Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Film and Media Studies Minor

Fall 2016 Course Descriptions

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Information is subject to change
76-239  Introduction to Film Studies: History, Theory, and Form  
Instructor: Bret Vukoder  
Meetings: TR 12:00 p.m. – 1:20 p.m.  
R 6:30 – 9:20 p.m. (Screening)  
Units: 9  
Prerequisite: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument (this course can be taken concurrently with 76-101)  
Open to: Undergraduates  

This course will serve as an introduction to the history, theory, and form of film. In the first half of the semester, we will look at the early moments of cinema, tracing the historical development of film form and narrative while investigating the incipient theories that sought to define its methods and effects. Working primarily through Bordwell and Thompson’s seminal text, Film Art: An Introduction, we will also learn the grammar of and various approaches to analyzing film. Additionally, we will trace the rise of the Hollywood studio system, understanding and situating its dominance during its “golden age” by watching movies that both represent and challenge the “classical Hollywood” mode. In the second half of the course, we will survey several national cinema movements, such as Italian Neorealism and French New Wave. And alongside a wide range of international films, we will consider many of the dominant strains within film theory, e.g., discussing auteur theory and watching an Ingmar Bergman film. To finish class, we will define the place of the big-budget, hybrid-form “blockbuster” in our increasingly global and interconnected context, interrogating the current state of the movies and moviegoing.

76-269  Survey of Forms: Screenwriting  
Instructor: Jane Bernstein  
Meetings: TR 3:00 p.m. to 4:20 p.m.  
Units: 9  
Prerequisite: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument  
Open to: Undergraduates  

It is not so difficult to learn the format or even to master the style of the screenplay—the challenge lies in writing image-driven stories with believable dialogue, vivid characters, and a coherent, well-structured plot. To that end, students will view short and feature-length films, paying special attention to such fundamentals as character development and story structure. Students will read screenplays to see how scripts provide the blueprints for the final product, and write analytical papers. To gain experience and confidence, students will work on a number of exercises that will lead them toward producing a polished short screenplay by the end of the semester.

76-338  The Rise of the Blockbuster Film  
Instructor: Rich Purcell  
Meetings: MW 10:30 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.  
W 6:30 p.m. to 9:20 p.m. (film screening)  
Units: 9  
Prerequisite: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument  
Open to: Undergraduates  

This course will focus on the American film industry during the 1970s and into the early 1980s. When Steven Spielberg’s Jaws, understood as the first American blockbuster, was released in 1975 it radically changed the global distribution and marketing of film. Spielberg’s film - like many blockbusters after it - was a mix of transgressive cinematic genres, advanced filmmaking techniques, and classical Hollywood narrative and form. While this class is focused on a “national”
cinema our approach to the blockbuster will attend to this mix, which is the product of transnational and transhistorical economic and aesthetic forces. To that end we will screen films from Hollywood’s “Golden Age,” other national cinemas, as well as genres associated with “grindhouse” and the avant-garde film.

76-381  Mad-Men, Television, and the History of Advertising  
Instructor: Kathy Newman  
Meetings: M 6:30 p.m. to 9:20 p.m.  
Units: 9  
Prerequisites: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument  
Open to: Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors

Don Draper, cigarette in one hand, drink in the other, on the prowl for his next conquest—be it client or lover—may be one of the coolest characters ever created for American television. But is it just the suave style of Mad Men that has made it so popular? What is the secret to the show’s success? In this class we will explore the rise and fall of the 20th century advertising model of mass culture by watching episodes from seven seasons of Mad Men, analyzing the show, and reading about the history of advertising as well as analyses of the show itself. Texts for the course will include Richard Ohmann’s essay “Where did Mass Culture Come From?”, Michael Schudson’s Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion, Archie Boston’s Fly In The Buttermilk: Memoirs of an African American in Advertising, Design & Design Education, Susan Faludi: Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women, Scott F. Stoddart, editor, Analyzing Mad Men: Critical Essays on the Television Series and Lilly J. Goren and Linda Beail, editors, Mad Men and Politics: Nostalgia and the Remaking of Modern America.

76-439  Stars and Celebrities  
Instructor: David Shumway  
Meetings: T 6:30 p.m. to 9:20 p.m.  
Units: 9  
Prerequisites: 76-101 Interpretation & Argument  
Open to: Juniors and Seniors

Charlie Chaplin, Greta Garbo, Cary Grant, Marilyn Monroe, John Wayne, Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, Mick Jagger, Madonna, Kim Kardashian and Caitlin Jenner, Babe Ruth and Michael Jordan are more than just successful entertainers. They are cultural icons rich in both semiotic and emotional investment.

This course will examine some of these stars as texts, and the texts in which they appear. The latter will be drawn heavily from film, but also will include popular music, television, and print. We will work at reading stars to discover their cultural significance, and at understanding the larger phenomenon of celebrity. We will read works on the theory and history of celebrity and stardom, focusing on the United States since 1910, including those of David Marshall, Joshua Gamson, Richard Dyer, Richard deCordova, Leo Braudy, and others. We will consider such questions as whether celebrity plays a larger role in culture than it once did, and whether the character of celebrity has changed in fundamental ways. Students will write a major research paper in addition to regular commentaries on readings and other texts.

79-220  Screening Mexico: Mexican Cinema, 1898 to Present  
Instructor: Paul Eiss  
Meetings: MW 10:30 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.  
T 6:30 p.m. to 9:20 p.m. (Screening)  
Units: 6
This mini-course is a survey of Mexican cinema from its origins in silent film to the present. Some areas of focus will include documentary footage and films of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), films of the Mexican Golden Age (1930-1960), and New Mexican Cinema from the 1990s forward. We will explore cinema as a window on Mexico’s changing social, cultural and political dynamics, and as a way to probe such topics as: changing conceptions of Mexican identity; political critique and revolutionary movements; and urbanization, migration and the drug war in contemporary Mexico.

**Please Note**: in addition to two weekly class meetings, this course also includes a required weekly film screening at 6:30 on Tuesday evenings.

**79-306**  
Fact into Film: Translating History into Cinema  
Instructor: Jeff Hinkelman  
Meetings: TR 12:00 p.m. to 1:20 p.m.  
Units: 9

From the very beginning, film has provided a window into the past. But how useful are the images we see through that window? For every person who reads a work of history, thousands will see a film on the same subject. But who will learn more? Can written history and filmed history perform the same tasks? Should we expect them to do so? How are these two historical forms related? How can they complement each other? This course will draw examples from across the history of film in order to examine how the medium of film impacts our understanding of facts and events, the ways that film transfers those facts to the screen, and how that process affects the the creation of historical discourse. Films may include such titles as The Fall of the Roman Empire, The Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, Saving Private Ryan, World Trade Center, Enemy at the Gates, Lagaan and Hero.

**79-309**  
The Chinese Revolution through Film (1949-2000)  
Instructor: Benno Weiner  
Meetings: MW 3:00 p.m. to 4:20 p.m.  
Units: 9

This course is about both film and history. It is not a detailed history of film, but rather introduces some key issues of modern Chinese history and examines how that history is treated in film. Most of the films are made in China (including Taiwan and Hong Kong) but some are produced in the west. Topics that may be explored include the rise of the Communist Party, life in Maoist China, the Cultural Revolution, the Cold War/anti-imperialism, depictions of China’s minority peoples, and the Reform-era under Mao’s successors. Along with feature movies, we may view documentaries, propaganda films, TV shows and even music videos. In addition to providing a general history of the period, accompanying readings and assignments explore the social context and methodology of the films while developing critical skills in writing, analysis, and historical imagination.

**82-278**  
Japanese Film & Literature: Art of Storytelling  
Instructor: Yoshihiro Yasuhara  
Meetings: MWF 12:30 p.m. to 1:20 p.m.  
Units: 9

This course explores how the art of storytelling is in tandem with the vicissitudes of human condition as illustrated in Japan’s variety of fictions, non-fictions, and films in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Analyses of each storytelling not only reveal cultural dynamics behind Japanese modernity, but also invite students to find new insights into Japanese culture and their ways to perceive our globalized world. What kind of cultural exchanges took place between modern Japan and the West? How are Japan’s traditional values transformed in the face of modern technicalization and
industrialization, compared to the modernization of other countries? And, in turn, what kind of impact has modern Japanese culture had on today’s world? Tackling these questions among others, the course also extends to such issues as the legacy of traditional Japanese culture, the modern Emperor system, the World War II experiences, emerging voices of minorities and the popular culture (e.g., anime and subculture). This course is taught in English.

82-533 Cultural Topics in Chinese Studies: Visions of China
Instructor: Gang Liu
Meetings: W 6:30 p.m. to 9:20 p.m.
Units: 9

By way of watching, analyzing and discussing a series of documentary films and new media made with a documentary touch, this course encourages students to develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of modern Chinese society in the closest proximity to its bare "reality." The course will use a thematic approach to cover different social and cultural issues that China is facing nowadays, including the harmony/conflicts between human and nature, the rise of the second generation of the nouveau riche, a humanitarian tale from the AIDS village, the influence of pop culture on modern China, the life of the foreigners in Chinese society, and so on. Students are expected to have excellent Chinese listening and speaking skills and very good writing and reading skills, in order to fully grasp the content of this course. To promote intercultural communication, the course also welcomes the participation of native or near-native Chinese learners.