

# FI116-30 Adaptation - From Page to Screens

**24/25**

**Department**

SCAPVC - Film & Television Studies

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 1

**Module leader**

James Taylor

**Credit value**

30

**Module duration**

18 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

This module will provide students of Film and Literature with a thorough appreciation of a major issue that is central to their degree – the adaptation of texts. The first term will offer a broad overview of issues and debates in adaptation, and the second term will focus on a case study of a specific genre (initially, crime fiction). Students will be assessed with essays and a creative project.

### Module aims

This module will provide students of Film and Literature with a thorough appreciation of a major issue that is central to their degree – the adaptation of texts. Adaptation will be considered in its broadest sense: from the traditional conception of the printed page to the filmic image, to the multiform texts crossing contemporary multimedia platforms. The module will cover key debates, such as the issue of fidelity, the role of heritage cinema and the rise of contemporary multimedia forms. Students will engage with the work of major theorists in the field, including Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, Sarah Cardwell and Linda Hutcheon, contextualising their approaches within the wider movements of post-structuralism and postmodernism. In the second term, students will undertake detailed analyses of a specific case study on crime fiction, encompassing the multiple

iterations of hardboiled crime fiction – including radio and filmic adaptations – and the many faces of Sherlock Holmes. In future years, this case study could be on a variety of genres, as long as there is no overlap with existing modules in the departments of Film and Television Studies and English and Comparative Literary 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.

Topics for Term One:

1. Word/image warfare and the issue of medium specificity.  
Bluestone's take up of Gotthold Lessing's analysis of the difference between poetry and painting and his use of this model of oppositional difference in relation to film. Woolf's essay on cinema and its presentation of the difference between literature and film as the conceptual versus the perceptual. McFarlane's analysis of novel to film adaptation utilises the distinction between narrative and enunciation to carefully distinguish those elements that that can be transferred from those that require 'adaptation proper'.  
Screenings: Orlando (Sally Potter, 1992); Cape Fear (J. Lee Thomas, 1961), Cape Fear (Martin Scorsese 1991).
2. Fidelity to the original and the heritage cinema debate.  
The differential status of literature and film – high culture versus mass culture and the impact of this on conceptions of authorship, intention and artistic value. The ways in which these assumptions inform critical debates about the value of heritage cinema and television. The linking of adaptation to issues of national and international contexts.  
Suggested screenings: Pride and Prejudice (Robert J Leonard, 1940), Pride and Prejudice TV miniseries BBC 1995, Bride and Prejudice (Gurinda Chadha, 2004), Pride and Prejudice (Joe Wright 2005), Austenland (Jerusha Hess, 2013).
3. Challenging assumptions: Ur Texts and halls of mirrors  
Cardwell's conception of the Ur text as a means of challenging and dismantling reductive notions of the original. Elliott's delineation of multiple modalities of adaptation via a reconceptualization of Alice Through the Looking Glass. Linda Hutcheon's analysis of the changes to adaptation within contemporary multimedia convergence culture, which will focus on multiple iterations of Batman.  
Suggested screenings: Alice in Wonderland (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luska, 1951), Alice (Jan Svankmajer, 1988), Batman Begins (Christopher Nolan, 2005), The Lego Batman Movie (Chris McKay, 2017).

Term Two: Crime Fiction Case Studies

1. Hardboiled crime fiction and its adaptation to film noir.  
Focussing on key writing such as Ernest Hemingway's short story 'The Killers', Raymond Chandler's The Big Sleep and James M. Cain's The Postman Always Rings Twice. These texts have also been adapted for radio.  
Suggested Screenings: The Killers (Robert Siodmak, 1946), The Big Sleep (Howard Hawks, 1946), Ossessione (Luchino Visconti, 1943), The Postman Always Rings Twice (Tay

Garnett, 1946), *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Bob Rafelson, 1981).

## 2. The multiple adaptations of Sherlock Holmes.

This section would include theatre – beginning with the play by William Gillette (1899), which is clearly referenced in *Sherlock Junior* (Buster Keaton 1924). It would address the long-running series of films, initially made for Fox Studios (1939) before moving to Universal (1942-1946) starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. These stars also made a series, 'The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes', for Old-Time Radio from 1939-1946. This case study would end with the contemporary *Sherlock* (BBC 2010-) starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman.

## Learning outcomes

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

- 1) Students will have a knowledge of major debates in adaptation theory, their placement within specific intellectual traditions and their implications for the practice of textual analysis.
- 2) Students will gain an ability to provide detailed analyses of different types of text: literary, filmic, televisual etc. and to demonstrate careful consideration of the media-specific elements of each type.
- 3) Students will gain an ability to interrelate different types of texts, placing them in productive dialogue with each other.
- 4) Students will gain practical experience of the process of adaptation and learn to apply their critical frameworks within a creative context.

## Indicative reading list

Beja, M. *Film and Literature* (Longman: New York, 1979).

Bluestone, G. *Novels into Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

Cardwell, S. *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002).

Elliott, K. *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Enright, D. J. *Fields of Vision: Essays on Literature, Language and Television* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Higson, A. *English Heritage: English Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Hutcheon, L. *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012).

Jenkins, H. *Convergence Cultures: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: NYU Press, 2008).

McFarlane, B. *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

Stam, R. 'Introduction: the theory and practice of adaptation', in Stam, R. and Raengo, A. (eds) *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 1-52.

Stam, R. and Raengo, A. (eds) *A Companion to Literature and Film* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

Wimsatt, Jr., W.K. and Beardsley, M.C. 'The intentional fallacy' in Neill, A. and Ridley, A. (eds) *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern* (Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw Hill, 1996), pp.374-84.

Woolf, V. 'The cinema', in *Collected Essays: volume 2* (London: Hogarth, 1966).

## **Research element**

Students will conduct research for their assessments.

## **Interdisciplinary**

This is a core module for the Film and Literature degree.

## **International**

The materials focus on British and American texts and films and also engage with a range of key films from diverse national cinemas including Italian, Polish and Bollywood cinema.

## **Subject specific skills**

1. Students will have a knowledge of major debates in adaptation theory, their placement within specific intellectual traditions and their implications for the practice of textual analysis.
2. Students will gain an ability to provide detailed analyses of different types of text: literary, filmic, televisual etc. and to demonstrate careful consideration of the media-specific elements of each type.
3. Students will gain an ability to interrelate different types of texts, placing them in productive dialogue with each other.
4. Students will gain practical experience of the process of adaptation and learn to apply their critical frameworks within a creative context.

## **Transferable skills**

1. Students will have a knowledge of major debates in adaptation theory, their placement within specific intellectual traditions and their implications for the practice of textual analysis.
  2. Students will gain an ability to provide detailed analyses of different types of text: literary, filmic, televisual etc. and to demonstrate careful consideration of the media-specific elements of each type.
  3. Students will gain an ability to interrelate different types of texts, placing them in productive dialogue with each other.
  4. Students will gain practical experience of the process of adaptation and learn to apply their critical frameworks within a creative context.
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## **Study**

## **Study time**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Required</b>
Seminars	18 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Other activity	36 hours (12%)
Private study	228 hours (76%)
Total	300 hours

### **Private study description**

Students must spend time independently reading texts and completing assignments.

### **Other activity description**

Film screening 2 hours per week for 18 weeks.

Seminars to be 2 hours across both terms to provide greater time for class discussion and facilitate on-going feedback for the creative project.

### **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 A1**

	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Study time</b>
Essay 1	30%	
Detailed analysis of specific extract from text and the equivalent scene/sequence to be done by week 6 in term 1.		
Essay 2	30%	
Analysis of different theoretical models of adaptation and their impact on textual readings – to be done by week 3 term 2.		
Creative Project	40%	
Adapting literature to either a visual poster or written screenplay to be developed across term 2. Project to include 1,000-word reflection on the process of adaptation. Length of creative project poster and reflection is 1,000 words, screenplay and reflection is 2,500 words. Due week 1 term 3. After discussion FTV is happy that the total assessment of 6,500 words for those doing the screenplay is congruent with our year one assessment patterns.		

### **Feedback on assessment**

The essays and the creative writing piece will all receive written feedback, which will be uploaded onto Tabula. Students will be encouraged to approach the seminar tutor for individual feedback during tutorial hours if they have further issues to discuss.

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## **Availability**

## **Courses**

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UFIA-QW25 Undergraduate Film and Literature