

# INTRODUCTION TO FILM THEORY AND CRITICISM

FILM 120 FALL 2009

Lecture T/TH 2-3:45 Screening T 4:15-7pm Oakes 105

Professor Amelie Hastie

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Office Hours: Monday 3-5 and by appt

**Teaching Assistants:** Michael Moeller ([mmoeller@ucsc.edu](mailto:mmoeller@ucsc.edu)), Sara Orning ([sorning@ucsc.edu](mailto:sorning@ucsc.edu)), Jonathan Steimnitz ([jonathanlit101@gmail.com](mailto:jonathanlit101@gmail.com)), Logan Walker ([lwalker@ucsc.edu](mailto:lwalker@ucsc.edu)), Harlan Weaver ([harlanweaver@gmail.com](mailto:harlanweaver@gmail.com))

## Sections:

01A	<b>Commun 117</b>	Friday	9:30-10:30	Sara Orning
01B	<b>117</b>	Friday	10:45-11:45	Sara Orning
01C	<b>117</b>	Friday	12:00-1:00	Logan Walker
01D	<b>117</b>	Friday	1:15-2:15	Logan Walker
01E	<b>Commun 117</b>	Friday	2:30-3:30	Michael Moeller
01F	<b>117</b>	Friday	3:45-4:45	Michael Moeller
01G	<b>Commun 121</b>	Monday	9:30-10:30	Jonathan Steimnitz
01H	<b>121</b>	Monday	10:45-11:45	Jonathan Steimnitz
01I	<b>121</b>	Monday	12:00-1:00	Harlan Weaver
01J	<b>121</b>	Monday	1:15-2:15	Harlan Weaver

## Required Texts (publications available at the Bay Tree Bookstore):

- Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, 6/e or 7/e, Ed. Leo Braudy & Marshall Cohen
- Course Packet (CP)
- Weekly film screenings

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

As an introductory study of film theory, this course is designed to offer you an in-depth foundation in classical film theory through an examination of historically significant writings that analyze film form and its social functions and effects. The course is primarily organized chronologically, with a focus on particular theorists, schools of thought, the forums in which many key writings have appeared, and relations between theory and practice. Through this structure, we will consider how ideas have developed and transformed, often in dialogue with one another. Our purpose will be to understand the arguments at stake in these works and to create our own dialogue with these theories, considering especially their impact on their contemporaneous film viewers and on viewing positions today.

## COURSE FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS

**Readings:** The weekly readings constitute the central subject matter of the course. Please try to complete them by the first lecture (Tuesday) of every week. And beware: the essays are difficult and sometimes lengthy. Plan to spend several hours each week reading them carefully (and repeatedly) so that you come to class informed about key issues and prepared to write and speak about them.

**Lecture:** The semi-weekly lectures are intended to put the readings in historical and theoretical context and, to some degree, to explicate the theoretical works and their relation to the screenings. Lectures will include a question and discussion period when time permits.

**Screenings:** Screenings will be held in a special time block, from 4-7pm on Tuesdays. It is imperative that you attend all screenings, even if you have previously seen the scheduled films. (However, if you must miss a screening, most of the films and videos we will be watching are available at the Media Center in the library.) The purpose of all of the scheduled screenings is to offer you textual material with which to work through the required readings of the course. Some of the screenings are ones to which theorists were directly responding; others illustrate a cinematic response to theoretical issues; some resituate earlier theoretical works in a contemporary context. Some screenings will also be included during the lecture periods.

**Sections:** Sections will offer each student the opportunity to develop her/his understanding of the readings and of the writing process in response to them. Therefore, the focus of the sections will rotate so that one week's meeting will be centered on the readings and the other week will concentrate on writing, with writing workshops and discussions. At the same time, because your written work will function as a way to comprehend the theoretical readings more fully, every section will also necessarily integrate reading, writing, and discussion. It is therefore important that you attend every section meeting and that you hone your skills as a discussant. **If you miss more than two section meetings, you will not pass the course.**

**"W" requirement:** FILM 120 satisfies the UCSC "W" requirement. This means that you will be producing four short essays («response papers») and two longer essays (4-5 pages) over the quarter. This total will include revisions of two of your short essays based on comments from your TA. Writing itself will be an important topic of discussion in the course, especially the sometimes difficult nature of writing about challenging theoretical work. To help deal with these issues, you will sometimes workshop your essays or fulfill other in-class writing assignments in sections. In the end, the goal of the course is to think through the theoretical readings by writing about them and, in effect, to think through the process of writing itself.

**Response papers (10% each):** To aid your understanding, you will produce four short essays (two pages long), in which you offer an explication of a theoretical concept and practice that theoretical concept through an applied analysis of a detail from a film screened in class. Questions will be circulated each week to guide your reading and your responses to it. These papers will be turned in during Thursday lectures, unless otherwise notified.

**Key work definitions:** On the weeks when you do not have a response paper or essay due, you will submit brief definitions of key words that you believe are central to the theoretical readings. The aim of these assignments will be to summarize the central argument through these particular terms. These definitions should be roughly 1 paragraph per term. Although they will not be graded, they will be considered as part of your participation evaluation (which will be **10% of your overall grade**).

**Essays (15% each):** You will be required to write two longer essays for the class on assigned topics. Each essay will be 4-5 pages in length. You will receive lengthy guidelines for these assignments. The first essay will be due in **week six**. The second essay will be due in **week ten**. These will be turned in on Thursdays during lecture.

**Final exam (20%):** A final exam will be held for this course; you will be required to have an understanding of each author's argument we have covered in the course. You will be required to define terms, provide summaries of arguments, and apply at least one concept to an in-class screening.

#### **LAPTOP POLICY:**

Laptops can be a useful tool in the service of teaching and learning; however, we ask that you use them productively and respectfully.

A few common sense rules:

1. Always set up your laptop computer before the beginning of class. Setting up the computer and booting it up can take a few minutes depending on what applications are set to open at startup.
2. Disable sound.
3. During lecture and classroom discussion, you should not be connected to network resources. To do so invites many distractions - web surfing, email, chats, etc. Chatting or emailing during class is no more acceptable than talking on a cell phone during class time. Additionally, your networked screens are distracting to those sitting near and behind you.
4. Turn off all other mobile devices before lecture begins.
5. Please keep laptops closed during screenings.

Laptops users are requested to sit in the first three rows of the classroom.

If you are found to be doing anything other than note-taking (or sanctioned network activity) you will be asked to leave the class immediately and will be marked as absent for that day.

# COURSE SCHEDULE

## UNIT I: THE DEVELOPMENT OF FILM THEORY

WEEK ONE: September 24

### INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

WEEK TWO: September 29 – October 1

### AESTHETICS OF A NEW MEDIUM

- Readings:** Hugo Munsterberg, "The Means of the Photoplay" (FTC)  
Jean Epstein, "The Senses I (b)", "Magnification," "On Certain Characteristics of *Photogénie*" (CP)  
HD, "Joan of Arc" (CP)  
Bryher, "What Shall You Do in the War?" (CP)
- Rec.:** Bela Balazs, «In Praise of Theory» (CP)  
Rudolf Arnheim, "The Complete Film," "Film and Reality" (FTC)  
Bela Balazs, "The Close-up" and "The Face of Man" (FTC)
- Screening:** The Passion of Joan of Arc (Carl Dreyer, 1929)
- Assignment:** Definition of key terms from Epstein and Munsterberg

## UNIT II: FILM FORM: REALISM AND REVOLUTION

WEEK THREE: October 6-8

### SERGEI EISENSTEIN AND SOVIET MONTAGE

- Readings:** Sergei Eisenstein, "Beyond the Shot [The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram]" and "The Dramaturgy of Film Form [The Dialectical Approach to Film Form]" (FTC)  
Vsevolod Pudovkin, "On Editing" (FTC)
- Screenings:** Old and New (Sergei Eisenstein, 1929)
- Assignment:** **Response #1 due in lecture**

WEEK FOUR: October 13-15

### "REALISM" DEBATES: SIEGFRIED KRACAUER AND ANDRE BAZIN

- Readings:** Siegfried Kracauer, "Basic Concepts," "The Establishment of Physical Existence" (FTC)  
Andre Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," "The Myth of Total Cinema" (FTC)  
Jonas Mekas, "The Diary Film" (CP)
- Rec:** Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (FTC)
- Screenings:** Ratcatcher (Lynn Ramsey, 1999)  
Short films by Georges Méliès and the Lumière Brothers  
Excerpts from work by Jonas Mekas
- Assignment:** Definitions of key terms due in sections

WEEK FIVE: October 20-22

### AUTHORSHIP – FROM HOLLYWOOD TO THE AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE

- Readings:** Francois Truffaut, "A Wonderful Certainty" (CP)  
Jean-Luc Godard, "Nothing but Cinema" (CP)  
Jacques Rivette, "The Genius of Howard Hawks" (CP)  
André Bazin, "On the *politique des auteurs*" (CP)  
Peter Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" (FTC)
- Rec:** Maya Deren, "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality" (FTC)  
Stan Brakhage, from Metaphors on Vision (FTC)  
Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962" (FTC)
- Screenings:** Ball of Fire (Howard Hawks, 1941)  
At Land (Maya Deren, 1944), Bridges Go-Round (Shirley Clarke, 1958)
- Assignment:** Definitions of key terms from Bazin, Wollen, and one other author

## UNIT III: THEORETICAL SCHOOLS AND IDEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

WEEK SIX: October 27 – 29

### STRUCTURALISM AND SEMIOTICS

- Readings:** Christian Metz, "Some Points in the Semiotics of Cinema," "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film" (FTC)
- Screenings:** Marlene (Maximilian Schell, 1984)  
Semiotics of the Kitchen (Martha Rosler, 1975)
- Assignment:** Response #2 (revision of response #1) due

WEEK SEVEN: November 3-5

### IDEOLOGY / APPARATUS / PSYCHOANALYSIS

- Readings:** Christian Metz, "Story/Discourse (A Note on Two Kinds of Voyeurism)" (CP)  
Metz, "Identification, Mirror" (FTC)  
Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" (FTC)  
Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism" (FTC)
- Rec:** Baudry, "The Apparatus" (FTC)  
Metz, "The Passion for Perceiving," "Disavowal, Fetishism" (FTC)
- Screening:** Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954)
- Assignment:** Essay #1 due

WEEK EIGHT: November 10-12

### FEMINIST CRITICISM AND THEORY

- Readings:** Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (FTC)  
Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema" (CP)  
Tania Modleski, "The Master's Dollhouse: *Rear Window*" (FTC)
- Rec.:** Molly Haskell, "Female Stars of the 1940s" (FTC)
- Screening:** Chaos (Coline Serreau, 2001)  
Growing Up Female (Jim Klein and Julia Reichert, 1971)
- Assignment:** Response #3 due

## UNIT IV: THEORY AND HISTORY: INTERSECTIONS

WEEK NINE: November 17-19

### RESISTING SPECTATORS AND THE WRITING OF HISTORY

- Readings:** Manthia Diawara, "Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance" (FTC)  
Alexander Doty, "There's Something Queer Here" (CP)  
B. Ruby Rich, "Reflections on a Queer Screen" (CP)
- Rec:** Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction" (FTC)
- Screening:** Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy (Tracey Moffatt, 1989)  
Eve's Bayou (Kasi Lemmons, 1997)
- Assignment:** Definitions of key terms from readings

WEEK TEN: November 24

### RE-VIEWING HISTORY

- Readings:** Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde" (CP)  
Miriam Hansen, "America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity" (CP)  
*Camera Obscura* collective, "Camera Obscura at Thirty: Archiving the Past, Imagining the Future" (CP)
- Rec:** Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator" (FTC)
- Screening:** Reconstruction (Irene Lusztig, 2001)
- Assignment:** Response #4 (revision of #3) due in Tuesday lecture

**WEEK ELEVEN:** December 1-3

**WRITING HISTORY INTO THEORY**

- Readings:** Vivian Sobchack, "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Cinematic and Electronic 'Presence'" (CP)  
Anne Friedberg, "The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change" (FTC)
- Rec:** D. N. Rodowick, «Dr. Strange Media; Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Film Theory» (read on line: *PMLA*, Vol. 116, No. 5 (Oct., 2001), pp. 1396-1404)
- Screening:** Run, Lola, Run (Tom Tykwer, 1998)
- Assignment:** Essay #2 due in Wednesday lecture

*Class screenings are subject to change.*

*All work must be turned in on time.*

*Any act of plagiarism will be met with a failing grade for the course.*