

# FI115-15 Film Theory

**24/25**

**Department**

SCAPVC - Film & Television Studies

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 1

**Module leader**

Karl Schoonover

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

50% coursework, 50% exam

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

Across the last 100 years, writers have debated the nature of cinema as a medium, its relationship to reality, history, and social politics. During this term, we examine a range of film theories that ask: what are the particular capacities and propensities of the moving image? What are its limits? How does the medium engage us as viewers? Note: Although film analysis is not the primary focus of this module, the films and media texts will serve as a crucial common ground for our discussions. Each week's film has been chosen to allow us to explore and expand on what the theoretical writings propose.

### Module aims

- To provide an understanding of central debates about the moving image.
- To provide the opportunity to reflect on different theoretical frameworks.
- To encounter complex writing and learn how to read it with precision.
- To practice using conceptual and theoretical language with precision.
- To apply theoretical models, creating close textual analyses of specific film texts.

### 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.

#### Week 1 – The cinematic image

- Andrew, Dudley, 'Cinema & Culture' *Humanities* 6:4 (August 1985) pp. 24-25.  
Screening: *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (Jean Renoir, 1939, 77 min.)

#### Week 2 – Affinities

- Kracauer, Siegfried, 'The Establishment of Physical Existence' and 'Inherent Affinities' from *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford University Press, 1960) pp. 41-74.  
Screening: *The Gleaners & I* (Agnès Varda, 2000, 82 min.)

#### Week 3 – Movement

- Metz, Christian. 'On the Impression of Reality in the Cinema' in *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*. (Oxford University Press: 1974) pp. 3-15.  
Screening: *The Bourne Ultimatum* (Paul Greengrass, 2007, 115 min.)

#### Week 4 – Affect

- Sontag, Susan. 'Against Interpretation' in *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays*. (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966) 3-14.  
Screening: *Il posto* (Ermanno Olmi, 1961, 93 min.)

#### Week 5 – Ideology

- Comolli, Jean-Luc, and Paul Narboni. 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' *Screen* (1971) 12 (1): pp. 27-38.  
Screening: *Written on the Wind* (Douglas Sirk, 1956, 99 min.)

#### Week 6 – Reading Week

#### Week 7 – The Male Gaze

- Mulvey, Laura. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' *Screen* (1975) 16(3): pp. 6-18.  
Screening: *Gilda* (Vidor, 1956) 110 min.

#### Week 8 – The Raced Gaze

- Gaines, Jane. 'White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory.' *Cultural Critique*, No. 4 (Autumn, 1986), pp. 59-79.  
Screening: *Mahogany* (Berry Gordy, 1975) 109 min.

#### Week 9 – Gaming and POV

- Galloway, Alex. 'Origins of the First-Person Shooter' in *Critical Visions in Film Theory*, edited by White & Corrigan, (Boston/New York: Bedford St. Martins, 2011) pp. 1070-1081.  
Screening: *South Park*, "Make Love, Not Warcraft" (writer/director Trey Parker), Ep. 8, Season 10, Comedy Central (US air date: 4 October 2006).

## Week 10 – The Digital Multitude

- Whissel, Kristin. 'The Digital Multitude' Cinema Journal vol. 49. no. 4 (Summer 2010) 90-110.  
Screening: Starship Troopers (Paul Verhoeven, 1997) 129 min.

### Learning outcomes

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

- Demonstrate a sound understanding of the key questions of theoretical debates around the moving image.
- Understand how theoretical inquiry differs from other forms of inquiry.
- Demonstrate an ability to use theoretical language with precision and to analyse argument in a rigorous way.
- Demonstrate an ability to use a close analysis of a theoretical text to expand, complicate or trouble the theoretical text's conceptual framework and premises.
- Demonstrate an ability summarise, explain, and paraphrase in writing the central ideas of the theoretical texts at hand.

### Indicative reading list

#### Dictionaries

Hayward, Susan. Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts. London: Routledge, 2006.

Kuhn, Annette, and Guy Westwell. A Dictionary of Film Studies. [Oxford]; [New York]: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Cook, Pam. The Cinema Book. London: BFI, 2007.

#### Basics of film aesthetics

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. Film Art: An Introduction. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010.

Corrigan, Timothy, and Patricia White. The Film Experience: An Introduction. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2012.

Yale Film Analysis website: <http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/>

#### Key anthologies of film theory [i.e., collections of key film theory essays]

Braudy, Leo, and Marshall Cohen. Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Corrigan, Timothy, Patricia White, and Meta Mazaj. Critical Visions in Film Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011.

Rosen, Philip. Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Stam, Robert, and Toby Miller. Film and Theory: An Anthology. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000.

Elsaesser, Thomas, and Malte Hagener. *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

## Feminist Film Theory

Kaplan, E. Ann. *Feminism and Film*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Thornham, Sue. *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

McCabe, Janet. *Feminist Film Studies: Writing the Woman into Cinema*. London; New York: Wallflower, 2004.

\* Shortcuts series

## 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%)
Supervised practical classes	(0%)
Other activity	18 hours (12%)
Private study	114 hours (76%)
Total	150 hours

### Private study description

n/a

### Other activity description

screenings

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

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

### Assessment group C3

	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Study time</b>
Essay	50%	
Examination	50%	
~Platforms - WAS		

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- Online examination: No Answerbook required

### Feedback on assessment

Students will receive detailed written feedback on each piece of written work, as is the departmental practice, and verbal feedback on examinations where requested.

There will be several formative exercises which will allow students to refine their argumentation skills in relation to the module texts and in preparation for the essay or exam.

[Past exam papers for FI115](#)

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Core for:

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