

## FILM/MDIA 402 – Film, Culture and Society

Trimester 1 2010

1 March to 4 July 2010

30 Points

- **Public holidays this trimester:** Easter: Friday 2 April-Tuesday 6 April 2010

### TRIMESTER DATES

**Teaching dates:** March 3, 2010 to June 3, 2010

**Mid-trimester break:** April 5 to April 18, 2010

**Study week:** June 7 to June 11, 2010

**Last piece of assessment due:** June 4, 2010

### WITHDRAWAL DATES

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

### NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

**Staff:** Dr. Geoff Stahl

**Email:** geoff.stahl@vuw.ac.nz

**Phone:** 04-463-7472

**Room:** 42-44 Kelburn Parade, KP 112

**Office Hours:** Thursdays 10:00-12:00 (or by appointment)

### CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

**Lectures:** Wednesdays, 14:00-16:00

**Trimester Dates:** March 1– June 16

**Room Number:** KP 101

**Screenings:** Thursdays, 15:00-17:00, KP 101 (N.B.: Some screenings may go past 17:00)

### COURSE DELIVERY

The course will be given in seminar form, with students expected to participate in, and at times lead, class discussion. There will be small group work in class, with size ranging from pairs to larger groups. There will also be in-class textual analysis of select clips.

### COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Blackboard will be used throughout this course. Any PowerPoint presentations will be posted there, AFTER the lecture. Questions regarding the course, readings, assignments, etc., should be posted on Blackboard.

## COURSE CONTENT

The relationship between media and urban space is a complex one, deeply rooted in, and often defining, the history of modernity and, lately, postmodernity. Film in particular has an intimate relationship to the city, which this course will deal with in detail. Using the themes of modernity/postmodernity, gender, race, crime, subcultures and the virtual city, among others, this course will cover a range of issues related to representing, imagining and experiencing the city through various visual media, with a focus mainly on, but not necessarily restricted to, film and television.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, students will be expected to have attained the following:

- An understanding of relationship between film, media and urban space.
- An introduction to different methodologies used to approach media texts.
- An analytical and critical approach to textual analysis of a selection of media texts.
- An overview of some of the different critical approaches and perspectives taken on media and urban space.
- A specific understanding of select cinematic and media figures, as well as urban types, including the *flâneur*, the gangster, and the detective.
- An ability to work in pairs and larger groups.
- An improvement in written, researching and oral presentation skills.

## EXPECTED WORKLOAD

Students should expect to devote 15 hours per week to this course.

## READINGS

**Essential texts:** All texts are available through Electronic Course Reserve, at the Library.

**Recommended Reading:** A number of books relating to the course have been placed at Closed Reserve, on three-day loan. Please check the Library listing for this course for more details.

## ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

### 1. **ASSIGNMENT ONE: Tutorial Participation (10%)**

You will be assessed on the quality of your contributions to seminars throughout the semester, starting in Week 2. This assignment will enable you to demonstrate your knowledge of issues raised in the course. It will also develop your critical skills, enhance your verbal skills, and improve your ability to work in pairs and small groups. Non-attendance at seminars without a valid excuse (such as illness) will affect your grade.

### 2. **SECOND ASSIGNMENT: Seminar Presentation 500 words (20%)**

This assignment will be done in pairs. Both students will be expected to lead the second half of the seminar. The presentation will develop the theme of the week by making reference to secondary material and drawing on examples from other media sources (film, television, etc.). The students will pose questions to put to the other students in order to facilitate

discussion. A brief write-up of the seminar presentation (500 words) is due by the Friday following the presentation. This can be in point-form with the main points of presentation highlighted, as well as any references used. This written portion will represent the work of both students. The ability to work together and collaborate in an effective manner is an important component of this piece of assessment. Seminars will begin in Week Three and occur each week throughout the trimester. Students will be evaluated separately.

**3. THIRD ASSIGNMENT: Close Analysis 2000-2250 words [30%]**

**Due Date: Monday, April 19, 2 PM @ Media Studies Office**

Students will choose ONE reading taken from a scholarly journal or academic text and consider its critical/analytical value. The chosen material must relate to one theme discussed in Weeks 1-5. It is expected that the student will briefly outline the author's argument, respond to its internal coherence, develop their own argument and support their thesis with evidence drawn from other media texts (films, television). As this is a close reading, references to other scholarly texts must be kept to a minimum. The analysis must be based on original research and cannot draw upon their seminar presentations. Analytical, critical and writing skills will be evaluated in this assignment.

**4. FOURTH ASSIGNMENT: Final Paper 2750-3000 words[40%]**

**Due Date: Friday, June 4, 2 PM @ Media Studies Office**

The final paper is a research essay in which the student will explore issues relating to ONE of the following issues:

- Spatiality
- Subjectivity
- Mobility
- Otherness

The student will ensure that this is original research, and is not to draw upon material used in either Assignment 2 or 3. References to readings from the course are encouraged, but extensive use of secondary material is required. Films and/or other media texts are to be used as evidence supporting the thesis. Developing an ability to research broadly, synthesize and present analysis in an economical and coherent fashion are the primary goals of this assignment.

N.B.: Students must discuss their final assignment with the lecturer during office hours or by making an appointment.

Details on all points of assessment will be dealt with in the seminar.

### ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS

Assignment cover sheets and extension forms can be found on Blackboard or outside the Programme office.

### 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

- Students must submit all pieces of assessment in order to pass the course.
- Attendance in seminars is mandatory. Exemptions are allowed for those with proper medical certificate or equivalent.
- All readings are to be done BEFORE class.

### 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](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcademic/Publications.aspx)

## COURSE PROGRAMME

Week 1 Mar. 3

### Introduction

Donald, James. "Fog Everywhere." *Imagining the Modern City*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999. 1-24.

Clarke, David B. "Introduction: Previewing the Cinematic City." *The Cinematic City*. Ed. David B. Clarke. New York: Routledge, 1997. 1-18.

**Screening:** *Slacker* (Richard Linklater, US, 1991)

Week 2 Mar. 10

### The Flâneur

Friedberg, Anne. "The Mobilized Gaze and the Virtual Gaze in Modernity: Flâneur/Flâneuse." *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. 15-46.

**Screening:** *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (Walter Ruttmann, DE, 1929)  
*Métropole/Montreal by Night* (Arthur Burrows/Jean Palardy, CA, 1947)

Week 3 Mar. 17

### Documenting the City

Webber, Andrew. "Symphony of a City: Motion Pictures and Still Lives in Weimar Berlin." *Cities in Transition: The Moving Image and the Modern Metropolis*. Eds. Andrew Webber and Emma Wilson. London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2008. 56-71.

Beattie, Keith. "From City Symphony to Global City Film: Documentary Display and the Corporeal." *Screening the Past 20* (December 2006)  
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/20/city-symphony-global-city-film.html>

**Screening:** Episodes of *The Shield*, *The Wire*, *Da Vinci's Inquest* (various directors, US/CA, various years)

Week 4 Mar. 24

### Gangsters & Detectives

Warshow, Robert. "The Gangster as Tragic Hero." *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre and other Aspects of Popular Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001. 97-104.

Salzani, Carlo. "The City as Crime Scene: Walter Benjamin and the Traces of the Detective." *New German Critique* 34.1 (Winter 2007): 165-187.

Williams, James S. "The Lost Boys of Baltimore: Beauty and Desire in the Hood." *Film Quarterly*, 62.2 (Winter 2008/2009): 58-63.

**Screening:** *Night and the City* (Jules Dassin, US, 1950)

Week 5 Mar. 31

**Film Noir: The Nocturnal City**

Dimendberg, Ed. *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004. 1-20.

Erickson, Glenn. "Expressionist Doom in *Night and the City*." *Film Noir Reader*. Eds. Alain Silver and James Ursini. New York: Limelight, 2000. 203-207.

Schlör, Joachim. "Contradictory Reports from Night in the Big City." *Nights in the Big City: Paris, Berlin, London 1840-1930*, London: Reaktion Books, 1998. 9-30.

**Screening:** *Sex and the City* (Michael Patrick King, US, 2008)

**N.B.: Close Reading Due:** Monday April 19<sup>th</sup> @ 2 PM

**Mid Trimester Break:** Friday 2 April– Sunday 18 April 2010

Week 6 Apr. 21

**The Gendered City**

Wilson, Elizabeth. "Into the Labyrinth." *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. 1-11.

Wolff, Janet. "The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity." *Theory, Culture and Society*. 2.3 (1985): 37-46.

Richards, Helen. "Sex and the City: A Visible Flâneuse for the Postmodern Era." *Continuum*, 17.2 (2003): 147-157.

**Screening:** *La Haine* (Matthieu Kassovitz, FR, 1995)

Week 7 Apr. 28

**Race and the City**

Haymes, Stephen Nathan. "Race, Culture, and the City: An Introduction." *Race, Culture, and the City: A Pedagogy for Black Urban Struggle*. New York: SUNY Press, 1995. 1-25.

Stanfield, Peter. "Black Gangsters and the 'Abandoned City' in the 1970s Blaxploitation Cycle." *Mob Culture: Hidden Histories of the American Gangster Film*. Eds. Lee Grievson, Esther Sonnet and Peter Stanfield. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005. 281-300.

Wacquant, Loïc. "Ghettos and Anti-Ghettos: An Anatomy of the New Urban Poverty." *Thesis Eleven* 94 (2008): 113-118

Screening: *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles & Kátia Lund, BR/FR, 2002)

Week 8 May 5

**Cinema and the Global City**

Amin, Ash and Stephen Graham. "The Ordinary City." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 22.4 (2004): 411-429.

Diken, Bülent. "City of God." *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action*. 9.3 (2005): 307-320.

Screening: *Suburbia* (Penelope Spheeris, US, 1984)

Week 9 May 12

**The Suburbs**

Chaney, David. "Authenticity and Suburbia." *Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory*. Eds. Sallie Westwood and John Williams. London: Routledge, 1997. 140-151.

Traber, Daniel S. "L. A.'s "White Minority": Punk and the Contradictions of Self-Marginalization." *Cultural Critique*, 48 (Spring, 2001): 30-64

**Screening:** *Cowboys and Communists* (Jess Feast, NZ, 2007)

*Downtown 81* (Edo Bertoglio, US, 2000)

Week 10 May 19

**Urban Scenes and Subcultures**

Lindner, Rolf. "The Cultural Texture of the City." *Cities and Media: Cultural Perspectives on Urban Identities in a Mediatized World*, Conference Proceedings, 2005. <http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/020/005/ecp072005.pdf>

Stahl, Geoff. "Ping Pong Country in the New Berlin." *Space and Culture*. 11.4 (2008): 300-324.

**Screening:** *Falling Down* (Joel Schumacher, US, 1993)

Week 11 May 26

**Dystopia**

Baeten, Guy. "Western Utopianism/Dystopianism and the Political Mediocrity of Critical Urban Research." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B Human Geography* 84.1 (October 2002): 143-152.



Zeilinger, Martin. "'Quit stalling...!': Destiny and Destination on L.A.'s Inner City Roads." *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 1.2 (2009): 367-384.

**Screening:** *Ghost in the Shell* (Mamoru Oshii, JP, 1995)

Week 12    June 2

**The Virtual City**

San Juan, Rose Marie and Geraldine Pratt. "Virtual Cities and the Urban Mapping of Virtual Space." *Screen* 43.3 (Autumn 2002): 250-270.

Yuen, Wong Kin. "On the Edge of Spaces: 'Blade Runner,' 'Ghost in the Shell,' and Hong Kong's Cityscape." *Science Fiction Studies*. 27.1 (Mar., 2000): 1-21.

No Screening

**N.B.: Final Assignment Due:** Friday June 4<sup>th</sup> @ 2 PM

**Study Week:**                    Monday 7 June to Friday 11 June 2010