FI111-15 Film and Television Criticism

20/21

Department
SCAPVC - Film & Television Studies
Level
Undergraduate Level 1
Module leader
Jose Arroyo
Credit value
15
Assessment
50% coursework, 50% exam
Study location
University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Module aims

1. Principal Module Aims This module aims to give first year students in Film Studies and Film and Literature an introduction to film and television criticism, building on the autumn term module Film and Television Analysis in which they learned the basic building blocks of close textual analysis in relation to these media. The module will always focus on introducing students to a sample of approaches to critical writing about film as well as the key critical turns in the study of television. There will be a historical focus to this work which will think about the development of film and television scholarship. As students gain confidence in the practice of textual analysis (in Film and Television Analysis in term one), they are encouraged to begin to make reasoned and carefully argued interpretations, and to reflect upon the validity of other accounts and interpretations, both in group discussion and through reading of critical scholarship on module films and programmes. The module has been designed to either offer a focus on wide range of films and programmes from different historical periods, film styles and, to a lesser extent, national contexts, or to focus in on a single case study from a variety of different critical angles, or a combination of these two approaches in the first and second part of the term. This is done in order that students might experience, and compare, different approaches to film and television criticism. The critical appreciation of films and television programmes is the foundation of learning and development on both undergraduate degrees, and this module provides the basis of this foundation. As with Film and Television Analysis in term one, this module will equip students to follow a film and/or television focus through the honours years of their degree, should they so choose. In the final year, students on both degrees take the core module Film Aesthetics,

which revisits many of the issues raised at a basic level in this module.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Section 1: Film (criticism) on the road

Week 1: Introduction – the language and style of film criticism – The Wizard of Oz (Victor Fleming, 1939)

- Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan (2012) ‘Introduction: The Language and style of film criticism’ in their The Language and Style of Film Criticism London: Routledge
- Pamela Robertson (1997) ‘Home and Away: Friends of Dorothy on the road in Oz’ in The Road Movie Book

Week 2: Genre criticism – Gun Crazy (Deadly is the Female) (Joseph H. Lewis, 1950)

- Rick Altman (1984) ‘A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre’, Cinema Journal, 23, 3: 6-18
- Jack Shadoian (1977) ‘Gun Crazy’, in his Dreams and Dead Ends: The American Gangster/Crime Film, Cambridge and London: MIT Press

Week 3: Feminist film criticism – Thelma and Louise (Ridley Scott, 1991)

- Patricia White (1998) ‘Feminism and film’ in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (eds) The Oxford Guide to Film Studies, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- H.R. Greenberg, Clover, C., Johnson, A., Chumo P.N., Henderson, B., Williams, L. and Kinder, M. (1991-2) ‘The many faces of Thelma and Louise’ Film Quarterly, 45:2, 20-31

Week 4: Reading art cinema - Alice in den Städten (Wim Wenders, 1974)

- David Bordwell, (1979) ‘The Art Cinema as a mode of film practice’, Film Criticism, 4, 1: 94-102
- Wendy Everett (2009) ‘Lost in Transition? The European Road Movie, or A Genre "adrift in the cosmos"’, Literature/Film Quarterly, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2009)

Week 5: Cinema/ideology/criticism – Texas Chainsaw Massacre (Tobe Hooper, 1974)

- Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni, ‘Cinema/Ideology/Criticism’, Screen 12:1 (1971): pp. 27-38
- Christopher Sharrett (1984) ‘The idea of apocalypse in The Texas Chainsaw Massacre’ in Barry Keith Grant (ed) Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film (Scarecrow) also collected in Barry Keith Grant and Christopher Sharrett (eds.) Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film Revised Edition (Scarecrow)

Section 2: Introduction to television criticism

Week 7: What is television? What is television studies? – Gogglebox (Channel 4, 2013-),

Ghostwatch (BBC Television, 1992)

- Charlotte Brunsdon (1998) ‘What is the television of television studies?’, in Christine Geraghty and David Lusted (eds) The Television Studies Book, London: Arnold, pp. 95—113.
- Milly Buonnano (2008) The Age of Television: Experiences and Theories, Bristol: Intellect – Chapter 1 – ‘The Age of Television’

Week 8: Flows and engagements with television – screening will be examples of broadcast and non-broadcast TV flows

- Milly Buonnano (2008) The Age of Television: Experiences and Theories, Bristol: Intellect – Chapter 2 – ‘Theories of the medium’
- Raymond Williams (1974) Television, Technology and Cultural Form, London: Fontana, Chapter 4 ‘Programming: distribution and flow’
- Horace Newcomb and Paul Hirsch (1983) ‘Television as a cultural forum’, Quarterly Review of Film Studies (Summer); also collected in Newcomb (ed.) (1987) Television: The Critical View (Fourth Edition), New York: Oxford University Press.
- John Ellis (1982) Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video, London: Routledge, Chapter 7 ‘Broadcast TV as Cultural Form’, pp. 111—126.
- John Thornton Caldwell (2003) ‘Second-shift media aesthetics: programming, interactivity and user flows’, in A. Everett and J.T. Caldwell (eds) New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality, New York, Routledge, pp. 127-144.
- Helen Wheatley (2016) Spectacular Television: Exploring Televisual Pleasure, London: IB Tauris - Introduction

Week 9: Television, eventfulness and national address: Extracts from The Royal Wedding (BBC1, 2011); London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony: Isles of Wonder (BBC1, 2012); news coverage

- John Corner (1995) ‘Television as public communication’, in Television Form and Public Address, London: Edward Arnold, pp. 11—31.
- Paddy Scannell (1996) ‘Eventfulness’, in Radio, Television and Modern Life, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 75—92.
- Milly Buonnano (2008) The Age of Television: Experiences and Theories, Bristol: Intellect – Chapter 3 – Televised Ceremonies

Week 10: Reading serial television: Dallas (Lorimar Productions, CBS, 1978-1991); 24 Hours in A&E (The Garden Productions, Channel 4, 2011-present); CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Jerry Bruckheimer Television, Alliance Atlantis, CBS, 2000-present); Seinfeld (Castle Rock Entertainment, NBC, 1989-1998).

- Jane Feuer (1984) “Melodrama, Serial Film and Television Today”, Screen, 25(1), pp. 4-16.
- Jason Mittell, (2006) ‘Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television’, The Velvet Light Trap, No. 58, pp. 29-40.
- John Caughie (2012) “Television and Serial Fictions” in David Glover and Scott McCracken (eds.) The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 50-67.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- 8. Principal Learning Outcomes By the end of the module, students should be able to test, evaluate and where appropriate contest critical interpretations of cinematic and televisual works, offering alternative interpretations and analysis, demonstrating subject specific knowledge, understanding and key cognitive skills. They should be able to offer detailed textual analyses of a range of films and television programmes, which are critically informed by historically significant writing on film and television, and mobilise appropriate theoretical models in their critical analysis of television and visual culture. All students should be able to make appropriate historical and theoretical connections and distinctions between film, television and other aspects of visual culture explored elsewhere on their course.

Indicative reading list

- David Bordwell (2005) Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2004) Film Art: An Introduction, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Pam Cook and Mieke Bernink (eds) (1999) The Cinema Book (Second Edition), London: BFI.
- John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (eds)(1998) The Oxford Guide to Film Studies, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jill Nelmes (ed.) (2007) Introduction to Film Studies, London: Routledge.
- V.F. Perkins [1972] Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies, London: Penguin.
- James Bennett and Niki Strange (2011) Television as Digital Media, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Charlotte Brunsdon and Lynn Spigel (2008) Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader, Maidenhead: Open University Press (2nd Edition).
- Milly Buonnano (2008) The Age of Television: Experiences and Theories, Bristol: Intellect.
- John Caughie (2000) Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Glen Creeber, Toby Miller and John Tulloch (eds) (2008) The Television Genre Book, London: BFI.
- John Ellis (1982) Visible Fictions: Film, Television, Video, London: Routledge.
- --- (1999) Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty, London: I.B.Tauris
- Karen Lury (2005) Interpreting Television, London: Hodder Arnold.
- Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay (2009) Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era, London: Routledge.
- Raymond Williams (1974) Television, Technology and Cultural Form, London: Fontana.

Subject specific skills

No subject specific skills defined for this module.

Transferable skills

No transferable skills defined for this module.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (33%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (33%)
Tutorials	9 sessions of 1 hour (33%)
Total	27 hours

Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

Other activity description

2 x 2-hour screening per week

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group C1

	Weighting	Study time
Essay	50%	
Online Examination	50%	

- Online examination: No Answerbook required

Feedback on assessment

Essays: Written feedback, one-to-one tutorials (when requested)\r\nExams: One-to-one tutorials (when requested)\r\n

Past exam papers for FI111

Availability

Post-requisite modules

If you pass this module, you can take:

- FI335-15 Film and Social Change
- FI329-15 Screenwriting
- FI338-15 The Art of Animation
- FI102-30 The Hollywood Cinema
- FI301-30 Film Aesthetics
- FI334-15 Film and Television Stardom

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UFIA-W620 Undergraduate Film Studies
- Year 1 of UFIA-QW25 Undergraduate Film and Literature