

DEPARTMENT OF FILM AND TELEVISION STUDIES MA IN FILM AND TELEVISION STUDIES

2020-2021 Autumn Term Modules: Outlines and Summer Preparation

SCREEN CULTURES AND METHODS (Core Module 2020-21)



This core module aims to explore significant methodologies and conceptual frameworks which are central to the study of audio-visual media. The module will be divided into three sections engaging with issues concerning: textual analysis, history and historiography, and theoretical paradigms. Film and television will be considered in each of these sections. The module provides a grounding in key concepts and methods but will also encourage an advanced level of reflection on the key areas addressed. The module is taught through a combination of screenings, lectures, seminars, presentations, and reading and viewing. This document suggests some reading which will enable you to begin the module in a position of preparedness. We look forward to seeing you in October.

Prof Stephen Gundle (convenor) - Film
Dr Richard Wallace - Television

General introductory reading

If you are new to film and television studies, familiarise yourself with the basics of analysis, and its terminology, by perusing one of the following textbooks: David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*. There are eleven editions (published between 1979 and 2017) so look at the most recent edition you can lay your hands on. **Or** try: Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An Introduction*, which has four editions.

VF Perkins' seminal book on 'understanding and judging movies' provides an overview of the approach to textual analysis we will adopt in our sessions: VF Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (1972. Reprints 1991, 1993).

You could also usefully expand your knowledge of the history of film by looking at Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction* (Boston: McGraw Hill). This too has many editions; any one will do.

In anticipation of the television sections of the module we would also suggest that you try and read the following books which will introduce you to the interpretation of television, to television historiography, and to current discussions of television aesthetics.

- Karen Lury (2005) *Interpreting Television*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Helen Wheatley (2007) (ed.) *Re-Viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, London: I.B.Tauris.

- Jason Jacobs and Stephen Peacock (2013) (eds) *Television Aesthetics and Style*, London: Bloomsbury.

Below we list the required reading that you will be asked to undertake for each week. If you wish make a start on any of it, then you may do so.

Week 1: Introduction (Stephen Gundle and Richard Wallace)

In week 1, we shall be looking at the short film by Albert Lamorisse, *The Red Balloon* (1956). The film can be viewed on You Tube. It will be screened in class, but we ask that you try to view it on any device prior to that. We shall be discussing the film in relation to mise-en-scène and colour.

We also ask that you endeavour to find any painting, photograph, illustration or other visual artefact that features a red balloon and bring it to class.

Required reading (two of the following three texts):

André Bazin (2005) 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' in André Bazin, *What is Cinema?, volume 1*, essays selected and translated by Hugh Gray (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 9-16.

John Gibbs (2002) 'The Elements of Mise-en-scène' and 'Investigations in the Critical History of Mise-en-Scène' in *Mise-en-scène: Film Style and Interpretation* (London: Wallflower, 2002), pp. 5-26; 55-66.

Adrian Martin (2014) 'What Was *Mise en scène*?' in *Mise en Scène and Film Style: From Classical Hollywood to New Media Art* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 43-73.

Weeks 2 and 3: Textual Analysis

This part of the module will allow you to practice and refine skills that will be crucial to your own work. Textual analysis involves, among other activities, observing the details of a film; 'reading' it closely. Through analysis we might form a deeper understanding of a film and build our own critical responses and arguments from this basis. In the session on film, we shall be focusing on the film *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946) and will complicate the question of analysis by incorporating questions of ideology. This in turn will allow us to reflect on the usefulness and limitations of textual analysis as a method. In the television week we will explore the changing textualities of television by looking at a range of examples of different modes of television, from live broadcasts to online streaming.

Week 2 required reading

Richard Dyer, 'The Persistence of Textual Analysis', *Kracauer Lectures in Film and Media Theory*, (Winter 2015/2016) <http://www.kracaueer-lectures.de/en/winter-2015-2016/richard-dyer/>

Richard Dyer (1998), 'Resistance Through Charisma: Rita Hayworth and *Gilda*' in E. Ann Kaplan (ed.) *Women in Film Noir* (London: BFI), pp.

Stephen Gundle (2008), 'Introduction' in *Glamour: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.1-17.

Week 3 required reading

Mimi White, 'Flows and other close encounters with television', in Lisa Parks and Shanti Kumar (eds), *Planet TV: a global television reader* (New York: New York University Press), pp. 94-110)

Casey J. McCormick, "Forward is the Battle Cry": Binge-Viewing Netflix's *House of Cards*, in Kevin McDonald and Daniel Smith-Rowsey (eds.), *The Netflix Effect* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 101-16.

Weeks 4, 5 and 7: History and Historiography

Weeks 4-7 of the term will concentrate on historiographical issues and research methodologies. They are designed to help develop students' empirical research skills and to evaluate the value of archival and other sources in contextualising film and television texts. In Week 4 we will continue our exploration of television history by using archival documents and television listings magazines to think about how we can tell television's history and its place in society. Weeks 5 and 7 will be devoted to the Italian film *La Dolce Vita* (Federico Fellini, 1960). We shall be considering some of the many sources that can be mobilised to research the film and its long-running impact.

Week 4 required reading

John Corner (2003) 'Finding data, reading patterns, telling stories: Issues in the historiography of television', *Media, Culture & Society* 25, 2: 273-280.

Helen Wheatley (2007) 'Introduction: Re-viewing Television Histories' in H. Wheatley (ed.) *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, London: IB Tauris, pp. 1-12.

Weeks 5 and 7 required reading (NB there is no teaching in week 6) James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Susan Harper (eds.) (2009), *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches* (London: Palgrave Macmillan) (Read Introduction, pp.1-10 and any chapters you choose).

Richard Dyer (2018), *La dolce vita* (London: BFI)

Stephen Gundle, 'La Dolce Vita' in David W. Ellwood (ed.) (2000), *Movies as History* (Stroud: Sutton), pp.132-40

Weeks 8, 9 and 10: Theoretical Paradigms

In the final three weeks we turn our attention to some broader theoretical questions related to audio-visual media. The two weeks of the module dealing with film (Weeks 8 and 9) will focus on theorizing the 'invisible' or 'absent' textual element. The first week will examine the way in which media texts represent reality or negotiate an unstable truth. Real historical events are increasingly re-staged or 'approximated' in drama in ways that bring a variety of perspectives into play and query accepted understandings of those events. Taking Stella Bruzzi's recent volume *Approximation* as a starting point, we shall consider the Kennedy assassination of 1963 in relation to two quite recent media texts: *Jackie* (Pablo Larrain, 2016) and *Mad Men* (season 3). The second week will examine film costume as a way of considering analytical strategies for discussing narrative film beyond plot and character. The screening will be *Plein soleil* (René Clément, 1960). In both weeks the stress will be on close textual analysis as an interpretative tool, and also on the marginalisation of narrative as the dominant means of understanding what's happening on screen. In Week 10, we return to the study of television, concluding the module by considering some of the ways in which the aesthetic qualities of the television image have been theorised, often in relation to the medium's 'cinematic' counterpart.

Week 8 required reading

Stella Bruzzi (2018), 'Approximation, Mad Men and the Death of JFK', *Foundations of Science*, 23, pp.237-44

Stella Bruzzi (2020), *Approximation: Documentary, History and the Staging of Reality* (London: Routledge), pp.1-12 and Chapter 3 (pp.82-119).

Week 9 required reading

Nick Rees Roberts (2015), 'Dressed to Kill: Delon as Style Icon', in Nick Rees Roberts and Darren Waldron (eds.) *Alain Delon: Style, Stardom and Masculinity* (London: Bloomsbury)

Steve Neale (1983) 'Masculinity as Spectacle', *Screen*, 24, 6, pp.2-17

Week 10 required reading

John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995). Chapter 1, 'Excessive Style: The Crisis of Network Television', pp. 3-31.

Deborah L. Jaramillo, 'Rescuing Television from "the Cinematic": The Perils of Dismissing Television Style', in Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock (eds.), *Television Aesthetics and Style* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 67-75.

Helen Wheatley, 'Introduction: What is Spectacular Television? What is (tele)visual Pleasure?', in Helen Wheatley, *Spectacular Television: Exploring Televisual Pleasure* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016), pp. 1-20.

Film Criticism, Film Style (Autumn Term Optional Module)
Module Tutor: Tiago de Luca



Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954)

MODULE OVERVIEW

The focus of the module ‘Film Criticism, Film Style’ is the close observation, description, and interpretation of particular films in precise detail. Its aim is to help improve the penetration of your observations about the significance of film style, to refine your ability to engage with some of the best film criticism, and to enable you to better articulate in the medium of words what you see and hear in the medium of film: from music to mise-en-scène, editing to performance, composition to camera movement.

This module will be equally accessible to those who have little experience of film analysis as to those who wish to deepen their existing skills. It is imperative always to continue striving to improve the keenness with which we perceive and respond to film style, since everything else that we might wish to discuss about films – their value, themes, emotional effects, political meanings, etc. – are only ever manifested *through* their style. The aim of this module is to reflect upon and wrestle with the challenge of this fact, and to help you rise to that challenge in your analyses.

The module will include lectures, seminars, readings of outstanding film criticism, presentations by students, and an assessed essay, the title of which can be developed in consultation with the module tutor.

The films to be studied on the module are TBC, but they will cover a broad historical range, and will include works by at least some of the following: Alfred Hitchcock, Michael Haneke, Douglas Sirk, Mary Harron, Max Ophuls, the Coen Brothers, Jean Renoir, and/or Paul Thomas Anderson.

SUMMER READING

The following are suggested readings that you might consider undertaking, or at least perusing, before term begins. The texts have been selected for the generality of their discussion on matters of film criticism or film style, but also because they are freely accessible online. They range from short articles or chapters to entire books, so I don't expect you to have completed them all by October. Where appropriate, I have suggested sections that would be particularly helpful introductory reading for this module.

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (1997) 'The Shot: Mise-en-Scene', from *Film Art: An Introduction* (5th Edition). **Chapter accessible here:** <http://bit.ly/2ud4lqP>

Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan (eds.) (2011) *The Language and Style of Film Criticism*. Especially the chapters 'Introduction' (Clayton/Klevan), 'Coming to Terms' (Clayton), and 'Description' (Klevan). **Entire book accessible here:** <https://bit.ly/2GJbUsQ>

Timothy Corrigan (2001) *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* (4th Edition). Especially the chapters 'Beginning to Think, Preparing to Watch, and Starting to Write', and 'Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing'. **Entire book accessible here:** <http://bit.ly/2uVjAIL>

John Gibbs (2001) 'The Elements of Mise-en-Scène', from *Mise-en-Scène: Film Style and Interpretation*. **Chapter accessible here:** <http://bit.ly/2tMxKXU>

Paisley Livingston and Carl Plantinga (eds.) (2008) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*. Especially the chapters 'Authorship' (Aaron Meskin), 'Emotion and Affect' (Carl Plantinga), 'Interpretation' (George Wilson), and 'Style' (Noel Carroll). **Entire book accessible here:** <http://bit.ly/2rPq7xm>

V. F. Perkins (1981) 'Moments of Choice'. **Article accessible here:** http://www.rouge.com.au/9/moments_choice.html

Film and Social Change
**(MA Autumn Term Optional Module/
3rd year option, BA Film and Literature, BA Film Studies)**
Module Tutor: Michele Aaron



Film can make us laugh. It can make us cry. It can make us care. Film can move us, but can it affect or even effect change? This module explores the potential of film to impact upon personal, social and political experiences and events. John Grierson called the filmmaker a 'propagandist'; Third Cinema hailed him or her a 'revolutionary'. More recently, Linda Williams, in re-defining all 'film' as melodrama, distinguished it as the medium of emotion.



We will be concerned with the convergence of these three, of ideology, resistance and feeling, within our developing understanding of how film might alter the attitudes or actions of its audience.



Case Studies include *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933); *Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966); *Bhaji on a Beach* (Gurinder Chadha, 1993); *Boys Don't Cry* (Kimberly Peirce, 1999) I, *Daniel Blake* (Ken Loach, 2016); *Hooligan Sparrow* (Nanfu Wang, 2016)

Film and Social Change will look at how various film theories – such as spectatorship, post-colonial and ethical theory - refigure the agency of those watching, and how various film movements, filmmakers and film practices reanimate this agency for socio-political goals. Moving from mainstream paradigms to much lauded counter-narratives to more marginal propositions, new technologies and platforms will become increasingly significant as we track an alternative history of the power of film into the Digital Age.

Delivery: Lectures, seminars and screenings. You will be required to watch additional screenings in your own time.

Summer preparation:

- 1) Watch a range of 'social justice' films. These are increasingly available on VOD platforms. Recent examples on Netflix include *Strong Island* (Yance Ford, 2017), *White Helmets* (Orlando von Einsiedel, 2016), and *The Great Hack* (Jehane Noujaim and Karim Amer, 2019) and on IPlayer, *Welcome to Chechnya* (David France, 2020). For more historical examples, visit this great recent COVID resource: <https://screenculture.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/2020/06/04/themed-playlist-revolution/>
- 2) For recent films (and television series, like *When They See Us*), especially, consider how they have been funded and why, and for who, they've been made and the role of fiction within them.
- 3) If you have not studied documentary before, you should do some preliminary reading in this area. There are various good introductory texts, such as John Corner's *The Art of Record: a Critical Introduction to Documentary* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1996); Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2001)