SCREEN CULTURES AND METHODS (Core Module 2017-18)

This core module aims to explore significant methodologies and conceptual frameworks which are central to the study of audio-visual media. The module will be divided into four sections engaging with issues concerning: textual analysis; television; theoretical paradigms; film style and history. The module provides a grounding in key concepts and methods, but will also encourage an advanced level of reflection on the key areas addressed. The module is taught through a combination of screenings, presentations, reading and discussion and this document suggests some reading which will enable you to begin the module in a position of preparedness. You are not expected to read everything indicated here; the suggestions below give a sense of the fields and their debates and offer some ways into exploring them. Feel free to select creatively. We look forward to seeing you in October.

Dr Tiago de Luca (convenor)
Dr James Taylor
Ms Zoe Shacklock
Dr Rick Wallace

Module structure

Week 1: Introductory session: all tutors

Film: All That Heaven Allows (Douglas Sirk, 1955)

If you are not yet familiar with Sirk’s film, or have not viewed it recently, then it is advisable to watch it over the summer. It is widely available. All 4 tutors will be participating in this first week, looking at All That Heaven Allows from different perspectives.

James Taylor will look closely at one sequence of All That Heaven Allows, considering how it introduces the viewer to the film’s world and how it invites us to read it. Zoë Shacklock will reflect upon the role of the theorist and critic in establishing norms of cultural value. Tiago de Luca will consider the ways in which the film and Sirk’s style have been variously constituted in different critical and theoretical frameworks across film history. Rick Wallace will explore the depiction of television within the film, examining television’s status as a domestic medium. He will also spend some time thinking about what happens to films when they appear on television.
Required reading:

- John Gibbs, ‘Mise-en-scène and Melodrama’, *Mise-en-scène: Film Style and Interpretation* (London: Wallflower, 2002), pp. 67-82. [It is also recommended to read the first chapter of this book (pp. 5-26), if you have time. It is a short introduction to many key elements of cinematic construction, and the ways in which they can contribute to a film’s meaning.]

**Weeks 2 and 3: Textual Analysis (James Taylor)**

These two weeks of the module will focus on developing, practising and reflecting on skills in textual analysis of the moving image mostly with specific reference to film (Rick Wallace will revisit textual analysis in relation to television in weeks 4 and 5). Textual analysis is a key methodological approach in the disciplines of Film and Television Studies, and this part of the module will enable you to develop your skills in this area as well as providing the opportunity for critical reflection on this method of analysis. The reading below will provide a useful background and introduction to questions of the textual analysis of films and television programmes.

**Week 2 screening:** *Scarlet Street* (1945, Fritz Lang)
**Week 3 screening:** *Fargo* (1996, Joel and Ethan Coen)

**Key suggested summer reading:**
- Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan (eds.), *The Language and Style of Film Criticism* (London: Routledge, 2011).

**Weeks 4 and 5: Television (Rick Wallace)**

Week 4 will discuss classic theories of the television text (how television is formed, how we experience it textually) and their applicability to our screenings and the ways that we watch television. Week 5 will concentrate on historiographical issues and methodologies specific to Television Studies. It is designed to help develop students’ empirical research skills and to discuss the value of archival and other sources in contextualising television texts over time and examining the history of television viewing.

**Week 4 screenings:** selections of ITV morning ‘flow’ (2017); *Grayson Perry: Divided Britain* (2017); *House of Cards*: Season 1 Episode 1 (2013)
**No screening in week 5**

**Key suggested summer reading:**
The Buonanno is an excellent overview of a number of the key debates in television studies, some of which we will address in weeks 1, 4 and 5. You should also read Karen Lury's exploration of television analysis which will be particularly important for week 4's work. If you have time, it will also be to your great advantage to have read Raymond Williams's (short, but important) book and the suggested chapters from John Ellis's *Visible Fictions* as we will be discussing their different theorisations of the television text (e.g. 'flow', 'glance theory', 'the segment') in more detail in weeks 1 and 4.

**Week 6: Reading Week**

**Weeks 7 and 8: Theorising the Film and Television Text (Zoë Shacklock)**

These two weeks of the module will explore how theoretical frameworks can be used to make sense of screen media. These weeks are designed to give you the tools to reflect upon pre-conceived and dominant ideas about media texts and spectatorship. We will be focusing on how theoretical frameworks can open up new possibilities for understanding screen media texts, particularly in terms of questions of cultural value and identity politic.

**Week 7 screening: The Grandmaster (Wong Kar-wai, 2013)**

**Week 8 screening: ‘Lemon Scented You’ (1:5) and ‘Come to Jesus’ (1:8), American Gods (Starz, 2017)**

**Key suggested summer reading:**
- *** Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 2010). **Highly recommended.**

**Weeks 9 and 10: Aspects of Film Style and History**

These two weeks of the module will focus on aspects of film style in relation to theoretical issues across history. They are designed to help students situate the film text within its specific context but also in relation to how it can be variously reconstituted in a variety of critical and filmic discourses over time and across different cultures.

**Week 9 screening: Tokyo Story (Yasujiro Ozu, 1953)**

**Week 10 screenings: Café Lumiere (Hou Hsiao-hsien, 2003); Five Dedicated to Ozu (Abbas Kiarostami, 2003)**

**Key suggested summer reading:**
Film Criticism, Film Style (Autumn Term Optional Module)
Module Tutor: James MacDowell

Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954)

Tell me everything you saw—and what you think it means...

MODULE OVERVIEW

The focus of the module ‘Film Criticism, Film Style’ is the close observation, description, and interpretation of particular films in precise detail. Its aim is to help improve the penetration of your observations about the significance of film style, to refine your ability to engage with some of the best film criticism, and to enable you to better articulate in the medium of words what you see and hear in the medium of film: from music to mise-en-scène, editing to performance, composition to camera movement.

This module will be equally accessible to those who have little experience of film analysis as to those who wish to deepen their existing skills. It is imperative always to continue striving to improve the keenness with which we perceive and respond to film style, since everything else that we might wish to discuss about films – their value, themes, emotional effects, political meanings, etc. – are only ever manifested through their style. The aim of this module is to reflect upon and wrestle with the challenge of this fact, and to help you rise to that challenge in your analyses.

The module will include lectures, seminars, readings of outstanding film criticism, presentations by students, and a 5000 word assessed essay, the title of which can be developed in consultation with the module tutor.

The films to be studied on the module are TBC, but they will cover a broad historical range, and will include works by at least some of the following: Alfred Hitchcock, Michael Haneke, Douglas Sirk, Mary Harron, Max Ophuls, the Coen Brothers, Jean Renoir, and/or Paul Thomas Anderson.
SUMMER READING

The following are suggested readings that you might consider undertaking, or at least perusing, before term begins. The texts have been selected for the generality of their discussion on matters of film criticism or film style, but also because they are freely accessible online. They range from short articles or chapters to entire books, so I don’t expect you to have completed them all by October. Where appropriate, I have suggested sections that would be particularly helpful introductory reading for this module.


Swedish Cinema (Autumn Term Optional Module)
Module Tutor: Ed Gallafent

MODULE OUTLINE

This module will give students on the MA an opportunity to study the national cinema of Sweden, which is distinctive in that it was a cinema of a small European nation that came for several decades internationally to be known through, and virtually identified with, the work of a single major auteur: Ingmar Bergman. The first part of the module will give you a chance to study a range of Bergman’s work, and look at the remaking of Swedish films by Hollywood in the 1930s. The second part will look at how Swedish cinema has developed since the close of the major phase of Bergman’s work, considering how it has both incorporated and reacted against his legacy. So the topics of the module will include:

- The specific conditions governing the film industry in Sweden: Swedish Cinema as a National Cinema.
- Ingmar Bergman’s films, their meanings and their reputation – their function as images of Swedish culture, and of the “art” film.
- The importance of a major native dramatist (August Strindberg) and more generally the role of a vital theatrical tradition. The production of high art as a job of work.
Swedish cinema in the twenty-first century: taking up or rejecting the legacy of Bergman.

The module will involve lectures, presentations by students and a 5,000 word assessed essay, the title developed in consultation with the module tutor.

The films will be studied over two weeks to give you time to develop your critical knowledge of them and prepare analyses of particular images and sequences for seminar discussions. The films studied will be:

Week 1 *Summer with Monica* (Ingmar Bergman, 1951)
Week 2 *Intermezzo* (Gustaf Molander 1936) and *Intermezzo* (Gregory Ratoff, 1939)
Week 3 *The Silence / Tystnaden* (Ingmar Bergman, 1963)
Week 4 *Autumn Sonata / Höstsonaten* (Ingmar Bergman, 1978)
Week 5 *Fanny and Alexander / Fanny och Alexander* (Ingmar Bergman, 1983)
Week 6 Reading and viewing week
Week 7 *Together / Tillsammans* Lukas Moodysson 2000
Week 8 *You, the Living /Du Levande* (Roy Andersson, 2007)

The film in week nine will be nominated by the group for screening that week and discussion and study in week ten (as per the timetable below).

Timetable:

Week One: Intro and Screening: *Summer with Monica:*

Week Two Tuesday
10-12 *Summer with Monica* Presentation and Seminar
1-3 *Intermezzo (both versions)* screening
3-5 lecture and discussion

Week Three Tuesday
10 – 12 *Intermezzo* Presentations and seminar
1 – 3 *The Silence* screening
3 – 5 lecture and discussion,

Week Four Tuesday
10-12 *The Silence* Presentation and Seminar
1-3 *Autumn Sonata* screening
3-5 lecture and discussion

Week Five Tuesday
10-12 *Autumn Sonata* Presentation and Seminar
1-4 *Fanny and Alexander* screening
4-5 lecture and discussion + Choosing of week nine film.

Week Six : Reading and Viewing week.
Week Seven Tuesday
10-12 *Fanny and Alexander* : Presentation and Seminar
1-3 *Together* screening
3-5 lecture and discussion

Week Eight Tuesday
10-12 *Together*: Presentation and Seminar
1-3 *You, the Living* screening
3-5 lecture and discussion

Week Nine Tuesday
10-12 *You, the Living*: Presentation and Seminar
1-3 *Student choice film* screening
3-5 lecture and discussion

Week Ten Tuesday
10-12 *Student choice film*: Presentation and Seminar
1-4 Final workshop: conclusion and module evaluation.

The assessed essay:

The essay is 5,000 words and will be due on the date given in your handbooks. It can be on one of the films studied on the module, but, subject to negotiation with EG, it can be on another narrative feature film made in Sweden or with a substantial connection to Swedish cinema and culture. If there is published criticism and scholarship of substance on the film of your choice, your essay should include an evaluation of it. I will expect to be consulted on the development of your projects and tutorial appointments can be made in my feedback and advice hours, or at other times if necessary.

**Background Reading**

There is a vast literature on Bergman. I suggest that you start with his own writing rather than with the commentary of others: *Bergman on Bergman* (New York, Da Capo, 1973), or *Images: My Life in Film* (London, Bloomsbury, 1994) or *The Magic Lantern* (Hamish Hamilton, 1988). There is also a collection of interviews in the University of Mississippi series, ed. Raphael Shargel.


The monumental, comprehensive reference guide to Bergman’s work, Birgitta Steene’s *Ingmar Bergman a Reference Guide* is in the library under reference works. There is an official website: [www.ingmarbergman.se](http://www.ingmarbergman.se) which is very useful. The article on Bergman by Hamish Ford in [www.sensesofcinema.com](http://www.sensesofcinema.com) contains an accessible bibliography.