

## Film 331 Film Theory

### Trimester 1 2013

4 March to 3 July 2013

20 Points



#### TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching dates:	4 March to 7 June 2013
Easter break:	28 March to 3 April 2013
Mid-trimester break:	22 to 28 April 2013
Last piece of assessment due:	7 June 2013

#### WITHDRAWAL DATES

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

#### NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Course Coordinator	Email	Phone	Room
Dr Alfio Leotta	<a href="mailto:alfio.leotta@vuw.ac.nz">alfio.leotta@vuw.ac.nz</a>	463 6520	83 Fairlie Terrace room 312
Office hours:	tbc		

#### CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

##### Screenings

Monday 3.10-6.00pm Hugh Mackenzie LT 002

##### Lectures

Wednesday 1.10-3.00pm Hugh Mackenzie LT 002

##### Tutorials

Tutorials begin in WEEK 2. Please register for tutorials via the FILM 331 site on Blackboard: go to "Tutorials" and then follow the instructions under the "SCubed - Tutorial Enrolment Instructions" link.

Please read the instructions carefully. Tutorial rooms will be listed on S-Cubed, Blackboard and on the bulletin board outside the Reception, 83 Fairlie Terrace.

### TEACHING LEARNING SUMMARY

The course is taught through lectures, screenings, tutorials, and set reading. Teaching provides a cultural, historical and critical context for each session. You are expected to attend all lectures, screenings and tutorials. The tutorials offer the opportunity for further discussion of the theories and concepts covered each week. You will need to complete the readings set for each week before the tutorials.

### COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Any additional information, or changes to the course, will be announced in class, posted on Blackboard and circulated by email to all class members. If you are not going to 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 do use.

### COURSE PRESCRIPTION

A survey of critical approaches to film and recent developments in film theory. The implications of these approaches are explored through close analysis of relevant films. This course offers a historically grounded sense of film analysis. The films and texts foreground a study of the affectivity of meaning as something that can only be read or interpreted. The practices of film analysis include a focus on shot analysis, the interrelations of sound and image, the voice-over, colour, and the close-up as cinematic modes of representation. We will study a range of different perspectives in film theory, from issues of spectatorship and the cinema apparatus through to the technological and cultural changes that affect the interpretation of film.

### COURSE CONTENT

This course will provide a basic introduction to the major works of Western film theory. This course is organised into three areas of study:

#### **Film Image and Language**

**Week 1-4:** In the first part we will closely discuss seminal approaches to film theory (formalism, realism and semiotics) that have attempted to both recognise film as a distinct art form and define the crucial elements of film language.

#### **Theories of the Viewer**

**Week 5-8:** We will then move onto the discussion of different approaches (psychoanalysis, cognitivism and phenomenology) to the theorisation of the notion of film viewer.

#### **Film, Society and Culture**

**Week 9-12:** The conclusive segment of the course will be devoted to the overview of more recent trends of analytical film theory that have attempted to examine the broader relationship between film and society.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the trimester, you should be able to:

- understand and use critical film terminology
- understand and discuss major trends in film criticism and theory
- analyse films using different critical approaches
- articulate your own ideas about film in relation to these trends and types of criticism

The course will:

- Augment your analytical and critical skills, particular when dealing when theoretical material.
- Enhance your proficiency at textual analysis and independent research.

- Improve your ability to write essays and make oral presentations.

### EXPECTED WORKLOAD

The expected workload for a 20 point course is 200 hours over the trimester or 13 week hours per teaching week. Therefore you should probably expect to spend, on average, about 10 hours per week (apart from class time) in reading, preparation, viewing films and essay writing. You are expected to attend all lectures, screenings and tutorials.

### GROUP WORK

The first group assignment for FILM 331 is a class presentation. Your tutor will place you in a group of 4 people during week 2 of the course. Students will receive an individual grade for the presentation (see Assessment Requirements).

### READINGS

#### Essential texts:

The essential readings will be placed on blackboard

#### Recommended Reading:

Braudy, L. and Cohen M. *Film Theory and Criticism*, 7th Edition, London: Oxford University Press, 2009

Stam, R. *Film Theory: An Introduction*, London: Blackwell, 2000

A list of additional bibliographic resources will be made available on Blackboard.

### ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

#### Assignment 1: In-class Presentation

Weighting: 20% - Due Date: Week 5 (in tutorial)

You will provide a critical and textual analysis of a selected film segment adopting either a formalist or realist theoretical approach. Alternatively you could present a 10-12 shot storyboard sequence of your creation and explain how the sequence reflects either a formalist or realist theoretical approach. You should plan on a maximum of 10 minutes for your presentation. All presentations should do the following:

- Offer a brief summary of the film (if you have chosen to design your own storyboard sequence you should explain how the sequence relates to the rest of the film).
- Isolate one particular issue that the film raises in relation to some element of film theory that we have studied.
- Using one scene or one set of examples from the film, explain how the film either illustrates the theoretical/critical issue in question, or demonstrates a particular problem with that theoretical/critical issue

The choice of your film will have to be negotiated with your tutor/course coordinator. Your presentations should be accompanied by a content outline and a bibliography. You should draw on sources in the Student Notes. You may use additional sources if you wish. All sources must be documented on a Works Cited page in MLA format.

Assessment criteria. The in-class presentation should:

- Relate the theories covered on FILM 331 to the textual analysis of film.
- Show a good understanding of the theories addressed in the presentation.
- Accurate and complete references should be given using footnotes and bibliography to cover all of the relevant sources.

Relation to learning objectives. This assignment will further develop:

- Your understanding of the theories covered on FILM 331 and their relationship to visual and textual analysis.

- Your ability to effectively identify research materials and draw them into a critical analysis of film.
- Your oral expression and your ability to work in small groups.

### **Assignment 2: Tutorial Tasks (100-200 words each)**

Weighting 10% - Due Date: Week 7-11 (in tutorial)

The aim of these very short assignments (about 100-200 words) is to encourage and reward regular and active participation in class discussion. In weeks 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 you will develop a question or point for discussion in tutorials based on one of the weekly readings and/or lectures. You must express this in writing (100-200 words) and bring it to tutorials. Assignments must be typed and will only be accepted at the tutorial and will not be accepted at any other time.

5 assignments worth 2% each will form the basis of the tutorial task component of your grade: 10%.

Assessment criteria. The tutorial task should:

- Demonstrate a critical engagement with the films and theories covered on FILM 331.
- Demonstrate a good understanding of the requested readings.

Relationship to learning objectives. This assignment will build on your skills in the following areas:

- Critical thinking.
- Formulating coherent interpretations of film that are informed by the theories and concepts covered on FILM 331.
- Relating complex theoretical concepts to visual and textual analysis.

### **Assignment 3: Critical Essay (2000 words)**

Weighting: 35% - Due Date: Week 8, Thursday 9 May 4pm

This will be a research/critical essay that deals with one of the topics discussed in the second part of the course.

Assessment criteria. The critical essay should:

- Demonstrate a critical engagement with the films and theories covered in FILM 331.
- Fulfilment of the set task in a clear, complete, direct, original and relevant manner.
- Understanding and articulation of course issues in a critical fashion.
- Correct responses to questions
- Argumentation and essay structure
- Quality and fluency of your expression
- Include accurate and complete references for all the relevant sources using footnotes and a bibliography.

Relationship to learning objectives. This assignment will build on your skills in the following areas:

- Critical and creative thinking.
- Formulating coherent interpretations of film that are informed by the theories and concepts covered on FILM 331.
- Relating complex theoretical concepts to visual and textual analysis.

### **Assignment 4: Take Home Test**

Weighting: 35% - Due Date: Week 12, Friday 7 June

The script for the take home test will be posted on Blackboard at the beginning of week 12. The take home test will be divided in two parts. Part I will have short answer questions about the whole course. Part II will have a short essay about topics covered in the last part of the course.

Assessment criteria:

- Fulfilment of the set task in a clear, complete, direct, original and relevant manner.
- Understanding and articulation of course issues in a critical fashion.
- Correct responses to questions
- Argumentation and essay structure
- Quality and fluency of your expression

Relationship to Learning Objectives:

This assignment relates to the learning objectives that ask you to consider the issues explored throughout the course. It will enable you to develop your knowledge of film theory as well as your critical argumentation skills. It will also improve your written expression.

Handing in essay and take home test:

Both the critical/research essay and the take home test must be submitted by the deadline in both of the following ways:

- Upload electronic file to turnitin.com (login and password will be provided during the trimester)
- Hand in a hard copy with signed coversheet to the drop box at the Administration office at 83 Fairlie Terrace.

Do not submit your assignments to your tutor. You must keep a copy of your assignment before submitting it.

### **ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS**

Assignment cover sheets and extension forms can be found on Blackboard or outside the Administration office: 83 Fairlie Terrace. Remember to fill in your tutor's name.

### **COLLECTING MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

Your marked assignment will be handed back by your tutor in tutorials or during their office hours. Any uncollected assignments can be picked up from the Programme Administrator after the last day of teaching. Assignments will be held in the Administration office until the end of the following trimester. You need to show your student identification to collect marked assignment from the Administration office.

### **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. 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).
- Attend at least 8 tutorials.

### **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. You can find out more information on Class Representatives on [www.vuwsa.org.nz](http://www.vuwsa.org.nz).

### 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. Where handwritten work is required you are expected to write clearly. If this 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>

### 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](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](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar) (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**

Week 1	04/03 – 08/03	<p><b><u>Part I: Film Image and Film Language</u></b></p> <p><b>Week 1 – What is film?</b></p> <p>Screening: Screening: <i>Sin City</i> (Rodriguez, 2005)</p> <p>Readings: Furstenau, Marc. "Film theory: A History of Debates", in <i>Film Theory: A Reader</i>. London: Routledge, 2010: 1-20.</p>
Week 2	11/03 – 15/03	<p><b>Week 2 – The Formalist Tradition</b></p> <p>Screening: <i>Strike</i> (Eisenstein, 1925)</p> <p>Readings: Arnheim, Rudolf. "Film and Reality", in Braudy, L. and Cohen M. <i>Film Theory and Criticism 7th Edition</i>, London: Oxford University Press, 2009: 282-291. Shklovsky, Victor. "Art as Technique", <i>Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays</i>. Trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965: 3-24.</p>
Week 3	18/03 – 22/03	<p><b>Week 3 – Theories of Realism</b></p> <p>Screening: <i>Umberto D.</i> (De Sica, 1952)</p> <p>Readings: Bazin, André. "The Myth of Total Cinema" and "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema", in Mast, G. and Cohen M. <i>Film Theory and Criticism 1st Edition</i>, London: Oxford University Press, 1974: 22-26. Kracauer, Siegfried. "Basic Concepts" and "Inherent Affinities", in Corrigan T., White P., and Mazaj M. <i>Critical Visions in Film Theory: Classical and Contemporary Readings</i>. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2011: 291-308.</p>
Week 4	25/03 – MTW 27/03	<p><b>Week 4 - Semiotics</b></p> <p>Screening: <i>Memento</i> (Christopher Nolan, 2000)</p> <p>Readings: De Saussure, Ferdinand. "Nature of the Linguistic Sign" in <i>Course in General Linguistics</i>. Trans. Roy Harris. New York: McGraw Hill, 1983: 65-69. Metz, Christian. "Some Points in the Semiotics of Cinema", in Mast, G. and Cohen M. <i>Film Theory and Criticism 1st Edition</i>, London: Oxford University Press, 1974: 103-119. Wollen, Peter. "The Semiology of the Cinema", in <i>Signs and Meaning in the Cinema</i>, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973: 171-185.</p>
<b>Easter Break:</b>		Thursday 28 March to Wednesday 3 April 2013
Week 4	04/04 – R F 05/04	<b>Only tutorials</b>
Week 5	08/04 – 12/04	<p><b><u>Part II: Theories of the viewer</u></b></p> <p><b>Week 5 - Psychoanalytic Film Theory</b></p> <p>Screening: <i>Mulholland Drive</i> (David Lynch, 2001)</p>

Readings:

Metz, Christian. "The Scopic Regime of the Cinema", in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, London: Macmillan, 1982: 61-66

Stam, Robert. "From Linguistics to Psychoanalysis", in *Film Theory: An Introduction*, London: Blackwell, 2000: 158-169.

Recommended:

Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage", in Easthope, A. *Contemporary Film Theory*, New York: Longman, 1993: 33-39.

**Assignment 1: Group presentations (in tutorial)**

Week 6 15/04 –  
19/04

**Week 6 – Feminist Film Theory and the Female Spectator**

Screening: *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)

Readings:

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'", in Easthope, A. *Contemporary Film Theory*, New York: Longman, 1993: 111-134.

Doane, Mary Ann. "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator" in Stam, R. and Miller T. *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000: 495-509.

**Mid Trimester Break:** Monday 22 to Sunday 28 April 2013

Week 7 29/04 –  
03/05

**Week 7 – Cognitivism**

Screening: *The Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991)

Readings:

Currie, Gregor. "Cognitivism" in Stam, R. and Miller T. *A Companion to Film Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004: 105-122.

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

**Assignment 2: Tutorial tasks (in tutorial)**

Week 8 06/05 –  
10/05

**Week 8 – Phenomenology**

Screening: *Old Boy* (Park, 2004)

Readings:

Laura U. Marks. 'Haptic Visuality: Touching with the Eyes', *Framework the Finnish Art Review*, No. 2, 2004: 78-82.

Sobchack, Vivian. 'What My fingers Knew' in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

**Assignment 3: Critical Essay (Thursday 9 May 4pm)**

Week 9 13/05 –  
17/05

**Part III: Film, Society and Culture**

**Week 9 - Marxism and Ideology**



Screening: *Top Gun* (Scott, 1986)

Readings:

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in Evans, J. and Hall, S. *Visual Culture: The Reader*, London: Sage, 1999: 317-323.

Comolli, Jean Luc & Narboni, Jean Paul. "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism", in Braudy, L. and Cohen M. *Film Theory and Criticism 6th Edition*, London: Oxford University Press, 2004: 812-819.

Week 10	20/05 – 24/05	<b>Week 10 – Postcolonialism</b> Screening: <i>The Battle of Algiers</i> (Pontecorvo, 1966)  Readings: Said, Edward. <i>Orientalism</i> , London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 3-28.  Stam, Robert. "Multiculturalism, Race and Representation", in <i>Film Theory: An Introduction</i> , London: Blackwell, 2000: 267-280.
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Week 11	27/05 – 31/05	<b>Week 11 – Postmodernism and Postmodern Aesthetics</b> Screening: <i>Blade Runner</i> (Scott, 1982)  Readings: Stam, Robert. "The Poetics and Politics of Postmodernism", in <i>Film Theory: An Introduction</i> , London: Blackwell, 2000: 298-305. Bruno, Giuliana. "Ramble City: Postmodernism and Blade Runner", <i>October</i> , 41, 1987: 61-74.
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Week 12	03/06 – 07/06	<b>Week 12 – Conclusions + Revision</b> No screening (Queens Birthday)  Readings: Friedberg, Anne. "The End of Cinema" in Braudy, L. and Cohen M. <i>Film Theory and Criticism 7th Edition</i> , London: Oxford University Press, 2009: 802-813.  <b>Assignment 4: Take Home Test (Friday 7 June 4pm)</b>
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