Film Analysis and Methods

Fall 2005
Mon. and Wed., 3:30-5:00
Screening: Mon., 5-7:30
Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 1:00-2:00 and by appointment
TAs: Mearah Quinn-Brauner (mquinnb@sas), Aliki Caloyeras (aliki@sas), and Nancy Srebro (nsrebro@sas.upenn.edu)

Required texts (available at the Penn Book Center):

Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, The Film Experience: An Introduction (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004). [TFE]

Recommended texts:

Bruce Kawin, How Movies Work (Univ. of California Press, 2000)
Graeme Turner, Film as Social Practice (London: Routledge, 1988)
Robert Stam and Toby Miller, Film and Theory: An Anthology, 6e (Blackwell: Oxford, 2000).

Requirements:

1) No more than three absences or late arrivals; class participation (10% of grade).
2) Attendance at all screenings is strongly recommended. If you’re unable to attend the screening, it is your responsibility to view the film before the class discussion. (All films are on reserve in Van Pelt/Rosengarten.) Note: Films will be screened in Stiteler B21 (at 5:15), the International House (at 6:00), or The Bridge (tba); please note the time and place each week. Friends and cinephiles may attend any and all screenings.
3) One 5-6 page essay (20% of grade). This will be a focused analysis of any film to be seen in class during the semester; it must be submitted by January 27.
4) A running journal (10% of grade) that responds, with one or two paragraphs, to at least two questions in the “Viewing Cues” each week. The journals entries must be posted on our Blackboard site where conversation and comments are encouraged. Entries must be posted the day before the class discussion of the film.
5) A final examination (35% of grade).
6) One 12-15 page research essay (25% of grade). The topic should be developed in consultation with the instructor, and approved by Feb. 15. It is due no later than Nov. 23.
7) Attendance at “Penn Cinema and Media Pioneers” (Oct. 22)

Plagiarism results in failure for the course; if you are unclear about what it is consult Chapter 12 of TFE.

Goals:
The goal of this course is to introduce the skills needed for careful, discriminating, and productive experiences at the movies. To achieve this goal we will move in four directions: 1) we will work to develop precise analytic vocabulary that will guide our “close readings” of individual films; 2) we will attend to the cultural dynamics that shape our viewing and understanding of those films as different kinds of experiences; 3) we will examine various theoretical methods that can, consciously or not, guide how we watch and understand a film; 4) we will underline the connection between articulating and writing about our experiences of a film and a richer, more sophisticated enjoyment of it.

Class preparation:

Read all assignments carefully, and come prepared to answer questions and to ask questions about them. Bring the readings to be discussed to class. Learn to take notes on the film to be discussed—the more detailed the better. Bring those notes to class.

Reserve material:

Recommended films are on reserve in the library. The Van Pelt Film Studies Rooms (4th floor) accommodate small groups who wish to screen videotapes and DVDs. The general collection of VHS tapes and DVDs at Van Pelt can be assessed at http://www.library.upenn.edu/catalogs/vcat

Extra-curricular events (very strongly recommended):

September 22: David Rodowick, "Lessons from Cavell, or What Film Called Thinking."


Oct. 18-20: The Films of Amos Vogel: Cinema 16, the NY Film Festival, and the Penn Classroom (with International House)

Oct. 21-22: Penn Cinema and Media Pioneers

October 31: Alloy Orchestra and The Phantom of the Opera (International House)

Nov. 7: Alex Gibney (Enron) lecture and screening

Schedule:

Sept. 7: Introductions

Sept. 12-14: Writing about Film

TFE, Chapter 12

Distribution, Promotion, and Exhibition
TFE, Chapter 1
Screening: Orson Welles, Citizen Kane (1941) at International House, 6:00 pm
Recommended films: Mike Newell, Four Weddings and a Funeral (1994) and Neal Jordon, The Crying Game (1992)
FTC: Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (791)

Sept. 19-21: Mise-en-Scene
TFE, Chapter 2
Screening: Vincente Minnelli, Meet Me in St. Louis (1944)
Recommended films: Spike Lee, Do the Right Thing (1989) and Vittorio de Sica, The Bicycle Thief (1948)
FTC: Leo Braudy, “Acting: Stage vs. Screen” (429)

Sept. 26-28: Cinematography
TFE, Chapter 3
Screening: Alfred Hitchcock, Vertigo (1958) at International House, 6:00 pm
Recommended films: Jean Renoir, The Grand Illusion (1937) and Fritz Lang, M (1931)
FTC: Rudolf Arnheim, “Film and Reality” and “The Making of a Film” (322)

FIRST PAPER DUE

Oct. 3-5: Editing
TFE, Chapter 4
Screening: Arthur Penn, Bonnie and Clyde (1967) at International House at 6:00 pm.
FTC: Vsevolod Pudovkin, “On Editing” (7)

Oct. 10-12: Sound
TFE, Chapter 5
Screening: Francis Coppola, The Conversation (1974) at International House at 6:00 pm.
Recommended films: Jane Campion, The Piano (1993) and Stanley Donen, Singin’ in the Rain (1952)
FTC: Mary Ann Doane, “The Voice in the Cinema” (386)

RESEARCH TOPICS DUE

Oct. 17: Fall Break
Oct. 19:  Researching Film  
TFE, Chapter 12

Oct. 24-26:  Narrative Cinema  
TFE, Chapter 6  
Screening: John Ford, *The Searchers* (1956)  
FTC: Peter Wollen, “Godard and Counter-Cinema” (525)

Oct. 31-Nov. 2:  Film Genres  
TFE, Chapter 8  
Screening: Charlie Chaplin, *The Gold Rush* (1925)  
FTC: Linda Williams, “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess” (727)

Nov. 7-9:  Documentary and Experimental Cinema  
TFE, Chapter 7  
Screening: Alex Gibney, *Enron* (2005) at The Bridge  
FTC: Maya Deren, “Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality” (187)

Nov. 14-16:  Conventional Film History  
TFE, Chapter 9  
Screening: Martin Scorsese, *Taxi Driver* (1976)  
FTC: Andre Bazin, “The Evolution of the Language of Cinema” (41)

Nov. 21-23:  Inclusive Film History  
TFE, Chapter 10  
Screening: Samira Makhmalbaf, *The Apple* (1998) at International House at 6:00 pm.  
Recommended films: Herbert Biberman, *Salt of the Earth* (1953) and Oscar Micheaux, *Within Our Gates* (1920)  
FTC: Manthia Diawara, “Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance” (892)

Nov. 28-30:  Film Theory I: Comparative Methods  
TFE, Chapter 11, part 1  
Screening: Orson Welles, *Touch of Evil* (1958)
Recommended film: Orson Welles, Lady from Shanghai (1948) and Ridley Scott, Blade Runner (1982)
FTC: Andrew Sarris, “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962” (561)

RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

Dec. 5: Film Theory II: Theory and Historical Context and Contemporary Film Theory
TFE, Chapter 11, parts 2 and 3
No Required Screening
Recommended films: Mike Figgis, Timecode (2000) and Amy Heckerling, Clueless (1995)
FTC: Anne Friedberg “The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change” (914) and Stephen Prince, “True Lies: Perceptual Realism, Digital Images, and Film Theory (270)

Dec. 7: Review and conclusions