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Class: M/W: 12-1:15, King 343
Screenings: T, W 7-10, King 337
Office Hours: M 10-11 & W 10-11:30
and by appointment

FILM THEORY CINE 358

Basic Information

Film Theory is an introduction to major developments in film theory and criticism. We will cover classic and contemporary film theory and examine the cultural contexts of its most animated debates and arguments. Each week of the syllabus pairs critical writing(s) on a central principle of film analysis with a cinematic example of this principle. Class time will be divided between discussion of the critical texts and attempts to apply them to a primary cinematic text. We will end the course by considering a number of recent attempts to "practice" film theory in audio-visual form. The topics we will cover include: the specificity of film form; cinematic realism; the politics and ideology of cinema; the relation between cinema and language; spectatorship, identification, and subjectivity; archival and historical problems in film studies; the relation between film studies and other disciplines of aesthetic and social criticism.

Readings

Required readings will be drawn from Braudy and Cohen eds., Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, 5th ed., and through electronic reserves. I have ordered Light Pens, one for each member of the class, for use during screenings. An **optional** collection of essays on and about film studies and film theory, The Oxford Guide to Film Studies, edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson. The Oxford is recommended as a sourcebook on debates and influences in film theory.

Additional recommended readings will be indicated in the syllabus as such and made available through the sources mentioned above. **Reference** works dealing with areas of film history and technique will be placed on reserve at Mudd: on basic formal and technical concepts, Bordwell and Thompson, Film Art: An Introduction, 6th ed.; on narrative film history, Cook, A History of Narrative Film, 3rd ed.; on film studies more generally, Cook and Berninke, The Cinema Book, 2nd. ed. Timothy Corrigan's A Short Guide to Writing about Film has also been ordered at the bookstore; it's an excellent place to look for tips on both note-taking and essay-writing.

Screenings

Unless otherwise indicated, screenings are on Tuesday evenings from 7-10 in 337 King. Attendance at these screenings, which will be the topic of discussion the following class, is mandatory, whether or not the films are available on videotape or DVD. Video or DVD copies of films on the syllabus will be placed on non-circulating reserve at Mudd Library, however, for the purposes of repeated viewings and close analysis. A number of supplementary tapes and DVDs will also be placed on reserve and the Audio-Visual department on the 4th floor of Mudd Library has a growing collection of films available for in-house use.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation and Attendance (25%)

It is expected that you will attend every class prepared to contribute to a discussion, and that you will take part in discussion. Any unexcused **absences** will jeopardize your participation grade. (An "excused" absence is one explained by a note from a health care provider or other college official.)

Notes on screenings and readings will be an essential part of your preparation for class discussion and writing assignments. You will be required to hand in, but not graded on, a page-long (double-spaced) summary of your reaction to the screening, in light of any particular idea(s) from the week's reading. *Late responses will not be accepted.*

Written Assignments (60%)

These assignments include: a short essay, 2-3 pages, on "going to the movies" (5%); and a long (15 –20 pp.) final paper (50%). The longer essay will include a proposal stage and, if time allows, the submission of a preliminary draft. Details on each of these assignments to follow. *All graded writing assignments should be carefully proof-read and should follow either MLA or Chicago citation guidelines. Late assignments will be subject to grade penalties and/or will receive a minimum of written commentary.*

Guiding Discussion (20%)

For one of our class sessions after the second full week, you will facilitate and guide part of our conversation: this responsibility will entail the selection and presentation of significant questions and points of interpretation from the readings, and the preparation of a selection of clips that help us do analytical work with that week's materials. To prepare for your week, you will, in advance: select a film clip; and outline possible topics of discussion in a form that can be handed out or presented visually.

Honor Code

I will ask you to write and sign the Honor pledge ("I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment") on all major writing assignments and tests. Assignments turned in without the Honor Code will be returned ungraded.

SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION: DEFINING CINEMA

Weeks 1 and 2: **WHAT IS CINEMA?**

9/10 Screening: *From the Journals of Jean Seberg* (Mark Rappaport; USA, 1997; 99 min.)
Sept. 4 Introductions
 Roland Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theater" (1975) (x)
Sept 9-11 Mark Rappaport, "I, Jean Seberg" (x)
 Peter Lehman, "Introduction: What is Film Theory?" (1997) (x)
 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
 (1936) (FTC)

UNIT I: CINEMATIC SPECIFICITY: FILM FORM AND ONTOLOGY

Week 3 CLASSICAL FILM THEORY I: THE IMPRESSION OF REALITY

NO CLASS 9/16

Sept. 17 Screening: *Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard; France, 1959; 90 min.)

Sept. 18 André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" (FTC)
 André Bazin, "The Myth of Total Cinema" (1946) (FTC)
 André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," (1955) (FTC)

 Supplemental:
 Rudolph Arnheim, "The Complete Film" (1933) (FTC)
 Rudolph Arnheim, "Film and Reality" (1933) (FTC)
 Siegfried Kracauer, "Basic Concepts" (1960) (FTC)

Week 4 CLASSICAL FILM THEORY II: THE AESTHETICS OF MONTAGE

Sept 24 Screening: *Strike* (Sergei Eisenstein; USSR, 1925; 94 min.)

Sept 23, 25 Vsevolod Pudovkin, "[on editing]," from Film Technique (1926) (FTC)

Sergei Eisenstein, "The Montage of Film Attractions" (1924) (x)
 Sergei Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith, and Ourselves" (1944) (FTC)
 Sergei Eisenstein, "Beyond the Shot" (1929) (FTC)
 Supplemental:
 Sergei Eisenstein, "The Dramaturgy of Film Form [The Dialectical Approach to Film form]" (1929) (FTC)

UNIT II: FILM LANGUAGE AND SUBJECTIVITY

Week 5 MODERNITY AND THE PUBLIC SPHERES OF CINEMA

Oct 1 Screening: *Intolerance* (D.W. Griffith; 1916, USA; 178 min.)

Sept 30, Oct 2 Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article" (1964) (e-res)
 Miriam Hansen, "The Hieroglyph and the Whore: D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance*(1989)(e-res)

Week 6 SEMIOTICS AND STRUCTURALISM: THE TEXTUAL SYSTEM

Oct 8 Screening: *Stagecoach* (John Ford; USA, 1939; 99 min.)

Oct 7, 9 Christian Metz, "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film" (1967) (FTC)
 Christian Metz, "Some Points in the Semiotics of the Cinema" (1968) (FTC)
 Nick Browne, "The Spectator-in-the-Text: The Rhetoric of *Stagecoach*" (1975) (FTC)

Week 7 THE APPARATUS: THE SPECTATOR'S LOOK AND "SUTURE"

Oct 15 Screening: *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock; USA, 1960; 109 min.)

Oct 14, 16 Daniel Dayan, "The Tutor Code of Classical Cinema" (1975) (e-res)
 Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus" (1970) (FTC)
 Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema" (FTC)
 Linda Williams, "Discipline and Fun" (2000) (e-res)

Week 8 THE SPECTATOR AND SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

Oct 29 Screening: *Stella Dallas* (King Vidor; USA, 1937; 100 min.)

Oct 28, 30 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) (FTC)
 Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator" (1982) (e-res)
 Linda Williams, "Something Else Besides a Mother: *Stella Dallas* and the Maternal Melodrama" (1984) (e-res)
 E. Ann Kaplan, "The Case of the Missing Mother: Maternal Issues in Vidor's *Stella Dallas*"

Week 9 FILM SOUND: HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY AND IDEOLOGY

Nov 5 Screening: *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola; USA, 1974; 113 min.)

Nov 4, 6 Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov, "Statement on Sound" (1928) (FTC)
 John Belton, "Technology and Aesthetics of Film Sound" (1985) (FTC)

Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space" (1980) (FTC)
Mary Ann Doane, "Ideology and the Practice of Sound Editing and Mixing" (1980) (e-res)

Week 10 GENRE THEORY

Nov 12 Screening: *Dancer in the Dark* (Lars Von Trier; Denmark, 2001; 140 min.)

Nov 11, 13 Robin Wood, "Ideology, Genre, Auteur" (1972) (FTC)
Jane Feuer, "The Self-Reflexive Musical and the Myth of Entertainment" (1977) (FTC)
Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama" (1972) (FTC)

UNIT IV: POLITICS AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Week 11 MASS CULTURE AND POLITICAL ALLEGORY

Nov 19 Screening: *The Matrix* (Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski; USA, 1999; 136 min.)

Nov 18, 20 Fredric Jameson, "Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture: *Dog Day Afternoon* as a Political Film" (1977) (FTC) *or* Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" (e-res)

Week 12 FILMIC ENUNCIATION

Nov 26 Screening: *Xala* (Ousmane Sembene, 1975, Senegal, 123 min.)

Nov 25, 27 John Mowitt, "*Sembene Ousmane's Xala: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages*" (1993) (e-res)
Laura Mulvey, "*Xala: Ousmane Sembene 1974: The Carapace that Failed*" (e-res)

Week 13 ANTI-COLONIAL CINEMA

Dec 3 Screening: *Perfumed Nightmare* (Kidlat Tahimik; Phillipines, 1977; 93 min.)

Dec 2, 4 Frantz Fanon, "This is the Voice of Algeria" (1959) (e-res)
Solanas and Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema" (1971) (e-res)
Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction" (FTC)

Week 14 EARLY CINEMA, LATE CINEMA

Dec 10 Screening: Nike "Move" ad (Jake Scott/RSA; USA, 2001; 1min 30 sec.); *Interior New York Subway* (American Biograph and Mutoscope, 1905; 5 min.); *The Heart of the World* (Guy Maddin; Canada, 2001; 6 min.); *The Fourth Dimension* (Trinh T. Minh-ha; USA, 2001; 87 min.)

Dec 9,11 Miriam Hansen, "Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Transformations of the Public Sphere" (1995) (e-res)

Dec 13 Anne Friedberg, "Cinema and the Postmodern Condition" (1995) (x)

Dec 13 Final Paper Due by 5 pm