

Course Syllabus

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VES 70 Art of Film

Spring 2017

Professor Rebecca Sheehan

Office Hours: TTH 12:30-1:30pm and by appointment

Office: Sever M-07

E-mail: sheehan@fas.harvard.edu

Teaching Fellows:

Mingyi Yu – mingyiyu@fas.harvard.edu

Hicham Awad – awad@g.harvard.edu

This course introduces students to film aesthetics through the analysis of film form and style. The course aims to provide students with a fluency in and understanding of film's unique language as it evolves technologically, historically and generically. Beyond teaching students how to recognize and describe formal choices and techniques, students will be asked to engage in close readings of films, attending to the greater aesthetic significance and stakes of formal choices and innovations evident within a particular film, directorial oeuvre, period or movement. Understanding form as an extension of content, we will look at the conventions of narrative film, the employment of formal techniques like the close-up, point of view, editing, framing and the use of sound as they function within particular filmic contexts and as they function within film's systemic languages (like that of continuity editing and genre). Concentrating on questions evoked from early cinema to the present about film's specificity as an art and technological ability, we will consider the changing role of the spectator in relation to the moving image, how film has evolved technologically, film's relationship to reality including its reporting and construction of the "real," as well as how film aesthetics have been employed to build ideology and to break with it.

Text Book: *Film Art* (Eleventh Edition), David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson

Additional Readings: Available on course site.

Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10-11, Carpenter Center Lecture Hall

Screenings: Tuesdays 7-9pm, Carpenter Center Lecture Hall

Assignments:

Film Analysis 1: 20%**Film Analysis 2: 20%****Final Paper: 30%****Quizzes: 10%****Course Forum Posts and Participation: 20%**

Film Analysis 1: Due February 27th, this 5 page paper (double-spaced) will take a single film seen in class and IDENTIFY, MAKE AN OBSERVATION ABOUT and ANALYZE 3 specific formal choices or techniques discussed at this point in the semester (narrative architectures, point-of-view narration, and mise-en-scene). These examples should all serve towards supporting the analysis of a central theme or idea you see advanced by the film. *Film Art* provides some helpful guidance on writing a film analysis – see p. 438-449.

Film Analysis 2: Due April 10th, this 5 page paper (double-spaced) will take a single film seen in class and IDENTIFY, MAKE AN OBSERVATION ABOUT and ANALYZE 5 specific uses of a formal choice or technique discussed at this point in the semester (narrative architectures, point-of-view narration, mise-en-scene, cinematography, framing shot duration, and editing). These examples should all serve to support the analysis of a central theme or idea you see advanced by the film.

Final Paper: Due at the end of the semester, this 10-12 page essay should advance an original, well-argued, clear thesis on a topic relating to the formal choices we have discussed over the course of the semester. Students will be required to submit an abstract for their papers no later than April 20th.

Quizzes: On any day of the semester (and at any point during class), your TF or I may give you a quiz during lecture or section. Quizzes will test material covered in class up to that day (including films and readings you were to prepare for that day) and are likely to focus on terminology from *Film Art* and from the additional readings.

Course Forum Posts: Each week (except on weeks when a film analysis is due), students must contribute 1-2 paragraphs to the course forum no later than Wednesday night at midnight. Your contribution should **IDENTIFY** and **ANALYZE** at least one example of the formal choice or technique we are studying that week in **ONE** of the films assigned. For example, if the topic is editing and one of the films assigned is *Battleship Potemkin*, you could identify the scene where Eisenstein uses overlapping editing when the boy's hand is trampled on the Odessa steps. In this instance, you would DESCRIBE the scene, then you would OBSERVE that Eisenstein has reinserted shots (overlapped them), thus making the action seem slower and more drawn out. Then you would ANALYZE this formal choice. For example, perhaps you would explain that this places emphasis on the action (highlighting the aggression of the Tsar's men) and/or that it makes the audience empathize with the sensation of the boy (and his mother) feeling trapped because time moves more slowly in this moment.

Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, and helping another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. Cheating is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, fraudulent, or unauthorized means. The following measures will be taken to prevent acts of cheating during in-class exams: you will be reseated, if necessary, to avoid physical proximity with your classmates, and you will not be allowed to leave the classroom during the exam. Plagiarism is the act of taking the specific substance of another source (whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim form) and offering it as one's own without giving credit to the source. If you are found guilty of academic dishonesty, you will be assigned an appropriate academic penalty (ranging from an F on the assignment in question to an F in the entire course) and reported to the Judicial Officer on campus.

Deadlines: All assignments are due on the assigned date, so plan your work in advance. Absent documentation explaining a legitimate absence (a medical note, etc.), late work will be penalized with a 1/3 of a grade loss per day.

Architectures of Narrative

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Tuesday, January 24th

From Art and Industry to an Embodied Experience



Auguste and Louis Lumière's "Screening at the Grand Café" (1896, France)

Hepworth Manufacturing Co.: *What it Feels like to be Run Over* (1900, UK)

Edison and Co.: *Uncle Josh at the Movies* (1903, USA)

Williamson's Kinematograph: *The Big Swallow* (1901?, UK)

Edison and Co.: *What Happened in the Tunnel* (1903, USA)



Thursday, January 26th

Plot, Story, Time

Screening, January 24th: *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010, USA)

Suggested Viewing: *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941, USA)

Reading: *Film Art*: p. 2-48, 455-460

"The Cinema of Attractions," Tom Gunning

"Review of the Lumière Program at the Nizhni-Novgorod Fair," Maxim Gorky

"Depth and Movement" from *The Psychology of the Photoplay*, Hugo Münsterberg

"Film and Reality," Rudolph Arnheim from *Film as Art*



January 31 and February 2nd

POV and Narrative

Screening January 31st: *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960, USA)

Suggested Viewing: *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944, USA)

Readings: Kristin Thompson, "Closure Within a Dream? Point of View in *Laura*"

David Bordwell, "Who Blinkered First?" *Poetics of Cinema*

http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/poetics_whoblindedfirst.pdf

Noël Carroll, "Toward a Theory of Point-of-View Editing: Communication, Emotion, and the Movies"

Film Art: p. 49-110



Mise-en-scene

February 7th and 9th

Mise-en-scene and the Aesthetics of Meaning

Screening, February 7th: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Weine, 1920, Germany)

Suggested Viewing: *Grand Budapest Hotel* (Wes Anderson, 2014, USA)

Readings: Siegfried Kracauer, "Caligari" from *From Caligari to Hitler* (first published, 1947)

Herman Sheffauer, "The Vivifying of Space," *Freeman* (24 November – 1 December, 1920), reprinted in Lewis Jacobs ed., *Introduction to the Art of the Movies* (New York: Noonday Press, 1960).

Film Art, p. 111-140, 463-468



February 14th and 16th

Mise-en-scene: Setting and Story

Screening February 14th: *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006, USA/UK/Japan)

Suggested Viewing: *Black Girl* (Ousmane Sembene, 1966, Senegal/France)

Reading: *Film Art*, p. 140-158

Slavoj Žižek on *Children of Men*

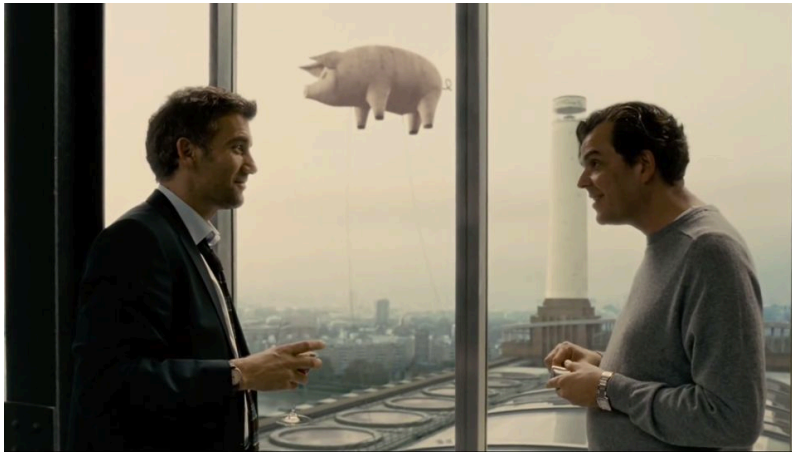
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqlqVcCPRd0> [_ \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqlqVcCPRd0\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqlqVcCPRd0)



[\(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqlqVcCPRd0\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqlqVcCPRd0)

Ben Ogrodnik, "Focalization Realism and Narrative Asymmetry in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*," *Senses of Cinema* (June 2014)

<http://sensesofcinema.com/2014/feature-articles/focalization-realism-and-narrative-asymmetry-in-alfonso-cuarons-children-of-men/>



Cinematography

February 21st and 23rd

Framing and the Photographic Image -

Screening February 21st: *Passion of Joan of Arc* (Carl Dreyer, 1928, France)

Suggested Viewing: *Blow-up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966, UK/Italy)

Reading:

Bela Balazs, "The Close-Up," "The Face of Man," *The Theory of Film*

Mary Ann Doane, "The Close-up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema," in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* (vol. 14.3, 2003)

Jean Epstein, "On Certain Characteristics of *Photogénie*"

Film Art – p. 159-194

****First Film Analysis Due** - February 27th - Midnight**

February 28th and March 2nd

Opening Space: Mobile Framing and the Long-take

Screening February 28th: 8 ½ (Frederico Fellini, 1963, Italy)

Suggested Viewing: *Rules of the Game* (Jean Renoir, 1939, France)

Reading: "The Evolution of Film Language," André Bazin

"Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality," Maya Deren

"*Children of Men* – The Cinematography of Emmanuel Lubezki,"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmRqS9dTHQc>

Film Art: p. 194-209

March 7th and 9th

Opening Time: The Long-Take and Slow Cinema



Screening March 7th: *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (Chantal Akerman, 1975, Belgium)

Suggested Viewing: *Late Spring* (Yosujiro Ozu, 1949, Japan)

Reading: Michael Walsh, "The First Durational Cinema and the Real of Time," in *Slow Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016)

Ivone Margulies, "The Equivalence of Events" in *Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist Everyday* (Duke University Press, 1996).

Film Art, p. 209-215, 350-369, 477-479.



Editing

March 21st and 23rd

Continuity Editing: The Logic Between Shots

Screening March 21st: *The Unseen Enemy* (DW Griffith, 1912, USA), *The Social Network* (David Fincher, 2010, USA)

Kevin Brownlow, "The Continuity System: Griffith and Beyond," ed. Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (BFI Publishing, 1990)

Tom Gunning, "Griffith: The Frame, the Figure," ed. Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (BFI Publishing, 1990)

David Bordwell, "*The Social Network*: Faces Behind Facebook,"

<http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/01/30/the-social-network-faces-behind-facebook/> (<http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/01/30/the-social-network-faces-behind-facebook/>)

Reading: *Film Art*, p. 216-252, 460-463

March 28th and 30th

Film Editing: From Rhythm to Relation

Screening March 28th: *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925, USSR)

Suggested Viewing: *La Roue* (Abel Gance, 1925, France)

Reading: Sergei Eisenstein, "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," and "Dramaturgy of Film Form" from *Film Form*, 1929

Dziga Vertov, *Kino Eye* (selections)

Film Art: p. 252-262, 470-473.

April 4th and 6th

Challenging the Logic of Continuity Editing

Screening April 4th: *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel, 1929, France/Spain), *Last Year at Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961, France)

Suggested Viewing: *Upstream Color* (Shane Carruth, 2013, USA)

Readings: André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 1924 (selections)

Germaine Dulac, "The Expressive Techniques of the Cinema" (1924)

Tom Conley, "A Rape of the Eye"

Film Art: p. 369-398, 466-470, 479-482.



Sound

Second Film Analysis Due- April 10th, Midnight

April 11th and 13th

Sound and Image

Screening April 11th: *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931, Germany)

Suggested Viewing: *L'Atalante* (Jean Vigo, 1934, France)

Reading: "Statement on Sound," Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Alexandrov

"The Art of Sound," René Clair (1929)

"Sound in Films," Alberto Cavalcanti (1939)

Reading: *Film Art*: p. 263-281, 474-477.



April 18th and 20th

Sound and Story

Screening April 18th: *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974, USA)

Suggested Viewing: *Blow Out* (Brian de Palma, 1981, USA)

Reading: *Film Art* p. 281-302, 482-488.

Michel Chion, "Preface," "Projections of Sound on Image," "Sound Film: Worthy of the Name," from *Audio-Vision*



Genre

April 25th and 27th

Genres and their Limits, Matters of Style

Screening April 25th: *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994, USA)

Suggested Viewing: *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001, USA)

Reading:

Rick Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre"

Thomas Schatz, "Film Genre and the Genre Film"

Film Art, 326-349.



Final Paper Due Date: TBA

Course Summary:

Date	Details
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