

FI111-15 Film and Television Criticism

24/25

Department

SCAPVC - Film & Television Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 1

Module leader

James MacDowell

Credit value

15

Module duration

9 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

A core module which teaches approaches to critical reading of film and television texts.

Module aims

The aims of this section of the module are four-fold.

It aims to further develop fluency in the vocabulary of audio-visual criticism so that you can describe accurately what you see and hear when you watch and listen to a film or television programme.

It aims to further develop your confidence when it comes to the precision expression of your analytical thinking in both your written and spoken work.

It aims to give you an extensive opportunity to make reasoned and carefully argued interpretations of individual film and television texts, especially in relation to the validity of other published accounts and interpretations, both within group discussion and through your own reading of a variety of critical writing.

It aims to introduce to the ways in which a work of film and television criticism may also deploy a range of significant historical, cultural, social and political contexts to inform its reading of an audio-visual text.

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 Buonanno (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 Buonanno (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 Buonanno (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:

- demonstrate a deep understanding of the ways in which the close analysis of film and television may be enriched by a scrupulous engagement with film and televisual style and form,
- explore a variety of published criticism and form arguments about its relationship to the film and television texts under discussion
- demonstrate an awareness of relevant social, cultural, historical and political contexts.
- demonstrate their ability to deploy foundational academic skills (such as referencing and bibliography formatting)

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 Buonanno (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

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
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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Tutorials	(0%)
Other activity	18 hours (12%)
Private study	114 hours (76%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Students will complete independent reading and viewing to prepare for seminars and for assessed work.

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 A1

	Weighting	Study time
Written Assignment 1 - Film	45%	

	Weighting	Study time
A short essay on film criticism		
Written Assignment 2 - Television	45%	
A short essay on television criticism		
Skills Assessment: Referencing Task	10%	
This assessment requires students to demonstrate their ability to reference quoted or paraphrased material in a rigorous way.		

Feedback on assessment

Essays: Written feedback, one-to-one tutorials (when requested)

Availability

Pre-requisites

To take this module, you must have passed:

- All of
 - [FI114-15 Film and Television Analysis](#)

Courses

This module is Core for:

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