

## FILM 234/334 National Cinema D: Contemporary Hollywood Cinema

Trimester 1 2011

28 February to 2 July 2011

20 Points



### TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching dates:	28 February to 3 June 2011
Mid-trimester break:	18 April to 1 May 2011
Study week:	6 June to 12 June 2011
Last piece of assessment due:	16 June 2011

### 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

**Course Coordinator:** Dr Tim Groves

**Room:** 83FT 303

**Email:** [tim.groves@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:tim.groves@vuw.ac.nz)

**Phone:** 463 5410

**Office Hours:** TBA

**Details of tutors will be posted.**

**Programme Administrator:** La'Chelle Pretorius

**Location:** 83FT, level 2

**Email:** [lachelle.pretorius@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:lachelle.pretorius@vuw.ac.nz)

**Phone:** 463 5750

**Office Hours:** 10am to 1.30pm

### CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

#### Lectures

Days: Mon, Tues    Time: 3-6pm    Room Number: HM LT 206

#### Tutorials

Tutorials start in week 2; further details will be posted on S-Cubed and Blackboard

## COURSE DELIVERY

This course will involve two lecture/screening sessions per week. Normally, the film will screen before the lecture. Lectures may be interactive. There will also be a weekly tutorial where students will discuss the issues raised by screenings, lectures and readings.

## COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information will be communicated via Blackboard and occasional emails to all students.

## COURSE CONTENT

This course will survey some of the key features of Hollywood cinema since about 1990. It will consider the economic dimensions of mainstream commercial filmmaking. It will examine debates about the narrative and stylistic features of postclassical cinema in detail. It will explore independent cinema, established genres such as romantic comedy and the gangster film, and recent trends in American cinema such as the 'smart' film and the serial killer film.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To provide students with a broad understanding of some of the key debates within Film Studies about contemporary Hollywood cinema.
- To give students specific knowledge of the Hollywood blockbuster, the narrative vs spectacle debate, 'intensified continuity', independent cinema, representations of gender, the 'smart' film, the serial killer film, and genres such as crime and comedy.
- To improve the textual analysis and independent research skills of students.
- To enhance the ability of students to write essays and work in small pairs and groups.

## EXPECTED WORKLOAD

This is a 20 point course, and the University expects you to devote 200 hours of time to it. In addition to seven hours per weeks of classes, you should spend about eight hours per week during the teaching period to preparing for tutorials and working on assignments.

## GROUP WORK

There will be some informal group work done during lectures and tutorials, but this will not be assessed.

## READINGS

There is no set text for this course. There are assigned readings for each tutorial. You are expected to complete each essential reading to help you prepare for class. The information about these readings will be posted on Blackboard. Each reading will be available via Electronic Closed Reserve in the Central Library.

## ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

All assessment for the course will be internal. There are three assignments; further details of each assignment will be posted. Please note that FILM 334 students are expected to produce a higher standard of work than FILM 234 students, and will be assessed accordingly.

### Assignment One: Reading Reports (20%)

**Length: 1400 words in total**

**Due Date: Tutorials in weeks 3, 6, 9 & 11**

Description:

In this assignment you will write four short tutorial reports (about 350 words each). Each report will focus on an assigned reading for the week. Your task is to summarise the key arguments in the reading and to

identify the theoretical approach the article employs. You must bring your report to your tutorial in the week indicated.

Assessment Criteria:

- Completion of the set task in a clear, direct, legible, relevant, complete and timely manner.
- Evidence of engagement with the specified article
- Evidence of critical and analytical skills
- Quality and originality of the report.
- Quality and fluency of your expression.

Relationship to Learning Objectives:

This assignment will develop your understanding of key concepts and/or issues in contemporary Hollywood cinema. It will also enhance your critical and expression skills.

**Assignment Two: Essay (40%)**

**Length: 2500-2800 words**

**Due Date: Monday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5pm**

Description:

This assignment will cover topics discussed in the first six weeks of the course, such as blockbuster economics, marketing, intensified continuity, narrative vs spectacle, puzzle films, postclassical aesthetics and televisuality.

Assessment Criteria:

- Completing the set task in a clear, direct, relevant, and complete manner
- Clear evidence of engagement with the ideas and materials discussed in FILM 234/334
- 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 your 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 in the first six weeks of the course. It will enable you to develop your textual analysis, independent research, and critical and argumentation skills. It will also improve your written expression.

**Assignment Three: Essay (40%)**

**Length: 2500-2800 words**

**Due Date: Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup> 5pm**

Description:

This assignment will cover the issues discussed in weeks 7-12 of the course, such as independent cinema, the 'smart' film, romantic comedy, female authorship, gangster films, serial killer films, the work of Clint Eastwood and representations of masculinity.

Assessment Criteria:

- Completing the set task in a clear, direct, relevant, and complete manner
- Clear evidence of engagement with the ideas and materials discussed in FILM 234/334

- 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 your 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 in the weeks 7-12 of the course. It will enable you to develop your textual analysis, independent research, and 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 administration office in 83FT. Remember to fill in your tutor's name.

#### **PENALTIES AND 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.

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2.5 percent deduction from your total mark per work day. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

#### **MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

To gain a pass in this course you must submit 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)

#### **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.

#### **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>

#### WHERE TO FIND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study). Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress). Most statutes and policies are available at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy), except qualification statutes, which are available via the *Calendar* webpage at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx) (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the website of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/avcacademic](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic).

#### COURSE PROGRAMME

Readings marked \*\* are the articles to be used for assignment one

##### **Week 1: Introduction to the Course; Planet Hollywood**

**Screenings:** *The Player* (Robert Altman, 1991); *The Empire Strikes Back* (Irvin Kershner, 1980)

Schatz, Thomas. "New Hollywood, New Millennium." *Film Theory and Contemporary Movies*. Ed. Warren Buckland. New York: Routledge, 2009. 19-46.

##### **Week 2: High Concept/Blockbusters; Marketing**

**Screenings:** *Batman* (Tim Burton, 1989) *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993)

**Readings:**

Wyatt, Justin. *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. 8-22.

Buckland, Warren. *Directed by Steven Spielberg: Poetics of the Contemporary Hollywood Blockbuster*. New York: Continuum, 2006. 7-28.

Balides, Constance. "Jurassic Post-Fordism: Tall Tales of Economics in the Theme Park." *Screen* 41.2 (Summer 2000): 139-160.

##### **Week 3: Narrative vs Spectacle; Sublime S/FX**

**Screenings:** *Twister* (Jan de Bont, 1996); *The Abyss* (James Cameron, 1989)

**Readings:**

\*\*King, Geoff. *Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000. 28-39.

Bukatman, Scott. "The Artificial Infinite: On Special Effects and the Sublime." *Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science Fiction Cinema*. Ed. Annette Kuhn. London and New York: Verso, 1999. 249-274.

#### **Week 4: The Persistence of Narrative; Intensified Continuity**

**Screenings:** *Speed* (Jan de Bont, 1994); *The Paper* (Ron Howard, 1994)

**Readings:**

Bordwell, David. *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006. 104-114.

Bordwell, David. "Intensified Continuity." *Film Quarterly* 55.3 (2002): 16-28.

#### **Week 5: Televisuality**

**Screenings: To Be Advised**

**Readings:**

Kellner, Douglas. "The X-Files and the Aesthetics and Politics of Postmodern Pop." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art History* 57.2 (1999): 161-175.

Caldwell, John T. *Televisuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995. 4-19.

Turnbull, Sue. "The Hook and the Look: *CSI* and the Aesthetics of the Television Crime Series." *Reading CSI: Crime TV under the Microscope*. Ed. Michael Allen. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007. 15-32.

#### **Week 6: Complex Narratives; Post-classical Style?**

**Screenings:** *Lost Highway* (David Lynch, 1997); *Man on Fire* (Tony Scott, 2004)

**Readings:**

\*\*Elsaesser, Thomas. "The Mind-Game Film." *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*. Ed. Warren Buckland. Oxford and Maldon, MA: Blackwell, 2009. 13-24.

Knapp, Larry. "Tony Scott and *Domino*: Say Hello (and Goodbye) to the Postclassical." *Jump Cut* 50 2008 <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/DominoKnapp/index.html> [this has three or four sections]

**Recommended**

Thanouli, Eleftheria. "Post-Classical Narration: A New Paradigm in Contemporary Cinema." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 4.3 (December 2006): 183-196.

#### **Week 7: 'Independent' Hollywood; The 'Smart' Film**

**Screenings:** *sex, lies and videotape* (Steven Soderbergh, 1989); *Ghost World* (Terry Zwigoff, 2001)

**Readings:**

King, Geoff. *Indiewood, USA: Where Hollywood Meets Independent Cinema*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009. 1-45.

Sconce, Jeffrey. "Irony, Nihilism and the New American 'Smart' Film." *Screen* 43.4 (Winter 2002): 349-369.

**Recommended**

Perren, Alisa. "Sex, Lies and Marketing: Miramax and the Development of the Quality Indie Blockbuster." *Film Quarterly* 55.2 (Winter 2001-2002): 30-39.

#### **Week 8: The New Sincerity; Female Directors in Contemporary Hollywood**

**Screenings:** *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004); *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, 2003)

**Readings:** Mayshark, Jesse Fox. *Post-Pop Cinema: The Search for Meaning in New American Film*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007. 1-14.

Kennedy, Todd. "Off with Hollywood's Head: Sofia Coppola as Feminine Auteur." *Film Criticism* 35.1 (Fall 2010): 37-59.

**Week 9: Romantic Comedy; Low Comedy**

**Screenings:** *Sleepless in Seattle* (Nora Ephron, 1993); *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* (Tom Shadyac, 1994)

**Readings:**

\*\*Krutnik, Frank. "Conforming Passions? Contemporary Romantic Comedy." *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*. Ed. Steven Neale. London: BFI, 2002. 130-147.

Bonila, Paul C. "Is there More to Hollywood Lowbrow than Meets the Eye?" *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 22.1 (2005): 17-24.

**Recommended**

Garrett, Roberta. *Postmodern Chick Flicks: The Return of the Woman's Film*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 92-125.

**Week 10: Clint Eastwood and the Deconstruction of Masculinity; The Rise of the Ubermensch**

**Screenings:** *Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood, 1992); *To Be Advised*

**Readings:**

Beard, William. *The Persistence of Double Vision: Essays on Clint Eastwood*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2000. 15-44.

Barker, Jennifer. "'A Hero Will Rise': The Myth of the Fascist Man in *Fight Club* and *Gladiator*." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 36.3 (2008): 171-187.

**Week 11: Gangster Films; The Serial Killer Film**

**Screenings:** *Goodfellas* (Martin Scorsese, 1990); *Se7en* (David Fincher, 1995)

**Readings:**

\*\*Shadoian, Jack. *Dreams and Dead Ends: The American Gangster Film*. Second Edition. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. 3-13.

Neale, Steve. "Westerns and the Gangster Film Since the 1970s." *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*. Ed. Steve Neale. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 34-40.

Thomas, Allan James. "The Word Made Flesh: Viscerality and Textuality in David Fincher's *Seven*." *Metro* 109 [1997]: 32-34.

**Recommended**

Seltzer, Mark. "Serial Killers (II): The Pathological Public Sphere." *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Autumn 1995): 122-149.

**Week 12: The Old and the New**

**Screenings: To Be Advised**