COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar will cover the major issues and concepts that have been taken up by contemporary film theorists in the years following World War II, with particular concentration in the 1960s, ’70s, and ’80s. While theory during the first half of the 20th century (often referred to as “classical” film theory) was mostly concerned with questions of ontology, aesthetics, and realism, contemporary film theory has been heavily influenced by cultural studies and ideological criticism, particularly as formulated from Marxist and psychoanalytical perspectives, and has therefore delved into previously ignored questions of race, gender, politics, and spectatorship. However, in recent years, with the advent of digital cinema and the profound impact it is having on everything from production to reception, film theory has started to circle back into questions of technology and ontology.

REQUIRED TEXTS


All other readings available on Blackboard (http://my.baylor.edu)
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

• **Theorist Overview Paper / Presentation (30%)**—Each student will select one important theorist/critic (either classical or contemporary) who we are not reading as part of the course and research his or her contributions to film theory. This will require that you read a substantial amount of this theorist/critic’s theoretical writings (i.e., you should not rely heavily on secondary interpretations of his or her works, but rather form your own opinions). You will then write an 8- to 10-page paper summarizing and critiquing the most important elements of this theorist’s work and also present your findings to the rest of the class (one or two students will present during each class meeting starting on Oct. 3). The paper should be type-written and double-spaced, use MLA style, and include a complete bibliography. On or before September 19 you must e-mail me the name of the person you wish to write about/present on and briefly justify his or her importance to film studies. The final paper is due by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 23. You must submit a hard copy to me and you must also submit an electronic copy via Turnitin on Blackboard.

• **Critical Theory Paper (50%)**—On the last day of the semester you will submit a 20- to 25-page critical paper (including a complete bibliography) that uses film theory to interrogate a pertinent question regarding any of the issues we have raised in class. The paper should demonstrate a strong understanding of the theory or theories you are utilizing to illuminate a film or body of films. It should be type-written and double-spaced using MLA style. On or before Wednesday, October 16 you must submit a two-page proposal for your paper to be approved by me. This proposal should outline (1) why your topic is interesting, (2) how your thesis relates to the theoretical issues we have been discussing in class, and (3) how your paper will be organized. It should also include a representative bibliography with at least 10 sources. The final paper is due to me in my office no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 9, and before submitting the hard copy you must also submit an electronic copy via Turnitin on Blackboard.

• **Class Discussion Leader and Participation (20%)**—Your participation grade is based on regular attendance and your active involvement in class discussions. As this is a discussion-based seminar, it is imperative that you participate regularly in every class session, which invigorates our discussion of the topic with multiple points of view and also illustrates to me that you have adequately prepared for class by carefully and studiously reading everything that was assigned. In addition, each week one student will be assigned as an “expert” for each reading, which means you should come to class prepared to lead discussion and be armed with thought-provoking questions and additional background material to illuminate the assigned reading. Also, the night before you are to present you must e-mail me an outline of the reading for which you are responsible and a list of questions/issues you plan to raise in class the next day.

GRADING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60–67</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0–59</td>
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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In this class, there is an absolute zero tolerance policy on cheating in any form, including plagiarism. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the university’s policies and what constitutes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in the Baylor Student Handbook (http://www.baylor.edu/student_policies). If you are caught cheating in any way, at the minimum you will receive a zero for that assignment, although the penalty may be more severe, depending on the circumstances. All instances of cheating will be reported to the university’s Honor Council.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

If you have any special learning needs, please see me during the first week of class so we can be sure you get the proper accommodations. However, before seeing me you must first register with the Office of Access and Learning Accommodation (OALA) (http://www.baylor.edu/oala).
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Aug. 28–29): Issues in Contemporary Film Theory

Wednesday Screening:
Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)

Read for Thursday:
• Andrew, “The ‘Three Ages’ of Cinema Studies and the Age to Come” [Blackboard]
• Rodowick, The Virtual Life of Film Part I [Blackboard]
• Ravetto-Biagioli, “Vertigo and the Vertiginous History of Film Theory” [Blackboard]

Week 2 (Sept. 4–5): Revisiting Classical Film Theory Part I: Formalism and Expressionism

Wednesday Screening:
In the Mood for Love (Wong Kar-Wai, 2000)

Read for Thursday:
• Kracauer, “Basic Concepts” and “Inherent Affinities” in Critical Visions (289–308)
• Eisenstein, “The Dramaturgy of Film Form” in Critical Visions (262–279)

Week 3 (Sept. 11–12): Revisiting Classical Theory Part II: Questions of Realism

Wednesday Screening:
Letter Never Sent (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1959)

Read for Thursday:
• Arnheim, “Film and Reality” in Critical Visions (279–288)
• Deren, “Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality in Critical Visions (144–156)
Week 4 (Sept. 18–19): The Troubles With Auteurism

Wednesday Screening:
*Amour* (Michael Haneke, 2012)

Read for Thursday:
- Barthes, “The Death of the Author” in *Critical Visions* (345–350)

If you’re not familiar with Michael Haneke’s previous work, please read his profile at Sense of Cinema (http://sensesofcinema.com/2010/great-directors/michael-haneke) and view at least one of his other films on your own time, preferable *Funny Games* (1997), *Cache* (2005), or *The White Ribbon* (2009).

**Reminder!** By Thursday, Sept. 19 you must e-mail me the name of the theorist/critic you will be writing about/presenting on and briefly justify his or her importance to film studies.

Week 5 (Sept. 25–26): Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, and Identification

Wednesday Screening:
*Peeping Tom* (Michael Powell, 1959)

Read for Thursday:
- Friedberg, “A Denial of Difference: Theories of Cinematic Identification” [Blackboard]
- Christian Metz, “From the Imaginary Signifier” in *Critical Visions* (17–34)

Week 6 (Oct. 2–3): The Ideological Turn

Wednesday Screening:
*2 or 3 Things I Know About Her* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967)

Read for Thursday:
- Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus” in *Critical Visions* (34–43)
Week 7 (Oct. 9–10): Gender and the Feminist Turn

Wednesday Screening: *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991)

Read for Thursday:
- Freeland, “Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films” [Blackboard]

Week 8 (Oct. 16–17): No Class or Screening

By 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday Oct. 16 you need to submit your two-page critical theory paper proposal, which I will return to you in class next week. You may either leave the proposal in my mailbox or slide it under my office door.

Week 9 (Oct. 23–24): Postmodernism and Simulacra

Wednesday Screening: *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (Steven Spielberg, 2001)

Read for Thursday:
- Huyssen, “Mapping the Postmodern” [Blackboard]
- Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra” [Blackboard]

Reminder! Theorist Overview Paper due by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 23.
**Week 10 (Oct. 30–31): Cinema in the Digital Age**

**Wednesday Screening:**
*King Kong* (Peter Jackson, 2005)

**Read for Thursday:**
- Allen, “The Impact of Digital Technologies on Film Aesthetics” [Blackboard]
- Whissel, “Tales of Upward Mobility: The New Verticality and Digital Special Effects” [Blackboard]

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**Week 11 (Nov. 6–7): The Future and/or End of Cinema**

**Wednesday Screening:**
*Sin City* (Frank Miller & Robert Rodriguez, 2005)

**Read for Thursday:**
- Friedberg, “The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change” [Blackboard]

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**Week 12 (Nov. 14–15): Critical Race Theory**

**Special Wednesday Screening / Discussion with Professor Charles Ramirez Berg:** *El Mariachi* (Robert Rodriguez, 1992)

**Read for Thursday:**
- Shohat and Stam, “Stereotype, Realism, and the Struggle Over Representation” in *Critical Visions* (800–822)
- López, “Are All Latins From Manhattan?” in *Critical Visions* (859–871)
- hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators” [Blackboard]
Week 13 (Nov. 21–22): Student Paper Presentations

No Wednesday Screening

Critical Theory paper presentations on Thursday

Week 14 (Nov. 28–29)

No screening or class—Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 15 (Dec. 4–5): Student Paper Presentations continued

No Wednesday Screening

Critical Theory paper presentations on Thursday

Critical Theory Paper due to me in my office Monday, December 9 by 5:00 p.m.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Screening Title</th>
<th>Director(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 28</td>
<td><em>Vertigo</em></td>
<td>Alfred Hitchcock</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>128 min.</td>
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<td>Sept. 4</td>
<td><em>In the Mood for Love</em></td>
<td>Wong Kar-Wai</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>98 min.</td>
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<td>Sept. 18</td>
<td><em>Amour</em></td>
<td>Michael Haneke</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>124 min.</td>
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<td>Sept. 25</td>
<td><em>Peeping Tom</em></td>
<td>Michael Powell</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>101 min.</td>
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<td>Oct. 2</td>
<td><em>2 or 3 Things I Know About Her</em></td>
<td>Jean-Luc Godard</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>87 min.</td>
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<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>No screening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 23</td>
<td><em>A.I. Artificial Intelligence</em></td>
<td>Steven Spielberg</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>146 min.</td>
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<td>Oct. 31</td>
<td><em>King Kong</em></td>
<td>Peter Jackson</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>187 min.</td>
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<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td><em>Sin City</em></td>
<td>Frank Miller &amp; Robert Rodriguez</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>124 min.</td>
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<td>No screening—Paper presentations</td>
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<td>Nov. 27</td>
<td>No screening—Happy Thanksgiving!</td>
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<td>Dec. 4</td>
<td>No screening—Paper presentations</td>
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Course Readings on Blackboard


Ravetto-Biagioli, Kriss. “*Vertigo* and the Vertiginous History of Film Theory.” *Camera Obscura* 25, no. 3 (2011): 101–140.
