

Department of Cinema Studies, New York University  
Summer 2007 (Session II: June 25<sup>th</sup>-August 1<sup>st</sup>)  
Mondays and Wednesdays 12:30-4:30pm  
721 Broadway, room 006

## **Language of Film**

H72.0011

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### **Course Description**

This course offers a systematic introduction to the evolution of film language, and provides students with the basic tools for analyzing and appreciating the art of film. It is strongly recommended as a pre-requisite for all cinema studies courses. Students will learn how to develop a formal appreciation of cinema based on analytic judgments, and acquire a critical vocabulary relating to particular cinematic practices and structures. By offering a very selective historical survey of key cinematic traditions contained within narrative, documentary, and experimental modes, we will examine how meaning in films is conditioned by the uses of camera, editing, lighting, sound and acting, and explore the impact of technological developments on film production.

### **Course Website and Blackboard**

This course will use Blackboard. Please be sure to check it regularly for course announcements, assignment guidelines, supplemental screenings, presentations from lectures, and your own personal grading and attendance records. You may also use Blackboard to submit assignments electronically. To access Blackboard, point your browser to <http://classes.nyu.edu> and log in using your NYU Net ID and password. You will find our course under "Courses You Are Taking."

### **Required Readings:**

The following book should be purchased for the course and is available at the NYU bookstore:

Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson. Film Art: An Introduction. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: McGraw Hill, 2008.

All other readings listed below (consisting of historical texts, film reviews, essential theoretical writings, and other introductory texts to film language) will be available as Portable Document Format (PDF) files via Blackboard.

### **Course Policy:**

Attendance in the course is vital. If you miss more than two class sessions, those absences will count against your final grade. Missing more than 30 minutes of class, either due to late arrival or early departure will count as one absence. Please note that all screenings are part of the lecture time.

Complete each week's readings before our class session. The lectures will cover material that assumes you have completed that week's assigned readings. I invite you to re-read certain chapters or articles after the class to get better acquainted with the film language glossary. It is imperative that the textbook and/or copies of each week's readings be brought to every class.

The papers are to be typed (double-spaced) and submitted on time. I reserve the right to lower the grade of any late paper unless the student has made arrangements in advance of the due date.

Plagiarized material found in any paper is inexcusable and will result in a failing grade for the paper; *in extremis* it leads to expulsion from school. It is the student's responsibility to ensure proper documentation of any information.

**Course Requirements:**

- 30% midterm paper (2-3 double-spaced pages): in which you will be asked to analyze one sequence or shot (from the films shown so far) according to the critical and technical vocabulary acquired in class.
- 50% final paper (6-8 double-spaced pages): in which you will be asked to choose one film (from a list of films not shown in class), and analyze it in accordance with the themes explored throughout the semester.
- 10% class attendance
- 10% class participation

Specific guidelines for the assignments will be given throughout the semester.

Please refrain from sending papers as email attachments. I will accept assignments electronically provided they are submitted through the Assignments section of Blackboard. Otherwise, please hand in assignments as hard copies to my mailbox.

**Holiday and Make-Up Class:**

We will not meet on Wednesday, July 4th, in observance of Independence Day. We will have make-up class on Friday, July 6th, from 12:30 to 4:30 PM, in our usual meeting venue.

**Part I: The Language of Film**

**Session 1 (June 25<sup>th</sup>)**

**Introduction: The Importance of Film Form**

Screening:

*Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960, US, 109m)

Readings:

No readings for this session.

**Session 2 (June 27<sup>th</sup>)**  
**The Frame: Mise-en-scène and Composition**

Screening:

*Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941, US, 119m)

Readings:

Bordwell and Thompson, 112-153.

Naremore, James. "Style and Meaning in *Citizen Kane*." Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*: A Casebook. Ed. James Naremore. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004: 123-160.

**Session 3 (July 2<sup>nd</sup>)**  
**Cinematography I: The Shot and the Question of Point-of-View**

Screening:

*Don't Look Now* (Nicolas Roeg, 1973, UK, 110m)

Readings:

Bordwell and Thompson, 162-194.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Screen 16:3 (1975)

**Session 4 (July 6<sup>th</sup>)**  
**Cinematography II: Camera Movement**

Screening:

*Paths of Glory* (Stanley Kubrick, 1957, US, 87m)

Readings:

Bordwell and Thompson, 194-217.

**Session 5 (July 9<sup>th</sup>)**  
**Editing I: Classical Editing - The American/Hollywood Paradigm**

Screening:

*Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942, US, 102m)

Readings:

Bordwell and Thompson, 218-251.

Kolker, Robert. Film, Form and Culture. New York: McGraw Hill, 2006: 81-107.

## **Session 6 (July 11<sup>th</sup>)**

### **Editing II: Alternatives to Classical Editing - Soviet Montage vs. The Long Take**

#### Screening:

*The Man with the Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929, USSR, 80m)

#### Readings:

Bordwell and Thompson, 251-263.

Bazin, André. "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema." What is Cinema I. London: University of California Press, 1967: 23-40.

Vertov, Dziga. "WE: Variant of a Manifesto." Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov. Ed. Annette Michelson. London: University of California Press, 1984: 5-9.

## **Session 7 (July 16<sup>th</sup>)**

### **Sound and Music in Film**

#### Screening:

*The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974, US, 113m)

#### Readings:

Bordwell and Thompson, 264-292.

Chion, Michel. "Projections of Sound on Image." Film and Theory: An Anthology. Ed. Robert Stam and Tovy Miller. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000: 111-124.

Eisenstein, Sergei, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Grigori Alexandrov. "Statement on Sound."

## **Part II: Important Film Styles and Movements**

## **Session 8 (July 18<sup>th</sup>)**

### **German Expressionism (1920s)**

[first paper is due]

#### Screening:

*The Last Laugh* (F.W. Murnau, 1924, Germany, 90m)

#### Readings:

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. Film History: An Introduction. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003. 101-118

Kracauer, Siegfried. "Introduction." From Caligari to Hitler.

**Session 9 (July 23<sup>rd</sup>)**  
**Italian Neo-Realism (1945-1951)**

Screening:

*The Bicycle Thief* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948, Italy, 93m)

Readings:

Bordwell and Thompson. Film History. 353-372.

Bazin, André. "An Aesthetic of Reality: Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of Liberation." What is Cinema II. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.

**Session 10 (July 25<sup>th</sup>)**  
**French New Wave (1959-1967)**

Screening:

*The 400 Blows* (François Truffaut, 1959, France, 99m)

Readings:

Bordwell and Thompson, Film History. 439-450.

Marie, Michel. "A Critical Concept." The French New Wave: An Artistic School. 26-48.

**Session 11 (July 30<sup>th</sup>)**  
**Documentary Traditions: The Case of Cinema Vérité and Direct Cinema (1960s)**

Screening:

*Don't Look Back* (D.A. Pennebaker, 1967, US, 96m)

Readings:

Ellis, Jack and Betsy A. McLane. "Direct Cinema and Cinema Vérité, 1960-1970." A New History of Documentary Film. London: Continuum, 1005. 208-226.

Rothman, William. "Eternal Verités". Charles Warren, Ed. Beyond Document: Essays on Nonfiction Film. 79-100.

**Session 12 (August 1<sup>st</sup>)**  
**Digital Futures After Celluloid**

[final paper is due]

Screening:

*Russian Ark* (Aleksandr Sokurov, 2002, Russia, 96m)

Readings:

Bordwell and Thompson. Film History. 701-704.

Wenders, Wim. "What the New Technologies Offer." Ed. Shari Roman. Digital Babylon: Hollywood, Indiewood & Dogme 95. Los Angeles: iFilm Publishing, 2001: 35-39.

**Supplemental Bibliography (in Alphabetical Order):**

Altman, Rick. Film/Genre. London: BFI Publishing

Barnouw, Eric. Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Bazin, André. What is Cinema I/II. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.

Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. Film History: An Introduction. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Braudy, Leo, and Marshall Cohen, eds. Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Casetti, Francesco. Theories of Cinema: 1945-1995. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999.

Chion, Michel. Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

Corrigan, Timothy, and Patricia White. The Film Experience: An Introduction. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

Eisner, Lotte. Fritz Lang. New York: Da Capo, 1976.

---. The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

Elsaesser, Thomas. Metropolis. London: British Film Institute, 2000.

---. Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary. London: Routledge, 2000.

Ferro, Marc. Cinema and History. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988.

Giannetti, Louis. Understanding Movies. (9<sup>th</sup> ed.) New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.

- Grant, Barry, and Jeannette Sloniowski, eds. Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings on Documentary Film and Video. Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1998.
- Hanson, Matt. The End of Celluloid: Cinema Futures in the Digital Age. Hove: RotoVision, 2003.
- Issari, M. Ali; Doris A. Paul. What is Cinéma Vérité?. London: The Scarecrow Press, 1979.
- Kelly, Mary Pat. Martin Scorsese: A Journey. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991.
- Kolker, Robert. ed. Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho: A Casebook. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1947.
- Leyda, Jay. Sergei Eisenstein - Film Form: Essays in Film Theory. New York: Harcourt, 1949.
- Mamber, Stephen. Cinema Vérité in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary. Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1974.
- Marie, Michel. The French New Wave: An Artistic School. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- Mast, Gerald, and Bruce Kavin. A Short History of the Movies. Boston: Allyn Bacon, 2002.
- Mellancamp, Patricia, and Philip Rosen, eds. Cinema Histories, Cinema Practices. Frederick, Md: University Publications of America, 1984.
- Michelson, Annette. Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.
- Mulvey, Laura. Citizen Kane. London: BFI Publishing, 1993.
- Naremore, James. Ed. Orson Welles's Citizen Kane: A Casebook. New York: Oxford University press, 2004.
- Neale, Steve. Genre and Hollywood. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Neupert, Richard. A History of the The French New Wave Cinema. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.
- Overbey, David, ed. Springtime in Italy: A Reader on Neo Realism. Connecticut:

Archon Books, 1978.

Renov, Michael, ed. Theorizing Documentary. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Sklar, Robert. An International History of the Medium. New York: Prentice Hall, 2002.

Stam, Robert, and Toby Miller. ed. Film and Theory: An Anthology. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.

Taylor, Richard, ed. The Eisenstein Reader. London, BFI Publishing, 1998.

Warren, Charles, ed. Beyond Document: Essays on Nonfiction Film. London: Wesleyan University Press, 1996.

Willis, Holly. New Digital Cinema: Reinventing the Moving Image. London: Wallflower Publishing, 2005.

Wood Robin. Hitchcock's Films Revisited. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.