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CULS 5204
Cultural Studies in Film and Video

Term 2, 2023-24

Day and Time: Wednesdays, 6:45-9:30pm

Venue: FYB UG02

Language English

Instructor: Prof. Stephanie DeBoer

Teaching Assistant: TBA

Course Description

This course offers a series of entry points into concepts, theories, and debates at the intersection of Cultural Studies and Critical Media Studies. It is impossible to map out the full contours of either of these arenas in a semester-long course. This course is organized, however, according to Cultural Studies' formation as not a comprehensive field but rather as a problem-posing arena of inquiry – characterized by historical breaks which themselves are spatially and temporally specific to eras and political places. (One could speak of the Birmingham school of Cultural Studies, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, or U.S. Cultural Studies, for example – aspects of which are introduced throughout this syllabus). It introduces basic vocabularies and examples for understanding debates on the dynamics of film and media in everyday culture and society; exploring a range of mainstream to alternative film, video, and media practices; analyzing representations of colonialism, class, race, nationality, gender, and sexuality; and examining the infrastructures and ecologies in which film and video are situated. Our overall aim is to develop critical/cultural approaches for examining film, video, and other screen media as both key parts of our everyday lives and as objects of scholarly and critical inquiry.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- understand and explain important concepts in analyzing film, video, and other screen media from a critical cultural studies perspective;
- analyze and interpret film and video as a forms of creative, even theoretical expression with regards to cultural and societal questions and concerns;
- critically evaluate relevant aspects of film, video, and other screen media that not only reflect upon society but also interact with – even shape – values, meanings, or ideologies;
- articulate their understanding of film and video works as complex cultural products with social, cultural, institutional, technological, and ecological ramifications.

Teaching & Learning Activities

Lectures will be given weekly to introduce key terms, concepts, and questions, as well as offer examples and images for analysis. Guided reading and in-class group discussions and activities will enhance students' understanding of the key issues in the course. Students will be expected to write a short (two-page) reflection essay, do group presentations on topics of interest to them that relate to the course, and complete a final project of their choosing of relevance to the course. It is expected that students will use the theories and cases provided in this course to better understand the film, video, and media that surround them.

Assessment Methods

Class participation (10%)

Class participation is a way of engaging with course material and ideas and respecting the classroom as well as the efforts your colleagues make in it. There are many ways to "engage:"

- Engagement can mean speaking and contributing one's understanding or opinion to the class.
- At other times, it can mean listening respectfully and with interest.
- It may also mean taking part in small group conversations assigned by your professor.
- Regardless of its form, participation honors our classroom learning process as a collaborative endeavor.

Two-page reflection essay (10%)

Please write a two-page reflection essay on a screening from our class or other non-commercial film or video screening events (HK Arts Centre or community screening events), exhibitions of film or video in a museum context (e.g., M+ or Videotage), or film or video festival screenings. The essay should demonstrate critical thinking skills in relation to film/video or the role of film/video in society. (Fuller instructions to be handed out in class).

Group presentation (30%)

Each week following week 3, a small group of students will offer a presentation that (a) chooses a case or example of film or video outside of our course examples, (b) explains and analyzes this case/example in relation to select terms and concepts from the previous week, and (c) raises further questions for consideration. As they do so, students will present images or a short clip of their chosen film or video and argue for the analysis and questions that they help us to understand. (Fuller instructions to be handed out in class).

Final project (50%)

This includes (a) a proposal in consultation with the professor, (b) a "work in progress" presentation to the class, and (c) final submission. Groups can be of 2-3 people. The final project should use theoretical concepts or debates to look at an example of film, video, or other screen media. It can be an individual academic paper or a creative project, the latter of which can include video, animation, photo-essay, and so on. This creative project will be accompanied by a 4-5-page written statement that reflects upon and critically argues for the analysis and insight that your project offers. The project should base its analysis and effort in the terms of the class and reference readings from this syllabus. (Fuller instructions, including parameters for the scope and size of the final project, will be handed out in class).

Weekly Schedule

Section 1: Reflections on Theory and Practice

Week 1 (10 January): Course Introduction – On Critical Media/Cultural Studies (what, why, where)

Readings: 1. Hall, Stuart, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies [1992]." In *Stuart Hall: Selected Writings. Essential Essays, Volume 1: Foundations of Cultural Studies*, edited by David Morley. Durham: Duke UP, 2018.

2. Chen, Kuan-Hsing and Chua Beng Huat, "An Introduction," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 1:1 (2000), 9-12.

3. Mitchell, W. J. T. and Mark B. N. Hansen, "Introduction." In *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, edited by W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2010, vii - xxii.

4. Steinberg, Mark and Alexander Zahlten, "Introduction." In *Media Theory in Japan*, edited by Mark Steinberg and Alexander Zahlten. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2017. 1-29.

Week 2 (17 January): On Critical/Cultural Writing for Film/Video/Media (how)

Readings: 1. Corrigan, T. *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* (6th Ed.) New York: Longman P, 2007. [excerpt]

2. Perkins, Tessa, "Who (and What) is it For?" In *Reinventing Film Studies*, edited by Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams. London: Arnold Press, 2000. 76-95.

3. Branston, Gill, "Why Theory?" In *Reinventing Film Studies*. Eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams. London: Arnold Press, 2000. 18-33.

Section 2: Debates on "Mass" Media, Culture, and Society

Week 3 (24 January): Frankfurt School: Debates on Mass Culture and Modernity

Readings: 1. Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. "Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." In *The Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by Simon During. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. 29-43.

2. Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Prism Key Press, 2010.

3. Freidberg, Anne. "The Mobilized and Virtual Gaze in Modernity," OR "The Passage from Arcade to Cinema." In *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993. 15-104.

Screenings: excerpts from *New Women* 新奴性 (dir. Cai Chusheng, 1935); *The Crowd* (King Vidor, 1928)

Week 4 (31 January): Media/Cultural Studies Debates on Media and Mediation

Readings: 1. McLuhan, Marshall. "The Medium is the Message." In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2001 [ninth printing, first published 1964], 1-21.

2. Williams, Raymond. "From Reflection to Mediation." In *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2009 [first published 1977], 95-100.

3. Williams, Raymond. "From Medium to Social Practice." In *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2009 [first published 1977], 158-164.

Screenings: excerpts from *Our World* ("Satellite Spectacular," CBC footage, 1967); others TBD

Week 5 (7 February): Distraction (here for television and mobile media)

Readings: 1. Williams, Raymond, "Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition" and "The Technology and the Society." In *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, edited by Ederyn Williams. London and New York: Routledge, 2003 [first published in 1974 by Fontana, London]. vii-xiii, 1-25.

2. Morse, Margaret. "An Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, the Mall and Television." In *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, edited by Patricia Mellencamp, Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990. 191-221.

3. Rafael, Vicente L. "The Cell Phone and the Crowd: Messianic Politics in the Contemporary Philippines." In *New Media/Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, Second Edition, edited by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Anna Watkins Fisher. New York and London: Routledge, 2016. 370-387.

Screenings: [in lieu of screening, please come to class with an example of media-affiliated "distraction" that you've observed or experienced in the week previous to class]

Section 3: On Other Film/Video/Screen Media Practices

Week 6 (14 February): Digital and Visual Analyses for Critical Media/Cultural Studies [workshop]

[Links to a range of frameworks and instructions for producing critical video essays and visual digital humanities projects will be provided in class.]

Week 7 (21 February): From Counter Cinemas to Third Cinemas (and Ideology)

Readings: 1. Wollen, Peter. "Godard and Counter Cinema: *vent d'est*." In *Film Theory and Criticism* (6th Edition), edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 2004. 525-533.

2. Solanis, Fernando and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema." (Internet link to film manifesto will be provided); Read with: Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam. "From Eurocentrism to Polycentrism." In *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. New York: Routledge, 1994. [focus on 25-31]

3. Hall, Stuart, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies." In *Culture, Society and the Media.*, edited by Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curran and J. Woollacott. London: Methuen, 1982.

Screenings: excerpts from *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967); *Hour of the Furnaces* (Solanas and Getino, 1968); others TBD

Week 8 (28 February): Video Art and Alternative Media Practices

Readings: 1. Bordwell, D. and K. Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004. [excerpt]

2. Lai, Linda C. H. "Video Art in Hong Kong: Organologic Sketches for a Dispersive History," 15-53.

3. Steyerl, Hito. "In Defense of the Poor Image." In *New Media/Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, Second Edition, edited by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Anna Watkins Fisher. New York and London: Routledge, 2016. 193-198.

Screenings: various video and media art curated and archived by *Videotage* in Hong Kong

Section 4: Film/Video/Media as Representation

Week 9 (6 March): Representations of Colonialism and Racism

1. Stam, R. and L. Spence. "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction." In *Film Theory and Criticism* (6th Ed.), edited by L. Braudy and M. Cohen. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2004. 877-891.

2. Armes, R. "Third Cinema" In *Third World Filmmaking and the West*. Berkeley: U of California P, 87-93.

3. Castillo, R. "'Race' and 'Racism' in Contemporary Africa-China Relations Research: Approaches, Controversies and Reflections." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 21(3), 310-336.

4. Erni, J. N. and L. Leung. "South Asian Minorities and Mainstream Media." In *Understanding South Asian Minorities in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2014. 49-78.

Screenings: excerpts from *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1965); others TBD

Week 10 (13 March): Representations of Race and Gender

1. hooks, bell. "Counter-Hegemonic Art: Do the Right Thing." In *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press, 1990. 173-184.

2. hooks, bell. "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators." In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992. 115-31.

3. Nakamura, Lisa. "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture." In *New Media/Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, Second Edition, edited by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Anna Watkins Fisher. New York and London: Routledge, 2016. 114-131. See also: her website: <http://www.computerhistory.org/atcm/indigenous-circuits/>

Screenings: excerpts from *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989); *Daughters of the Dust* (Julie Dash, 1991); others TBD

Week 11 (20 March): Representations of Gender and Sexuality

Readings: 1. Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16.3 (1975) 6-18.

2. Kaplan, Ann E. "Silence as Resistance in Marguarite Duras' *Nathalie Granger*." In *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*. New York and London: Methuen P, 1987. 91-103.

3. Yue, Audrey. "Queer Asian Cinema and Media Studies: From Hybridity to Critical Regionality." *Cinema Journal* 53.2 (2016), 38-52.

4. selections in Hammer, B. *HAMMER!: Making Movies Out of Sex and Life*. The Feminist Press at CUNY.

Screenings: excerpts from *Nathalie Granger* (Marguarite Duras, 1972); Barbara Hammer Selections; others TBD

Section 5: Movements, Infrastructures, and Ecologies

Week 12 (27 March): National/Transnational Film and Media and Global/Local Flows

Readings: 1. Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2.2 (1990).

2. Higson, Andrew: "The Limiting Notion of National Cinema." In *Transnational Film Reader*, edited by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 15-26.

3. Zhang, Yingjin. "Chinese Cinema and Transnational Film Studies." In *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, edited by Natasa Durovicova and Kathleen Newman. New York and London: Routledge, 2010. 123-136.

Screenings: excerpts from *Good-bye Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003); *That's the Way I Like It* (Glen Goei, 1999); others TBD

Week 14 (3 April): Media Infrastructures and Ecologies

Readings: 1. Parks, Lisa and Nicole Starosielski, "Introduction." In *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, ed. Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 1-27.

2. Chu Kiu-wai, "Ecocinema," *Journal of Chinese Cinema* 10.1 (2016), 11-13.

3. Warren, Karen. "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism," *Environmental Ethics* 12.1 (1990), 125-146.

Screenings: TBD

Week 15 (10 April): Final Presentations

Week 16 (17 April): Final Presentations

*weekly screenings are subject to change

Honesty in Academic Work: A Guide to Students

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students, and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating and plagiarism. Any related offence will lead to disciplinary action including termination of studies at the University. All student assignments in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes should be submitted via VeriGuide with effect from September 2008:https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUSCS.jsp

Although cases of cheating or plagiarism are rare at the University, everyone should make himself/herself familiar with the content of this website and thereby help avoid any practice that would not be acceptable.