FMST 800/Winter 2012

Part Two of Issues in Disciplinarity: Some Contemporary Approaches

Thursdays, 13:15 – 17:15, EV 6.421

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**Course Description:**

This second half of the ProSeminar will address several trends in the scholarship within film and moving image studies which have emerged with particular force over the last decade. These new approaches question the commonly held assumptions about the object of study within our discipline, and about some of the key categories which have traditionally constituted the study of moving images.

The first is the so-called “sonic turn” which brings attention to the study of **sound** within the field, which until recently has defined itself largely in **visual** terms (note how this is reflected in the very term “study of the moving image”). This focus on sound enters into a wise variety of the existing scholarly methodologies, but also requires establishing new vocabularies and categories for a successful analysis of the **audio-visual** phenomena.

The second approach challenges the traditional object of study which have until recently often been assumed to be theatrically-exhibited feature films understood as entertainment or as aesthetic experience. This approaches shifts scholarly attention towards **a wider variety of moving images outside of the theatrical celluloid projection paradigm**, and proposes new methodologies of exploring this phenomena, with a particular focus on the technological **platforms** (screens, projectors, etc) and their **institutional settings** (museums, schools, etc).

The third approach questions the category of **the nation** as the key constitutive category in the historical and theoretical discourses within film and moving image studies. Along with introducing a category of **transnational**, this approach often implicitly challenges the **Eurocentrism** of the geopolitical imaginary of the field and attempts to account for the historical dynamics of global exchange and circulation of moving images in its many forms (colonialism, internationalism, globalization, etc).

For the last week of the seminar, the class will collectively choose a topic for discussion (related to the questions raised in class). On the basis of your choice I will prepare reading for that week later in the semester.

The goal of this course is to familiarize you with some of the current debates within the field in order to help you assess your own research project in light of these developments, possibly integrating these new approaches (or at least your awareness of them) in your own work. It will also ask you to consider how these developments could be reflected in the pedagogical practice. Finally, it is intended to give you an opportunity to practice your skills in different modes of academic performance/genres (research proposal; bibliographical essay; presentation; source analysis).

**Course Format:**

Class participation and engagement with the readings and each other’s comments are crucial to this seminar.

**Web forum discussion:**

In additional to contributing to the discussion in class, you are asked to participate in the weekly web forum. These posts can be short (less than a page, or around 250 words) and informally written, and are due **Wednesday at noon** to give 24 hours for everyone to read each other’s posts and respond to them as part of this web forum discussion.

Often we’ll assign one person to start a new thread by making a comment and posting a question in relation to that week’s reading. All the other students will then either respond to the question posed and pose the next question, or start a new thread with a new question. We can allow up to 3 simultaneous threads running each week. Other times, all of you will be invited to respond to a specific question.

Your class participation grade will consist of both your oral and your web forum contributions.

NB:

The first three weeks of the seminar overlaps with a job search in the department for a faculty member whose areas of expertise include sound. The talks by the candidates will be incorporated into this into the seminar, so I will ask you to attend **at least 3 out of the 5 talks** and write your web responses to them, whenever possible positioning these presentations in relation to the questions posed in the readings for these first three weeks of class.

**Course materials:**

Most of the readings will be posted in PDF format through library e-reserves (indicated in the schedule with an \*). When the reading includes book chapters, books are placed on reserve in the library.

There is one required text:

*World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, eds. Kathleen Newman and Natasa Durovicova, Routledge, 2010. (WCTP in the schedule)

If you are interested in the topic, you may also find useful having your own copies of:

Abe Mark Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*, University of MN Press, 2007.

Amit S. Rai, *Untimely Bollywood: Globalization and India’s New Media Assemblage*, Duke University Press, 2009.

**Assignments:**

1. Textbooks analysis and syllabus creation (in groups of two)

In groups of two, you are asked to compare 2-3 textbooks or readers. You should evaluate structure of the texts, the selection and the presentation of the material in so far as they reflect the scholarly developments discussed in the class.

You can choose from: 1) several available textbooks for Introduction to Film; 2) several version of texbooks on Film History; 3) several editions of Film Theory and Criticism (ed. Braudy and Cohen), or 4) several different readers on Film Theory. You will present your analysis in class.

In addition to this, your group will also design a syllabus on a topic of your choice demonstrating engagement with the methodological approaches discussed in the course. The syllabi will be discussed in a workshop format in class. Based on the feedback you receive, you will have a chance to revise the syllabus before submitting the final version. For the final grade for this assignment, your textbook presentation and the syllabus will be equally weighted.

2. Research **proposal** (modeled on grant proposal/synopsis of dissertation proposal). The first draft will be presented in class, on March 1 and further revised on the basis of the feedback you receive and in consultation with me. 4-5 pages

3. As your final project, you are asked to choose one of the following two assignments:

- analysis of a select element from **10-year run of a film journal**. The exercise requires you to read through the whole of the journal’s run and to generate a single line of coherent analysis from that process. Your history may be thin (diachronic - spread over the whole ten years) or thick (synchronic - focused specifically on a particular moment). 8-10 pages

- **bibliographical essay** (covering 25-50 entries) on a topic of your choice. 8-10 pages.

**Course Evaluation:**

Participation: 25%

Textbook/Syllabus Assignment: 25%

Research Proposal: 25%

Final Assignment: 25%

**Due Dates:**

Feb. 15 – submit topics for the group projects

March 1 – first draft of the research proposal due, to be discussed in class

March 8 – submit seminar’s chosen topic for the final day of class

March 15 – textbook presentation; first draft of the syllabus to be discussed in class

March 22 – submit revised research proposal

March 29 – submit revised syllabus and topics for final assignment

April 15 – submit final assignment

Always keep a copy of all assignments handed in. The department assumes no responsibility for lost work. Please feel free to consult me at any time if you are experiencing difficulty in completing course assignments.

Students are well advised that late papers are not a right! If special circumstances warrant, a paper may be handed in late provided permission has been given beforehand. In such circumstances a late penalty may still be assessed (varying in each case, based on circumstances).If no prior permission has been given, the assignments will not be accepted after their due dates, and a mark of “F” will be awarded. The Graduate School frowns (growls?) at IP grades (incomplete course work). Every human effort should be made to complete your course work on time.

If you need to contact me outside of class, email is the best way. Please note, I will do my best to respond to your questions promptly. But, you must allow me a full 24 hours to reply (and more on the weekend).

**Course Schedule**

Jan 5

Introduction

Reading :

The Velvet Trap Panel Discussion on Film Sound\*, Spring 2003

*Cinema Journal* “In Focus: Sound Studies” (Hilmes, Kassabian, Coates)\* Fall 2008

Mark Kerins, “A Statement on Sound Studies”\* Fall 2008

Jonathan Sterne, “Being ‘In the True’ of Sound Studies”\* Fall 2008

Suggested: Rey Chow and James Steintrager, “In Pursuit of the Object of Sound”\* Fall 2011

An indispensible web source for research on standard texts on sound in cinema:

<http://www.filmsound.org>

Some questions to think about:

1. what are the different aspects of sound in cinema identified/implied in these discussions, and what methodological approaches do they necessitate? What aspect of sound do they ignore/marginalize?
2. what kind of knowledge is required to produce this kind of work: methods of interdiscipinarity

Suggested further reading \*(for weeks 1-3):

From Anahid Kassabian, Hearing Film: *Tracking Identifications in Contemporary Hollywood Film Music\**

From Mark Kerins, Beyond Dolby *(Stereo). Cinema in the Digital Sound Age\**

Kay Dickinson, “Pop, Speed, and the MTV aesthetic”

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

Jan 12

No class (make up for attending the talks)

Reading:

Martin Stokes, “Music and the Global Order”\*

Marvin D’Lugo, “Aural Identity, genealogies of sound reproduction, and Hispanic transnationality” (WCTP)

Suggested Reading: Kay Dickinson, *Off Key: When Film and Music Won’t Work Together*, Chapter Five “Pop Stars Who Cannot Act and the Limits of Celebrity ‘Flexibility’”\*

Simon Frith, Book Review\*

Jan 19

History of sound theory, historical practices of sound reproduction, and speech

Reading:

Georgio Bertellini, “Dubbing L’Arte Muta” (copy handout)

Neepa Majumdar, “Sound in Indian Cinema”\*

Suggested: John Mowitt, “Like a Whisper”\*

Markus Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*, Chapter Six, pp. 188-229 “Loving dubbing”

John Mowitt, *Re-takes*: Postcoloniality and Foreign *Film Languages.*

Jan 26

Screen Studies

Reading:

Charles Acland, “Curtains, carts and the mobile screen”\*

Lee Grieveson, “On governmentality and screens”\*

Mike Zryd, “Experimental Film as Useless Cinema\* (from Useful Cinema)

Haidee Wasson, “Big, Fast Museums/Slow, Small movies”\* (from Useful Cinema)

Suggested Reading:

Laura Marks, “Information, Secrets, and Enigmas”\*

Bernard Stiegler, “The Carnival of the New Screen”\*

If you did not read it last semester:

Dudley Andrew, “The Core and the Flow of Film Studies”\*

Haidee Wasson, “Response to Dudley Andrew: Small Discipline, Big Pictures”

<http://www.synoptique.ca/core/articles/wasson_haidee_dudley_andrew/>

Some Suggested Viewings: *Be Kind, Rewind* (Michel Gondry, 2008)

*Blackboard Jungle* (Richard Brooks, 1955)

Feb 2

Art Cinema Museum Exhibition

Reading:

Brian Price, “Art/Cinema and Cosmopolitanism Today”\* (in *Global Art Cinema*)

Ji-hoon Kim, “The post-medium condition and the explosion of cinema”\*

Alison Butler, “A Deictic Turn”\*

http://www.animateprojects.org/films/by\_project/primitive/primitive

Suggested Readings: Hal Foster, *The Art-Architecture Complex*, Part 3, section “Film Stripped Bare.”

Erica Balsom, “Cinema at the Gallery”\*

Suggested viewing: *Uncle Boonmie Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2010), *Hunger* (Steve McQueen, 2008),

Feb 9

Transnational approaches:

Reading:

Will Higbee, Song Hwee Lim, “Concepts of transnational cinema: towards a critical transnationalism in film studies”\*

Kathleen Newman, “Notes on Transnational film theory” (WCTP)

Jungbong Choi, “National Cinema”\*

Jeff Menne, A Mexican Nouvelle Vague: The Logic of New Waves under Globilization”\*

Suggested Reading:

Dudley Andrew, “Timezones and Jetlag: the flows and phases of world cinema” (WCTP)

Mark Betz, “Beyond Europe: On Parametric Transcendence”\* (in *Global Art Cinema*)

Bliss Cua Lim, *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique*, “The ghostliness of genre: global Hollywood remakes the ‘Asian horror film.’"

Suggested viewing: TBA

**Submit group project topics**

Feb 16

Global Hollywood and Resistances

Reading:

Toby Miller, “Global Hollywood 2010”\*

Barry King, “The Lord of the Rings as a Cultural Projection”\*

Brian Larkin**, “**Degraded Images, Distorted Sounds: Nigerian Video and the Infrastructure of Piracy”\*

Suggested Reading:

Barbara Klinger, "Contraband Cinema: Piracy, Titanic, and Central Asia."\*

Franco Moretti, “Planet Hollywood” \*

Paul Willemen, “Fantasy in Action” (WCTP)

Toby Miller, “National Cinema Abroad” (WCTP)

Suggested further reading:

*Global Hollywood 1 and 2.* Eds. Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell, and Ting Wang, London: British Film Institute, 2001 and 2005.

Studying the Event Film: The Lord of the Rings. Eds.Harriet Margolis, Sean Cubitt, Barry King, and Thierry Jutel, Manchester UP, 2008.

Feb 23 – reading week

**Bring Your Research Proposal to Class**

Mar 1

In class presentation/discussions of research proposals

**Submit the seminar’s choice of the topic for the final class.**

Mar 8

Translations and Migrations

Natasa Durovicova, “Vector, flow, zone: towards a history of cinematic translatio” (WCTP)

Mark Abe Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*, pp. TBA

Masha Salazkina, “Moscow – Rome – Havana: A Film Theory Roadmap”\*

Suggested Reading: “Phil Rosen, Border Times and Geopolitical Frames”\*

Saayan Chattopadhyay, “Framing Frontiers: The Suspended Step towards Visual Construction of Geopolitical Borders”\*

Mar 15

Group Presentations: textbooks analysis (20 min each presentation)

Workshop on syllabi (20 min per session)

**Revised Syllabus due**

**Submit topics for final assignment**

Mar 22 – no class, SCMS

**Revised research proposal due**

Mar 29

Case studies: *Untimely Bollywood* and *Slumdog Millionaire*

Amit Rai, Untimely Bollywood, Ch. 2, pp. 56-111.

Ana Mendes, “Showcasing India’s Unshining: Film Tourism in Danny Boyle’s Slumdog Millionaire” \*

Shakuntala Banaji, “Seduced ‘Outsiders’ versus Sceptical ‘Insiders’?: *Slumdog Millionaire* through its Re/Viewers”\*

Suggested viewing: *Devdas* (Bimal Roy, 1955; Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 2002); *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle, 2008)

April 5

TOPIC OF STUDENTS’ CHOICE

**April 16: Final assignment due**

Some additional suggested bibliography and useful web resources (section under construction):

**Some Standard Readings on Sound History and Theory:**

James Lastra, Sound Technologies and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity. Columbia UP, 2000.

Rick Altman, ed. *Sound Theory/Sound Practice*, Routlegde, 1992.

Michel Chion, *AudioVision: Sound on Screen*. Columbia UP, 1994

Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, Columbia UP, 2005

Richard Abel and Rick Altman(eds), *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, Indiana University Press, 2001.

For a complete bibliography **on film festivals** consult the following page:

<http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/Medien//berichte/arbeiten/0091_08.html#national>

Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe:

<http://www.migrantcinema.net/bibliography/C46/>

Postcolonial Theory and Criticism:

<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/bibl.html>