

FI348-15 Film Analysis and Methods

21/22

Department

SCAPVC - Film & Television Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Julie Lobalzo Wright

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This module is concerned with the close reading and interpretation of film texts through close textual analysis. Over the course of the module, you will acquire the skills and vocabulary necessary to analyse the ways in which meaning is conveyed through the formal properties of film. This module is also concerned with the broader applications of close textual analysis. By the end of the module and you should be confident in applying your skills of textual analysis in order to interrogate the political dimension of audio-visual texts.

While this module will always focus on close textual analysis and issues of film and politics, the exact content of the module in any given year will depend on the particular expertise and research interests of the current module convenor. An example of what might typically be covered on the module is given below:

- Unit 1 – Style and Meaning focuses on developing and applying the critical vocabulary required to analyse formal elements of cinema, such as mise-en-scène, sound, editing, and composition.
- Unit 2 – The Matter of Images gives you the opportunity to apply the skills and vocabulary developed in the previous weeks in order to engage with the political aspects of the image and issues of representation. Typical areas of focus include masculinity, queer cinema, and critical race film.

Module aims

This module is intended to introduce students to the techniques and skills of textual analysis. This module aims to introduce and familiarise students with the principles of film form, narrative, and style as well as the basic methodologies of film criticism. It gives students the opportunity to study historical and contemporary cinemas from a range of national and industrial contexts. It intends to equip students with a critical vocabulary for analysing films and will give them significant practice in discussing and writing about cinema.

It aims to introduce cinema through a range of critical lenses and frameworks, familiarising students with key formal strategies and critical concepts that are necessary for analysing films. It is designed to ensure that students are adept at examining the various visual, aural and narrative conventions by which they create meaning and how these meanings have been understood within the academic field of Film Studies.

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.

Typical topics, films, and core readings may include

Week 1: Introduction

Screening: *The Night of the Hunter* (Dir. Charles Laughton, USA, 1955)

Reading: No set reading, see entry for week 1 in module outline

Week 2: Mise-en-scene

Screening: *All that Heaven Allows* (Dir. Douglas Sirk, 1955).

Reading: John Gibbs, *Mise-en-scène: Film Style and Interpretation* (London: Wallflower, 2002). pp. 5 – 22.

Week 3: Screen Space

Screening: *Yojimbo* (Dir. Akira Kurosawa, Toho, Japan, 1961).

Reading: David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 2013) pp.182 – 194 [although the whole chapter “The Shot: Cinematography” is useful]

Week 4: Editing

Screening: *Cleo from 5 to 7/Cléo de 5 à 7* (Dir Agnès Varda, France, 1962)

Reading: Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An Introduction*, Fourth Edition, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2015) pp. 140 – 172

Week 5: Sound

Screening: *The Babadook* (Dir. Jennifer Kent, Australia/Canada, 2014)

Reading: David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson, “Fundamental Aesthetics of Sound in the Cinema” in *Theory and Practice of Film Sound* ed. by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York/Guildford: Columbia University Press, 1985) pp. 181 -199

Week 7: Constructing and Representing Masculinity

Screening: *Creed* (Dir. Ryan Coogler, USA, 2015)

Reading: Susan Jeffords, "The Big Switch: Hollywood Masculinity in the Nineties" in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* ed by Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins (New York: Routledge, 1993) pp. 196 – 208

Week 8: Queer Cinema

Screening: *But I'm a Cheerleader* (Dir. Jamie Babbit, 1999)

Reading: Bob Nowlan, 'Queer Theory, Queer Cinema' in *Coming Out to the Mainstream: New Queer Cinema in the 21st Century* (ed by) JoAnne C. Juett (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010) pp, 2 – 19

Week 9: Critical Race Film?

Screening: *Get Out* (Dir. Jordan Peele, USA, 2017)

Reading: Donald Bogle in 'Black Beginnings: from Uncle Tom's Cabin to Birth of a Nation' in *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Film* (New York & London: Continuum, 2002) pp. 3 – 18

Week 10: The Politics of Monsters

Screening: TBC

Reading: J. Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Duke University Press, 1995)

Learning outcomes

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

- Students will gain knowledge of, and be able to accurately identify and describe the formal properties of film; including mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and sound and style
- Students will have a good working knowledge of essential technical vocabulary; and use it appropriately and with accuracy
- Students will be able to apply the principles of textual analysis to a variety of film texts in order to form their own interpretations
- Students will be able to write critically about film, with convincingly structured arguments supported by appropriate evidence in the form of close textual analysis
- Students will be able to use textual analysis to interrogate the political dimension of film images; using theories relating to topics such as representation, ideology, or approaches such as post-colonialism

Indicative reading list

- David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2013). A highly recommended text if you are new to Film Studies. A very rigorous if somewhat mechanical approach to the analysis of film form, it boasts clear explanations of technical vocabulary and a wealth of visual examples.
- *Film Moments: Criticism, History, Theory*, eds. Tom Brown and James Walters (London: BFI, 2010). This collection contains many fine examples of textual analysis, along with notes from the editors about the practice of textual analysis and its role in film studies.
- Pam Cook, *The Cinema Book* (London: BFI, 2007). A wide-ranging introductory text with a focus on theoretical concepts and national cinema, particularly useful for term two.
- John Gibbs, *Mise-en-scène: Film Style and Interpretation* (London: Wallflower, 2002) An

excellent introduction to close textual analysis that consistently foregrounds the importance of understanding parts in relation to the whole.

- Adrian Martin, *Mise en Scene and Film Style: From Classical Hollywood to New Media Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). This is not an introductory text. Instead it is exploration of different types of close textual analysis and how they relate to ways of valuing film. It does however feature an excellent introduction covering the history of mise-en-scène analysis.
- V.F. Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993). One of the foundation texts of textual analysis in film, and a text of huge important to the practice of Film Studies at Warwick. Both a practical example of textual analysis with many close readings of key moments from film and a philosophical consideration of what textual analysis is.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

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 develops 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
- political awareness, especially in relation to the power of images

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	114 hours (76%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Weekly reading and viewing in preparation for classes, plus private study for essays.

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 A

	Weighting	Study time
Sequence Analysis	40%	60 hours
For this essay you will need to provide a detailed analysis of ONE SEQUENCE from ONE of the five films screened on the module so far this term. For this essay, you will need to describe, analyse and interpret how meaning is constructed in the sequence you have chosen. Sophisticated and attentive textual analysis will consider how this expressivity relates to wider systems of meaning that run across the film as a whole. This should not however distract from the main focus of the task, which is the close analysis of the formal properties of your chosen sequence.		
Film Analysis Essay	60%	90 hours
Analyse the representation of gender, sexuality or race & ethnicity in one module film. More detailed information will be provided closer to the assessment		

Feedback on assessment

written feedback and annotated essay returned via tabula

Availability

Courses

Course availability information is based on the current academic year, so it may change. This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UFRA-R1WA Undergraduate French with Film Studies

- Year 1 of UGEA-RP33 Undergraduate German with Film Studies
- Year 1 of UHPA-RP43 Undergraduate Hispanic Studies with Film Studies