

FILM 406 Studies in Film Authorship

Trimester 1 2012

5 March to 4 July 2012

30 Points



TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching dates:	5 March to 8 June 2012
Mid-trimester break:	6 to 22 April 2012
Study week:	11 to 15 June 2012
Last piece of assessment due:	20 June 2012

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	tim.groves@vuw.ac.nz	463 5410	FT83 Rm 303
Consultation times will be posted.			
Course Administrator: La'Chelle Pretorius	lachelle.pretorius@vuw.ac.nz	463 5750	FT83 Rm 202

CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Seminars

Wednesday and Friday	1.10pm – 3pm	85FT108
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COURSE DELIVERY

The course will be delivered through combination of seminars and screenings. There will be some short lectures. Seminars will involve considerable student participation.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information will be communicated in seminars and posted on Blackboard. If you are not going the use the Victoria email address set up for you, we strongly encourage you to set a forward from the Victoria email system to the email address you will use.

COURSE PRESCRIPTION

A critical examination of one or more aspects of the aesthetic dimensions of cinema. In 2012 the course will explore the ways in which directors such as Robert Altman, Martin Scorsese, Michael Mann and Steven Soderbergh have contributed to the development of a distinctively post-classical American cinema. The course will consider issues such as genre, audiovisual style, intertextuality, and tone.

COURSE CONTENT

As the course prescription indicates, FILM 406 will examine the ways in which directors such as Altman, Scorsese, Mann and Soderbergh have contributed to post-classical American cinema. Weeks 1-2 will introduce the course, situate it in a historical and conceptual context, and begin to examine the specific features of 1970s narration. Weeks 3-4 will use the work of Martin Scorsese to investigate the Film School group of directors and the influence of film history and cinephilia on 1970s cinema. Weeks 5-6 will explore Robert Altman's revisionist genre films and approach to narration. Weeks 7 will introduce Michael Mann's work and explore it in relation to 1980s 'high concept' cinema. Week 8 will involve a case study of Mann's important gangster film *Heat*. Weeks 9-10 will consider some aspects of Steven Soderbergh's work, including complex temporality, audiovisual style, intertextuality, and working within the context of the contemporary Hollywood system. Weeks 11-12 will examine Mann's digital aesthetics, evolving film style, and relation to 1970s cinema.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students passing the course should have acquired detailed knowledge of the characteristics of the work of Michael Mann, and some understanding of the work of Martin Scorsese, Robert Altman, and Steven Soderbergh. They should possess a critical awareness of the features of, and some of the key debates about, post-classical American cinema. They should be able to apply the knowledge and skills developed in this course to other films and filmmakers. They should have enhanced their analytical and critical skills. They should have improved their proficiency at film analysis and independent research, as well as 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 scheduled classes, you should spend about eighteen hours per week during the teaching period on research, film viewing, and preparation for class and assessment. The remaining time should be spent on assessment.

GROUP WORK

There will be some informal group work during seminars, but this will not be assessed separately.

READINGS

There is no prescribed text for this class. A list of assigned and recommended readings will be posted before the teaching period begins. You should use this material to prepare for seminar discussions. The material will be available through electronic closed reserve in the central library.

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

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

Assignment One: Seminar Participation (10%)

Due Date: Seminars in weeks 2-12

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
- 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 3-11

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 (800-1000 words), including a bibliography and filmography.

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 406
- 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: Essay (30%)

Length: 2700 words

Due Date: Monday, April 23

Description:

This assignment will cover topics discussed in the first five weeks of the course, such as narration, intertextuality, and genre revisionism in the context of 1970s Hollywood cinema.

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 406
- 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 in the first five 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: Essay (40%)

Length: 3600 words

Due Date: Wednesday, June 20

Description:

This assignment will cover the topics dealt with in weeks 6-12, including visual style, high concept aesthetics, digital aesthetics, intertextuality, masculinity, tone, and post-classical cinema.

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 406
- 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 in the second phase 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.

Please note that assignment marks for Honours level assignments and final course grades are not finalised until the external moderation process has been completed. You should also be aware that honours grades gained in individual papers remain subordinate to the overall final classification made by the Honours programme examination committee.

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.

EXTENSIONS AND PENALTIES

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. 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 be eligible to pass 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)
- Attend at least sixteen 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.

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

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. 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.

WHERE TO FIND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at 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. Most statutes and policies are available at 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 (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.

FILM 406 Screenings and Readings

Week 1: Introduction; Late Classical Cinema

Screenings: *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956)

Readings: McBride, Joseph and Michael Wilmington. "Prisoner of the Desert." *Sight and Sound* 60.4 (1971): 210-214.

Staiger, Janet. "Authorship Approaches." *Authorship and Film*. Ed. David A. Gerstner and Janet Staiger. New York: Routledge, 2003. 27-57.

Week 2: 1970s Cinema and the Crisis in Narrative

Screenings: *Two-Blacktop* (Monte Hellman, 1971)

Readings: Elsaesser, Thomas. "The Pathos of Failure: American Films in the 1970s. Notes on the Unmotivated Hero." *The Last Great American Picture Show: New Hollywood Cinema in the 1970s*. Eds. Thomas Elsaesser, Alexander Horwath and Noel King. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004. 279-292.

Laderman, David. *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002. 93-105.

Week 3: Film School Directors

Screenings: *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, 1973)

Readings: Grist, Leighton. "New Hollywood Cinema: *Mean Streets*." *The Films of Martin Scorsese, 1963-1977: Authorship and Context*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000. 61-78.

Cook, David A. "The Film School Generation." *The New American Cinema*. Ed. Jon Lewis. Durham, SC and London: Duke University Press, 1998. 11-37.

King, Geoff. *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. 36-48.

Week 4: Scorsese, Intertextuality and Expressive Aesthetics

Screenings: *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1975)

Readings: Taubin, Amy. "God's Lonely Man." *Sight and Sound* 9.4 (April 1999): 16-19.

Carroll, Noel. "The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond)." *October* 20 (Spring 1982): 51-81.

Friedman, Lawrence. *The Cinema of Martin Scorsese*. New York: Continuum, 1998. 61-87.

Week 5: Altman and Genre Revisionism (No Friday Seminar)

Screenings: *The Long Goodbye* (Robert Altman, 1973); *McCabe & Mrs Miller* (Robert Altman, 1971)

Readings: Kolker, Robert. *A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn, Stone, Kubrick, Scorsese, Spielberg, Altman*. Third Edition. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980. 339-357; 362-373 [excerpts].

Cawelti, John G. "Chinatown and Generic Transformation in Recent American Films." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. 559-579.

Danks, Adrian. "Just Some Jesus Looking for a Manger: *McCabe & Mrs Miller*." *Senses of Cinema* 9 (September 2000)

Berliner, Todd. "The Genre Film as Booby Trap: 1970s Genre Bending and *The French Connection*." *Cinema Journal* 40.3 (Spring 2001): 25-46.

MID-SEMESTER BREAK April 6 to 22

Week 6: Altman and Narration (Assignment 3 Due; No Wednesday Seminar)

Screenings: *Nashville* (Robert Altman, 1975)

Readings: Altman, Rick. "24-Track Narrative? Robert Altman's *Nashville*." *Cinemas: Journal of Film Studies* 1.3 (1991): 102-125. (available from www.erudit.org)

Week 7: Michael Mann and High Concept Aesthetics

Screenings: *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986) *Miami Vice* (USA, 1984-1990)

Readings: Wyatt, Justin. *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. 23-64.

Sharrett, Christopher. "Michael Mann: Elegies on the Post-Industrial Landscape." *Fifty Contemporary Filmmakers*. Ed. Yvonne Tasker. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 253-263.

Week 8: Heat Case Study

Screenings: *Heat* (Michael Mann, 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 (This will be provided)

Dzenis, Anna. "Michael Mann's Cinema of Images." *Screening the Past* 12 (2002)

www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr0902/adfr14b.html

Lindstrom, J.A. "Heat: Work and Genre." *Jump Cut* 43 (July 2000): 21-37.

Week 10: Soderbergh, Complex Temporality and Intertextuality

Screenings: *The Limey* (Steven Soderbergh, 1999)

Readings: Carruthers, Lee. "Biding our Time: Rethinking the Familiar in Steven Soderbergh's *The Limey*." *Film Studies* 9 (Winter 2006): 9-21.

Goss, Brian Michael. "Steven Soderbergh's *The Limey*: Implications for the Auteur Theory and Industry Structure." *Popular Communication* 2.4 (2004): 231-255.

Thanouli, Eleftheria. "Post-Classical Time: The Temporal Qualities of the Cinematic Image." *Post-Classical Cinema: An International Poetics of Film Narration*. London and New York: Wallflower, 2009. 113-136.

Week 9: Steven Soderbergh's Style; Working in Indiewood

Screenings: *Solaris* (Steven Soderbergh, 2002)

Readings: King, Geoff. "Some Sort of Hybrid: Steven Soderbergh, *Traffic* and *Solaris*." *Indiewood, USA: Where Hollywood Meets Independent Cinema*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009: 141-189.

Week 11: **Mann's Digital Aesthetics**

Screenings: *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

TBA

Week 12: **Towards Postclassical Cinema**

Screenings: *The Insider* (Michael Mann, 1999)

Readings: **TBA**

Study Week: June 11 to 15

Final Assignment Due: June 20