993)

Readings: Currie, Gregory. "Cognitivism." *A Companion to Film Theory*. Eds. Toby Miller and Robert Stam. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. 84-104.
Plantinga, Carl and Greg M. Smith. "Introduction." *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition and Emotion*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. 1-17.

Week 3: Character and Sympathy

Screening: TBA

Readings: Smith, Murray. *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. 73-86 and 95-109.

Week 4: Cognitive Approaches to Horror

Screenings: *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez, USA, 1999)

Readings: Hills, Matt. *The Pleasures of Horror*. London: Continuum, 2005. 13-32.

Week 5: Cognition and the Body

Screening: TBA

Readings: Plantinga, Carl. "The Sensual Medium." *Moving Viewers: American Cinema and Spectator's Experience*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009. 112-139.

Week 6: Deleuze and Affect

Screening: NO SCREENING

Readings: Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002. 23-45.

Week 7: Deleuze and Faciality

Screening: *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, France, 1928)

Readings: Powell, Anna. "Off Your Face: Schizoanalysis, Faciality and Film." *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Cinema*. Eds. Ian Buchanan and Patricia MacCormack. London: Continuum, 2008. 116-129.

Week 8: Deleuze and Horror

Screening: *The Masque of the Red Death* (Roger Corman, USA, 1964)

Readings: Powell, Anna. *Deleuze and Horror Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. 109-153.

Week 9: Melodrama, Affect and Performativity

Screening: *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, West Germany, 1972)

Readings: Del Rio, Elena. *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection*.

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Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. 67-112.

Week 10: **Touching the Void: Introduction to Phenomenology**

Screening: *The Gleaners and I* (Agnes Varda, France, 2000)

Readings: Rutherford, Anne. "The Poetics of a Potato: Documentary that Gets under the Skin."
 Metro 137 (2003): 126-131. **(Supplied)**
 Sobchack, Vivian. "Introduction." *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image*
 Culture. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. 1-9.

Week 11: **Phenomenology: Vivian Sobchack**

Screening: TBA

Readings: Sobchack, Vivian. "What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the
 Flesh." *Senses of Cinema* 5 (April 2000) www.sensesofcinema.com

Week 12: **Tactility, Empathy**

Screening: *Sherlock Jr.* (Buster Keaton, USA, 1924)

Readings: Barker, Jennifer M. *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*. Berkeley and
 Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009. 69-106.