

FI113-15 Theories for Film Studies

20/21

Department

SCAPVC - Film & Television Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 1

Module leader

Michele Aaron

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

50% coursework, 50% exam

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This module aims to introduce students to theoretical models that were originally developed in subject areas such as English Literature, Philosophy, and Psychology and to address the ways in which such theories have been taken up by scholars within Film Studies.

Module aims

Students will engage with a range of theories that offer different constructions of textuality, meaning and interpretation. Students will gain knowledge of major shifts in theorisation by addressing key paradigms such as: structuralism, psychoanalysis, marxism, semiotics, deconstruction, postmodernism. They will gain knowledge of key theorists within Film Studies, such as Baudry, Mulvey, Metz and Sobchack. Students will apply the theoretical models to specific film texts, adding a conceptual dimension to their textual analysis.

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.

The syllabus covers a range of theories that have been influential in their application to film. The module is structured so that a different topic is introduced and discussed each week or, for more

foundational approaches/where necessary, over two weeks. Each topic is dedicated to a specific theoretical approach, addressing the primary material in the first instance, the theorists who have taken this into Film Studies and then the application of the theory to the close reading of film.

Indicative content:

- 1: Structuralism – an analysis of structuralist linguistics and the impact of Saussure's new model of meaning construction. The ways in which Film theorists took up and adapted the work of, for example, Vladimir Propp
2. Marxism – an analysis of Althusser's theory of ideology and its importation into Film Theory by, for example, Baudry.
- 3: Psychoanalysis – an analysis of Freud's take up of, for example, the Oedipus myths and the reworking of the literary sources as steps in subject formation. The take up of psychoanalytic models by film theorists, such as Mulvey.
- 4: Postmodernism – an analysis of the work of key theorists of the postmodern: Frederic Jameson and Linda Hutcheon, focussing on major areas of disagreement. The take up of these models within film theory by Constable et al.
5. Postcolonialism – an analysis of postcolonial theory and its implication for understandings of the Imperial Gaze by film theorists such as Stam and Spence.
6. Queer Theory – an analysis of the work of key theorist, Judith Butler, and her use of film in illuminating queer theory. The broader take up of this approach within Film Studies.
7. Ethics – an analysis of key philosophical theories of, for example, ethical obligation. The take up of these by film theorists, such as Downing and Saxton.
8. Crip Theory – an analysis of theories of able-bodiedness, by for example Davies, and their application to the reading of the normativity of film, by McRuer.
9. Affect and Haptic Theory – an analysis of the work of key theorists of phenomenology and the body, and their take up by film theorists like Sobchack.

Learning outcomes

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

- 1) To locate the development of theoretical models within Film Studies within broader interdisciplinary contexts.
- 2) To demonstrate a sound understanding of one of more areas of theoretical debate within Film Studies.
- 3) To demonstrate an ability to use theoretical language with precision and to analyse argument in a rigorous way.
- 4) To demonstrate an ability to apply theory to specific film texts and to add a conceptual dimension to close textual analysis.

Indicative reading list

Althusser, L., 'Ideology and Ideological State apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation' [1969], in *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. B. Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

Barthes, R. *Mythologies*, A. Lavers (trans.), London, Grafton Books, 1973, pp. 15-26.

Baudry, J.L. (1985) 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus' [1970], in B. Nicholls (ed.) *Movies and Methods: Volume II: An Anthology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 531-42.

- Booker, M K. *Postmodern Hollywood*, Praeger, 2007.
- Constable, C. *Postmodernism and Film: Rethinking Hollywood's Aesthetics*, Wallflower/Columbia University Press, 2015, chapter 2.
- Cooper, S., ed., 'The Occluded Relation: Levinas and Cinema' *Film-Philosophy*. 11.2 (2007) <http://www.film-philosophy.com/index.php/f-p/issue/view/13>
- Culler, J. "The Linguistic Basis of Structuralism", Introduction to Structuralism, D. Robey (ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Creed, B. "Film and Psychoanalysis", *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 77-90.
- Davis, L. J., ed., 'Introduction', *The Disability Studies Reader* (New York; London, Routledge, 2006).
- Doane, M-A. *Femmes Fatales*, London, Routledge, 1991, chapter 3, pp. 44-75.
- Downing, L and L., Saxton, *Film and Ethics: Foreclosed Encounters* (London: Routledge, 2010)
- Freud, S. "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex", *On Sexuality*, J. Strachey (tr.), London: Penguin Books, 1991, pp. 313-322. Originally published 1924.
- Freud, S. "Female Sexuality", *On Sexuality*, J. Strachey (tr.), London: Penguin Books, 1991, pp. 367-392. Originally published 1931.
- Freud, S. "The Ego and the Id", *On Meta-psychology and the Theory of Psychoanalysis*, J. Strachey (tr.), London: Penguin Books, 1991, pp. 339-407.
- Hutcheon, L. "The Politics of Parody" in *The Politics of the Postmodern*, Routledge, 2002, pp. 89-113.
- Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" in Hal Foster (ed.), *Postmodern Culture*, London, Pluto, 1985, pp. 111-125.
- Marks, Laura U., *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2000)
- McRuer, R., *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006)
- Metz, C. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, Indiana University Press, 1981, pp. 151-173.
- Monaco, J. "Film Speaks and Acts: Metz and Contemporary Theory", *How to Read a Film*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1981.
- Mulvey, L. "The Oedipus Myth: Beyond the Riddles of the Sphinx", *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Macmillan, London, 1989, pp. 177-201.
- Mulvey, L. *Fetishism and Curiosity*, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1996.
- Sobchack, V., 'What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh' in *Senses of Cinema* <http://sensesofcinema.com/2000/conference-special-effects-special-affects/fingers/>
- Stam, R. "The Advent of Structuralism" and "The Question of Film Language", *Film Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 2000, pp. 102-118.
- Stam R., and L. Spence, 'Colonialism, Racism and Representation: An Introduction'. *Screen* 24. 2 (1983).

Subject specific skills

This module develops skills of audio-visual literacy, through close textual and/or contextual analysis in relation to the moving image and sound. It may also develop understandings of historical, theoretical and conceptual frameworks relevant to screen arts and cultures.

Transferable skills

- critical and analytical thinking in relation
 - independent research skills
 - team work
 - clarity and effectiveness of communication, oral and written
 - accurate, concise and persuasive writing
 - audio-visual literacy
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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Other activity	18 hours (12%)
Private study	74 hours (49%)
Assessment	40 hours (27%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Reading and additional viewing for seminars and essay and exam preparation.

Other activity description

Screening

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group C2

	Weighting	Study time
Summative Essay	50%	20 hours
The essay tests students understanding of the theories addressed during the module		
Online Examination short exam	50%	20 hours

- Online examination: No Answerbook required

Feedback on assessment

Essay: Written feedback in the form of an overall comment and final mark will be provided. Students can discuss feedback further during tutors' office hours.

[Past exam papers for FI113](#)

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UFIA-W620 Undergraduate Film Studies