**FMST 600/Methods in Film Studies**

Mondays 13:15 – 17:15, FB-250

Fall Semester: Dr. Masha Salazkina

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To contact me, it is always best to use email.

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**Course description and objectives**:

This is the only mandatory course in the MA in Film Studies Program. It is designed to help students develop research, writing and presentation skills appropriate to the discipline of film studies. In addition to technical and practical matters, the course helps students develop productive and original research questions by examining those that guide quality research in the field. The screenings and readings provide the ground for an analysis of the tools and methods of film studies. Course materials examine the ways that film history, criticism and textual analysis have been and can be written, encompassing a range of ways of seeing, interpreting and understanding cinema. Written and oral assignments are designed to develop research and communication skills appropriate to the field. The course also works to facilitate an esprit de corps within the M.A. class.

**Seminar layout:**This is an MA-level seminar, which requires sustained participation and work on the part of the students in the class, all the time. Rather than having a long research paper at the end, the class assignments are smaller and are distributed throughout the course of the semester. Students are asked to come to the seminar having done **all** the reading assigned **for that week,** and take notes during the in-class screenings. It is also highly recommended that you watch **all films** **again** after you have done the reading for the following week’s class. On several occasion, you will be asked to watch an additional film on your own, outside of the class time. All films will be placed on reserve in the Visual Resource Library. You will be asked to post **weekly web forum responses**, addressing the readings assigned in relation to the screenings (usually there will be questions posed to each screening that the students will be expected to address; other times students will be invited to formulate their own questions to both films and texts). These **weekly responses** should be posted on the moodle webforum by Sunday noon (i.e. the day before the seminar meets) at the latest. I encourage all students to check the webforum frequently, read each other’s posts and respond directly to the issues raised in the responses. These posts will not be graded individually but will form a large part of your Seminar Participation grade.

A large portion of the seminar this year will be integrated with the International Conference on the **IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS ON FILM THEORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY**. In the mid-part of the semester, all the work for the course will be in conjunction with the conference to take advantage of this remarkable opportunity. There will be occasional **quizzes** on the readings and the screenings.

In addition, all students will be required to attend a **Required Library Resource Training Session in Room LB-203 in the Webster Library. You can choose from the following time slots:**

Tueday, Oct 4 from 1-2:30pm

Friday, Oct 7 from 1:30-3pm  
Friday, Nov 4 from 11am-12:30pm

**Assignments:**

**Take home Assignment #1** 5-8 pp **(DUE OCT 17):** An analysis comparing two scholarly, or one scholarly and one non-scholarly essays on a film of you choice discussing their overall rhetorical function, the methodologies they use, and the type of analysis they employ.

**Take-home Assignment #2:** 7-10 pp **(DUE DEC %):**

A comparison of sequences from one of the following:1. *Infernal Affairs*, 2002 and *The Departed*, 2006.

2. *Devdas*, 1955 and 2002*3. Scarface*, 1932, 19834. *Seven Samurai,* 1960 and *The Magnificent Seven,* 1964

5. *Let Me In*, 2010 and *Let the Right One In*, 2008

You will be asked to identify the differences between the two versions:

- discuss how they constitute the “style” of each film, and what how that contributes to the creation of meaning in each case. - attempt to position these stylistic choices as historically- and nationally-coded conventions, characteristic of specific periods and/or cultural influences.

The clips will be distributed in class at least 2 weeks before the assignment is due.

**Film Theory and Technology** **Conference Report : 4-5 pp (FIRST DRAFT DUE IN CLASS, NOV 7):**

At the Technology Conference, you must attend two roundtables of your choice. In addition, you will choose in advance one more presentation which you are going to attend. The schedule of the conference is posted on the moodle site. Before the presentation, you will need to have read at least one substantive work by the presenter (an article/chapter of a book, not a review or an interview) and try to understand his/her scholarly trajectory and contribution to the field.

Your report will therefore consist of two parts: a critical synthesis (a summary of the arguments presented, the way they can be linked to the larger questions of the conference, and your critical response to them) of the roundtables, and of the presentation of your choice.

Keep in mind, that the Q&A discussion is part of the presentation, so make sure you stay until the end of the session.

**Detailed description of all the assignments will be handed out separately.**

\*You can make up for **one missed web response** with an extra credit assignment:

a one-page report on a film-related event you attended (festival film screening; film conference other than the Technology conference; lecture or other film-related event at Concordia or other university campus).

**Grade Breakdown:**Seminar Participation (in class discussion and web responses): 20%Assignment #1: 25%Assignment #2: 35%

Conference Report: 20%

**Final grades will be calculated on the basis of all assignments and presentations in both semesters.**

**Books:**

*Required:*

*Critical Visions in Film Theory*, eds. Corrigan, White, and Mazaj.

(CV on the schedule)

*Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, eds. Hill and Church Gibson

(OG on the schedule)

\*This collection will serve as a reference guide designed to provide a detailed background on the methodological approaches that we touch upon each week. The readings from this collection are listed on the schedule under “background readings”

**Additional reading will be placed under e-reserves for this course, accessible through the library web site.**

**Schedule**

**Week One - Sept 12**

**Introduction to Film Studies; Why film analysis?**

Assigned Reading:

Dyer, “Introduction to Film Studies”, OG

Bill Nichols, “Film Theory and the Revolt Against Master Narratives” (PDF);

David Bordwell, “Never the Twain Shall Meet: Why Can’t Cinephiles and Academics Just Get Along” (PDF)

Screening: *Singing in the Rain* (Gene Kelly/Stanley Donen, US, 1952)

On reserve: *Dance, Girl, Dance* (Dorothy Arzner, US, 1940)

September 16-18

Film Screenings and Academic Symposium

Visual Underground: Theatre Scorpio & Japanese Experimental Cinema of the Sixties

<http://www.visualunderground.ca/>

**Week Two – Sept 19**

**Auteur/Genre/Gender/Sound**

**Shot-by-shot breakdown (in class)**

Assigned Reading: Steven Cohan, “Case Study: Singing in the Rain” (PDF)**;** Claudia Gorbman, from *Unheard Melodies* (CV)

Background: Stephen Crofts, “Authorship and Hollywood” (OG),

“Genre and Hollywood” (OG), Patricia White, “Feminism and Film” (OG);

Suggested: “Jane Feuer, Singin’ in the Rain”; Kassabian, *Hearing Film*: *Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music,* Ch 1 and 2

Screening: *Aventurera* (Alberto Gout, Mexico, 1950)

September 22-24

Film Conference: Europe on Display

McGill University

<http://poec.mcgill.ca/?page_id=125>

**Week Three – Sept 26**

**Reception/Performance/Queer Studies**:

Assigned Reading: Richard Dyer, from *Stars* (CV), Thomas Schatz, “Film Genre and Genre Film” (CV), Alexander Doty, “There’s Something Queer Here” (PDF)

Background: Anneke Smelik, “Gay and Lesbian Criticism” (OG)

Alexander Doty, “Queer Theory” (OG)

Suggested: Thomas Elsaesser, “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama” (CV)

*Screening:* *Xala* (Ousmane Sembene, Senegal, 1975)

**Week Four – Oct 3**

**Post-Colonial Debates/Case Studies**

Assigned Reading:

Gabriel, “Xala A cinema of wax and gold”. HYPERLINK "http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC27folder/XalaGabriel.html" http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC27folder/XalaGabriel.html Pfaff, "Three faces of Africa: Women in *Xala*" HYPERLINK "http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC27folder/XalaPfaff.html" http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC27folder/XalaPfaff.htmlMulvey, “Xala”\*Background: Rajadhyaksha, “Realism, Modernism, and Post-Colonial Theory” (OG)

Dissanayake, “Issues in World Cinema” (OG)

Suggested: Solanas and Getino, “Towards a Third Cinema” (CV)

Screening: *Avatar* (James Cameron, US, 2009)

**Week Five – NO CLASS, Thanksgiving**

**ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**

**Week Six – Oct 17**

**Vision technologies/Industrial analysis/Post-colonial and Race Critique**

Assigned Reading: Charles Acland, Avatar as Technological Tenpole

http://flowtv.org/2010/01/avatar-as-technological-tentpole-charles-r-acland-concordia-university/

Richard Dyer, from *White* (CV)

Lisa Nakamura, “The Social Optics of Race” (CV)

Background: “Marxism and Film” (OG), “Race, Ethnicity and Film” (OG), “Film and Cultural Identity” (OG)

Suggested: Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Culture” (CV), Lamarre, “Animation and Repetition of Cinema” (PDF)

Screening: students’ choice!

**Week Seven – Oct 24**

**Visiting Presentations by our PhD students**

Reading: Lee Grieveson “Fighting films: race, morality, and the governing of cinema” (PDF); Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions” (PDF); Donald Crafton, excerpt from *The Talkies: American Cinema’s Transition to Sound*, pp. 23-61 (electronic resource on the library webpage).

**Week Eight – Oct 31**

**Visiting Lecture by Stephen Groening**

Reading: Stephen Groening, “Film in Air: Airspace, In-Flight Entertainment, and NonTheatrical Distribution” (PDF); Barbara Klinger "Contraband Cinema: Piracy, *Titanic*, and Central Asia”(PDF)

November 1-6

International Conference:

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS ON FILM THEORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

(detailed schedule and information on our course Moodle site)

**Week Nine – Nov 7**

**Conference Reports:**

**Come to class with a draft of your Conference Report.**

**Week Ten – Nov 14**

**Visiting lecture by Haidee Wasson**

Reading:Prof. Wasson’s selection on moodle

Screening: *Syndromes and a Century* (Apichatpong Veerasethakul, Thailand, 2006)

**Week Eleven - Nov 21**

**Art Cinema, Parametric Narration, Installation Spaces**

Mark Betz, “Beyond Europe: On Parametric Transcendence”; Ji-hoon Kim, “Between Auditorium and Gallery: Perception in ApichatpongWeerasethakul's Films and Installations” (PDF), Erika Balsom, A cinema in the gallery, a cinema in ruins

(PDF);

Screening*: Chungking Express* (Wong Kar Wai, Hong Kong, 1996)

**Week Twelve – Nov 28**

**Transmedia/MTV**

Carol Vernallis, “Music Video, Song, Sounds” (PDF); Brian Hu, “The KTV Aesthetic” (PDF), Kay Dickinson. “Pop, Speed, Teenagers, and the ‘MTV Aesthetic’”

<http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=jun2001&id=275&section=article>

**Suggested:** Peter Jenkins, Searching for the Origami Unicorn: The Matrix and Transmedia Storytelling (CV)

Screening: Your Choice

**ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE, 6pm**

**Week Thirteen, Dec 5**

**NO CLASS (Make-Up for library session earlier in the semester)**