

Spring 2017: Film 280
CLASSICAL FILM THEORY
Monday and Wednesday 10:00-11:50
Lincoln Hall 211

Instructor: Dr. Dave Colangelo
Email: dave.colangelo@pdx.edu
Office: Lincoln Hall 143C
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 12-1pm

Course Description:

This course introduces you to the significant trends of the first fifty years of Western film theory via primary and secondary source essays. We will concentrate on the aesthetic and philosophical debates about film as an art form and as a material form by studying Hugo Munsterberg's articulation of psychological film theory in the 1900s, Soviet filmmaker's conceptions of montage, Walter Benjamin's conception of representation during modernity, Siegfried Kracauer's understanding of filmed reality, Andre Bazin's aesthetic of realism and authorship, and contemporary theorist Malcolm Turvey's engagement with revelationism, an early-twentieth century trend in French film theory argued for by Jean Epstein and Germaine Dulac.

Note on the Class:

This is a seminar. As such, the success of the class depends on your prompt and thoughtful preparation for each class. Film theory is simply the space in which scholars ask questions of and about the medium. You too are scholars, so please ask many, many questions and contribute your own thoughts about the concepts we will encounter in our reading.

Course Objectives (KSA = Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes)

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyse films from the early 20th century using classical film theory (K,S)
2. Synthesize debates and arguments about film in writing and in class discussions (K,S) while remaining collegial and constructive (A)

Required Readings:

Required Books

Bazin, Andre. *What is Cinema?* Volume 1. 1967. Trans. Hugh Gray. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Bazin, Andre. *What is Cinema?* Volume 2. 1967. Trans. Hugh Gray. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Turvey, Malcolm. *Doubting Vision: Film and the Revelationist Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Required Essays Available on D2L

Arnheim, Rudolf. "Film and Reality" & "The Content of the Film." From *Film as Art*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1957.

Balazs, Bela. "'In Praise of Theory,'" "The Creative Camera," "The Close-up," & "The Face of Man." From *Theory of The Film: Character and Growth of a New Art*. 1930. New York: Arno Press, 1972.

Baudelaire, Charles. "The Painter of Modern Life." In *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, translated by J. Mayne. London: Phaidon, 1964.

Eisenstein, Sergei. "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form." 1929. *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*. Trans. Jay Leyda. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977.

---. "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram." 1929. *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*. Trans. Jay Leyda. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1977.

Kern, Stephen. *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983.

McQuire, Scott. "The City in Fragments" in *The Media City: Media, Architecture and Urban Space*. London: Sage, 2008.

Morgan, Daniel. "Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics." *Critical Inquiry* 32.3 (2006): 443-481.

Munsterberg, Hugo. *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study and Other Writings*. 1916. Ed. Allan Langdale. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Pomerance, Murray. "Light, Looks, and *The Lodger*," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 26: 5, 425- 433, 2009.

Schweinitz, Jörg. "The Aesthetic Idealist as Efficiency Engineer: Hugo Münsterberg's Theories of Perception, Psychotechnics and Cinema." *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture*. Eds. Annemone Ligensa and Klaus Kreimeier. London: John Libbey Press, 2009: 77-86.

Assignments:

1. Journals (45% - 5% x 9 weeks)

Due every week, except for the first week, at midnight on Sunday, you will be required to prepare a 500 word reflection. Each reflection should directly address the week's readings and *anticipate* its screenings, and include three discussion questions. Each week, you are required to bring in THREE copies of your journal to distribute in a small group for discussion.

2. Discussion and Regular Participation (10%)

Discussion is central to this course. You are required to have completed the readings for the week before class on Monday, and come prepared to class to discuss the readings and screenings for each week.

Essay and Essay Proposal

You are to produce a piece of writing that presents an argument about a theory or theorist discussed in the class. You should draw on films and readings from the class to illustrate your argument. You may also use readings from outside of the class as long as they are referenced and introduced in the essay. Make sure to provide specific evidence from the readings and from the film(s), not generalized comments.

3. Final Essay Proposal (15%)

The proposal should be 200-250 words typed with one-inch margins, double-spaced. It should clearly state the question you are trying to answer, your thesis, your main points, and the evidence with which you will illustrate them. This can be done in point form if you like, or with subheadings. You should also provide bibliographic references for at least three sources. Throughout, you should use APA style for referencing: (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>).

4. Final Essay (30%)

The essay is 2000-2500 words typed with one-inch margins, double-spaced. Throughout, you should use APA style for referencing: (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>).

Grading Standards:

A 93-100	B- 80-82	D+ 67-69
A- 90-92	C+ 77-79	D 63-66
B+ 87-89	C 73-76	D- 60-62

Advising

Advising is essential to your success as a Film Major or Minor. Meeting with your advisor will help to make sure that you are making timely progress towards your degree, provide you with a valuable connection, and increase your opportunities to participate in school activities and in professional film and television opportunities, such as internships. See the school website for all advising information.

Schedule

Course schedule and reading is subject to change. You will be notified in advance if/when such changes occur. Be sure to check the course website (D2L) and your school email account for updates!

In general we go over the readings on MONDAY, and have our screenings on WEDNESDAY. Be sure to have ALL of the readings done before class on Monday and submit your journal by midnight on SUNDAY.

Week 1**A Culture of Time and Space****April 3 and April 5**

Class Introduction

- Read: Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, Chapter 3
- Screen: Edison, Lumiere, Biograph, and Méliès shorts

Week 2**Classical Film Theory and Consciousness****April 10 and April 12****Week 2 Journal Due at Midnight on Sunday**

- Read: Munsterberg, *The Photoplay* (Chapter 1) and Langdale's Introduction: "Stimulation of Mind" (excerpt) & Schweinitz [D2L]
- Screen: *Intolerance* (1916)

Week 3

Montage and Soviet Film Theory

April 17 and April 19

- Read: Eisenstein, "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," & "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form" [D2L] & [Senses of Cinema Great Directors: Eisenstein](#) [online]
- Screen: *Potemkin* (1925), *Strike* (1925)

Week 4

Cinema as Art

April 24 and April 26

- Read: Balázs, excerpts from "Visible Man or the Culture of Film" [D2L]
- Read: Arnheim, "Film and Reality" & "The Complete Film" [D2L]
- Screen: *Joan of Arc* (1928)

Week 5

Modernity and Representation 1: City Symphonies

May 1 and May 3

- Read: [Senses of Cinema: 1920s City Symphony Films](#) & Baudelaire, the painter of modern life
- Screen: *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1927)
- **Final Essay Proposal Working Session**

Week 6

Modernity and Representation 2: Space and Light

May 8 and May 10

- Read: Pomerance, "Lights, Looks, and the Lodger"
- Read: McQuire, "The City in Fragments"
- Screen: *The Lodger* (1927)

Week 7

Bazin and Realism

May 15 and May 17

- Read: Bazin, Vol. 1: "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," & "The Myth of Total Cinema"
- Screen: *Citizen Kane* (1941)

- **Final Essay Proposal Due**

Week 8

Bazin and Film Theory

May 22 and May 24

- Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics" [D2L] & Bazin, Vol. 2: "An Aesthetic of Reality: Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of Liberation," "Bicycle Thief," "De Sica: Metteur en Scene"
- Screen: *The Bicycle Thieves* (1948)

Week 9

Doubting Vision

May 29 and May 31

NO CLASS ON MAY 29th – MEMORIAL DAY

- Read: Turvey, Introduction and Chapters 1 & 2
- Screen: *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)

Week 10

Doubting Vision

June 5 and June 6

- Read: Turvey, Chapters 3 & 4
- Screen: *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943)

Class Wrap-up

Final Essay Due During Finals Week (TBD)

University and Course Policies

- ❖ Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and cheating will be reported to the Dean of Students in accordance with Code of Student Conduct and Responsibility, Procedures for Complaints of Academic Dishonesty. See <http://www.pdx.edu/dos/conductcode.html>.
- ❖ Requirements of this class may include class meetings, assignments and/or performances that will be held off-campus. Students/participants will provide his/her own method of transportation to the off-campus location, UNLESS the department arranges for van/bus transportation as part of the particular trip/event/activity

- ❖ Any student who, because of religious beliefs, is unable to attend classes on a particular day shall be excused from attendance requirements and from any examination or other assignment on that day. The student shall make up the examination or other assignment missed because of the absence. Students should make arrangements with their instructors prior to the holy day.
- ❖ Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities
PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, <http://www.pdx.edu/drc>.

- If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.
 - Students who need accommodations for tests and quizzes are expected to schedule their tests to overlap with the time the class is taking the test.
 - Please be aware that the accessible tables or chairs in the room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not useable.
 - For information about emergency preparedness, please go to the Fire and Life Safety webpage (<http://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety>) for information.
- ❖ As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students and for the campus as a whole. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find [a list](#) of those individuals. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module [Creating a Safe Campus](#) in your D2L.