FI113-15 Theories for Film Studies

23/24

Department
SCAPVC - Film & Television Studies
Level
Undergraduate Level 1
Module leader
Alice Pember
Credit value
15
Module duration
10 weeks
Assessment
100% coursework
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: psychoanalysis, semiotics, postcolonialism and queery theory. They will gain knowledge of key theorists within Film Studies, such as Wollen, Butler, Mulvey 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:
Semiotics – an analysis of structuralist linguistics and the impact of Pierce's theory of signs on theorists such as Wollen and Gabriel.
Ideology – an analysis of Althusser's theory of ideology and its importation into Film Theory by, for example, Baudry and Comolli and Narboni.
Postcolonialism – an analysis of postcolonial theory and its implication for understandings of the colonial and anti-colonial gaze by film theorists such as Stam and Spence.
Psychoanalytic feminism – an analysis of Lacanian psychoanalysis and its implication for understandings of the apparatus of cinema, as well as the take up of psychoanalytic models by feminist film theorists, such as Mulvey and Silverman.
Queer Theory – an analysis of the work of key theorist, Judith Butler, and their use of film in illuminating queer theory. The broader take up of this approach within Film Studies.
Ethical Theory – an analysis of key philosophical theories of, for example, ethical obligation. The take up of these by film theorists, such as Downing and Saxton.
Crip Theory – an analysis of theories of able-bodiedness, by for example Davies and McRuer and their application to the reading of the normativity of film.
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

Peter Wollen, "The Semiology of Cinema," in Signs and Meanings in the Cinema (London: BFI, 1998), 79-107
Teshome H. Gabriel, "Xala: A Cinema of Wax and Gold," Jump Cut 27 (1982): 31-33.

Glyn Davis, et al. "Film and Politics," in Film Studies: A Global Introduction (London: Routledge, 2015), 95-119. Read sections "Cinema and Ideology" and "Cinema and Activism."

Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," Screen 12, no. 1 (1971): 27–38.

Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," Film Quarterly

Robert Stam and Louise Spence, ‘Colonialism, Racism and Representation’ (1983), in The Film Studies Reader, ed. Joanne Hollows, Peter Hutchings and Mark Jancovich (London: Arnold, 2000), pp. 315–22File

Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Screen 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975): 6–18.

Kaja Silverman, ‘The Fantasy of the Maternal Voice: Paranoia and Compensation’, The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1988), pp. 72–8

Linda Dyson, ‘The Return of the Repressed? Whiteness, Femininity, and Colonialism in The Piano’, Screen 36: 3 (Autumn 1995), 267–76

bell hooks, “Is Paris Burning?,” in Black Looks: Race and Representation (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 145-56.

Judith Butler, “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion,” Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’(London: Routledge, 1993), 124-37.

Emmanuel Levinas, “Ethics as First Philosophy,” in The Levinas Reader (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 75-87.

Libby Saxton, ‘“The South Looks Back”: Ethics, Race, Postcolonialism,” in Film and Ethics: Foreclosed Encounters (London: Routledge, 2009), 50-56.

Robert McRuer, “Introduction: Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence,” in Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 1-32.

Vivian M. May and Beth A. Ferri, ‘“I’m a Wheelchair Girl Now”: Abjection, Intersectionality, and Subjectivity in Atom Egoyan’s “The Sweet Hereafter”’, Women’s Studies Quarterly 30, no. 1-2 (2002): 131-50.

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

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 A3

	Weighting	Study time
Reading Diary	40%	20 hours
The reading tests students understanding of the theories addressed during the first half of the module.		
Essay	60%	20 hours
The essay tests students understanding of the theories addressed during the second half of the module.		

Feedback on assessment

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

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.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UFIA-W620 Undergraduate Film Studies