FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES

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http://filmstudies.yale.edu
M.Phil., Ph.D.

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FIELDS OF STUDY

Film and Media Studies is an interdisciplinary field drawing on the study of the history of art, national cultures and literatures, literary theory, philosophy, anthropology, feminist and queer studies, race and representation, and other areas. To study film and media at Yale, every doctoral student must be accepted into a combined program involving another discipline. Film and Media Studies offers a combined Ph.D. with African American Studies, American Studies, Comparative Literature, East Asian Languages and Literatures, English, French, German, History of Art, Italian, and Slavic Languages and Literatures. In addition to acquiring a firm grounding in the methods and core material of both film-media studies and another discipline, the candidate is advised to coordinate a plan of study involving comprehensive knowledge of one or more areas of specialization. Such areas include:

1. Historiography, including archival history, history of technology, silent film.
3. European film: British-Irish, French, German and Nordic, Italian, Slavic.
5. World film: global image exchange; cinema in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.
6. Documentary as an aesthetic, cultural, and ideological practice.
7. Cinema in its relations with other arts and other media.
8. Screen cultures, screened images, post-cinema, theory and history of media.

Through course work, examinations, and the dissertation, the candidate links a film and media specialty with material and methods coming from the participating discipline. Directors of graduate studies from both programs monitor the candidate’s plans and progress.

SPECIAL ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

Combined-program applicants should familiarize themselves fully not only with the Film and Media Studies entrance requirements but with those of the other graduate program as well. Since combined-program applicants must be admitted both by Film and Media Studies and by the other department, candidates should make sure that the material they submit with the application clearly addresses the requirements and mission of both graduate programs.

The application for Film and Media Studies is administered by the Office of Graduate Admissions. All applications are to be completed online and can be accessed by visiting its website at http://gsas.yale.edu/admission-graduate-school. In the “Programs of Study” section of the application, the applicant should do the following: choose Film and Media Studies in Step 1 and the combined department in Step 3. All applications including writing samples are read by the admissions committees in both units.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE

Every student selected for the combined program is subject to the supervision of the Film and Media Studies program and the relevant participating department. A written protocol between each department and Film and Media Studies outlines the requirements and schedule to be borne in mind as a plan of study is worked out in consultation with the director of graduate studies (DGS) of Film and Media Studies and the DGS of the participating department. In all cases, students are required to take two core seminars in Film and Media Studies (FILM 601 and FILM 603) as well as at least four additional Film and Media Studies seminars. Course requirements vary for participating departments. By October 1 of the third year, all students must have fulfilled an assignment related to foundational texts and films. Later that year, students advance to candidacy by completing qualifying examinations and a dissertation prospectus.
1. Qualifying examinations follow the regulations of the participating department with at least one member of the Film and Media Studies Executive Committee participating.

2. The dissertation prospectus is presented to a faculty committee or the entire faculty of the participating department. The prospectus is also circulated to the entire Film and Media Studies Executive Committee for their information and ratification.

3. A defense of method occurs when the dissertation is nearing completion, one or two terms before submission. The purpose of this defense is to provide guidance and feedback at a critical stage, in order to assist the dissertation’s final form. At least three faculty readers meet with the student; the DGS of Film and Media Studies and the DGS of the participating department are also invited to participate. At least one examiner of the dissertation must be a member of the Film and Media Studies Executive Committee and one must be from the participating department.

The faculty in Film and Media Studies considers participation in the Teaching Fellows Program to be essential to the professional preparation of graduate students. Students normally teach in years three and four. Every student may expect to assist in two Film and Media Studies courses, one of which will almost certainly be Introduction to Film.

MASTER’S DEGREE

M.Phil. See Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

COURSES

FILM 601b / CPLT 917b, Foundational Texts in Film and Media Studies  Dudley Andrew
The course sets in place some undergirding for students who want to anchor their film interest to the professional discourse of this field. A coordinated set of topics in film theory is interrupted first by the often discordant voice of history and second by the obtuseness of the films examined each week. Films themselves take the lead in our discussions.

FILM 604b, The Film Archive  Brian Meacham
The history, theory, and working activities of a film archive. The materiality of film, the types of film elements held in film archives, and the policies and procedures of collection development, cataloging, access, exhibition, conservation, and preservation. Film archives in light of the transition to digital in production, consumption, and distribution of films. Students learn film inspection and take a film print through the archival process from acquisition to public screening.

FILM 690a / CPLT 913a, Radical Cinemas of Latin America  Moira Fradinger
An introductory overview of Latin American cinema, with an emphasis on post-World War II films produced in Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. Examination of each film in its historical and aesthetic aspects, and in light of questions concerning national cinema and "third cinema." Examples from both pre-1945 and contemporary films. Conducted in English; knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese helpful but not required.

FILM 714b / AFAM 550b, Race, Affect, and Cinema  Rizvana Bradley
This seminar draws out the importance of the recent "affective turn" in emergent theoretical discourses, in order to think about the organization of emotion and feeling within cinema, particularly cinema that foregrounds questions of race and racial intimacy. We are especially interested in thinking about the relationship between race and feeling, as well as the development of minor feelings, racial affect, and black affect. Course readings take up many of the key texts within affect theory, but we try to make explicit connections to the examples of racial affect we see emerging within cinema.

FILM 733b / AMST 834b, Documentary and the Environment  Charles Musser
The environmental documentary has emerged as one of cinema’s most vital genres of the past ten years (in documentary, its only rivals are probably those concerned with the Second Gulf War). As the world’s environment faces a growing crisis, documentary has come to serve as a key means to draw public attention to specific issues. This course combines screenings with readings on documentary such as Bill Nichols’s important book Representing Reality. Often films have book tie-ins, and we consider how they complement each other and work together to maximize the impact of their message. Readings also focus on news items, debates, websites, and other media forms that are employed in conjunction with the films.

FILM 735a and FILM 736b / AMST 832a and AMST 833b, Documentary Film Workshop  Charles Musser
This workshop in audiovisual scholarship explores ways to present research through the moving image. Students work within a Public Humanities framework to make a documentary that draws on their disciplinary fields of study. Designed to fulfill requirements for the M.A. with a concentration in Public Humanities.

FILM 753b / CPLT 935b, French Cinema through the New Wave  Dudley Andrew
This seminar uses a sample of twenty films (with clips from many others) to survey four decades of the tradition of French cinema crowned by the privileged moment of the New Wave. Graduate students are asked to challenge the idea of "national cinema" by reporting on some non-canonical or marginal film before midterm. Keeping the culture industry in view, we question the extent to which such a consistently robust cinema has been bound to—or remained partly independent of—a nation that from 1930 to 1970 underwent a depression, a socialist experiment, an occupation, a liberation, and the humiliations of decolonization abroad and social unrest (May ’68) at home. In addition to the midterm contribution, graduate students write a substantial term paper.
Examination of representative films by three major German-language auteurs. Topics include cinema’s investment in painting and theatricality; its relation to gendered, imaginary, and abject bodies and to the specificities of time and place; the fictions of the self that these auteurs construct; and how questions of identity intersect with ideology and the political. Films subtitled; all readings and discussion in English.

This course presents a historical overview, incorporating some of the main landmarks of the 1920s and 1930s including works by Pilyayk, Bakhtin, the Formalists, Platonov, Mayakovsky, Bulgakov, Zoshchenko, Eisenstein, Protazanov, Pudovkin, the Vasilyev "brothers," and G. Aleksandrov.

This seminar focuses on the heyday of radio—its so-called Golden Age—and considers the medium from a variety of perspectives: media theory, auditory culture, musicology, and sociology, among others. The goal is to understand how radio functioned not only as a mass medium but also as a form of mediation. Special attention is given to the role of music on the radio and to the ways that radio altered the nature of musical works. Readings include classic texts on radio (Arnheim, Adorno, Merton, Lazarsfeld, Fanon, McLuhan) as well as more recent writing in cultural history (Douglas, Hilmes), sound studies (Mowit, Bijsterveld), and media archaeology (Ernst). Special attention is given to the nature of the radio archive and its problems, with sessions devoted to working with source materials.

The seminar aims at retracing two divergent cultural processes: how and why, starting from the discovery of artificial perspective, an increasing number of cultural practices were devoted to making the world visible; and correlatively how and why, starting from the first half of the nineteenth century, visuality increasingly met with the resistance of other modes of accessing the world through the human body and the role of the environment? These two trajectories are retraced through a special attention to the media that were on the forefront of these cultural processes: from Brunelleschi’s mirror to Alberti’s window and grid, from camera obscura to Galileo’s telescope, from Panorama to Phantasmagoria, from the optical toys of the nineteenth century to the increasing implication of art into social and political questions. The seminar privileges the cultural practices that underpin both the trust in visuality and the discovery of environmentalty, and it gives due attention to the political questions that the changing fortunes of the optical media imply. The seminar is the first part of a two-year project and will be followed next year by an analysis of the prevalent of the environmental dimension in contemporary media.

Since the late nineteenth century, human and nonhuman voices have been technically amplified, recorded, distorted, enhanced, synthesized, and measured for purposes of art, science, and politics. This class explores classic and recent books and essays on the media of sound and culture, with a particular focus on the voice. We are guided by two fundamental questions: How do voices get into bodies and bodies into voices? How do media capture something whose existence amounts to vibrations and whose essence involves disappearance? The voice is a key but conflicted site for defining what it means to be a human being. This complex organ or apparatus depends on lungs, brain, vocal tract, emotion, training, and culture. The voice implicates physics and music, communication and culture, anatomy and art. It raises questions about beauty, identity, power, religion, art, poetry, style, culture, race, gender, and age. Animals and machines have voices; so may the stars.

Exploration of the history and practice of family photography from an interdisciplinary perspective. Study of family photographs from the analog to the digital era, from snapshots to portraits, and from instrumental images to art exhibitions. Particular attention to the ways in which family photographs have helped establish gendered and racial hierarchies and examination of recent ways of reconceiving these images.

This seminar questions the concept of "collaboration" through a variety of moments and projects of collaboration between photographers, photographed persons, and spectators that take place in different geopolitical contexts. Collaboration is a form of relation that may be idyllic or problematic, liberating or coercive, generating knowledge or disseminating ignorance, empowering or intimidating, involving assistance and solidarity as much as abuse; it may take place among friends or between enemies, and it may create friendship as much as it may complicate it. Reviewing this spectrum of possibilities, we ask how collaboration informs and transforms the event of photography.

Contemporary Scandinavian film and television examined in relation to earlier cinematic highpoints. Europe’s first art cinema, early Scandinavian film was catalyzed and sustained by modernist breakthroughs in theater, literature, and painting. Contemporary cinema and television (Dogma films; Nordic Noir television; experimental music and genre film) continue to develop innovative aesthetic, funding, and exhibition models. The course explores regionally specific ideas about acting, visual culture, and the role of art; feminism and the social contract; historical forces and social change. Films by Bergman, Dreyer, Sjöström, Sjöberg, Vinterberg, von Trier, Östlund, Kaurismäki, Kjartansson; as well as contemporary television series selected by students.
FILM 874a / EALL 892a, Japanese New Wave Cinema  Stephen Poland
This course explores the “New Wave” in Japanese cinema in the context of the rise of “new wave” across cinemas in the American sphere in the period roughly between 1955 and 1975. It focuses on both local contexts and global flows in the turn to experimental filmmaking in Japan, paying particular attention to how films sought to make social and political interventions in both content and form. We analyze New Wave films and critical writing by asking what they can tell us about Japan’s postwar, high-speed economic growth, student and counterculture movements, and place in the Cold War order. We also consider what the Japanese New Wave tells us about the possibilities of cinema: its global simultaneity, transcultural movement, and historical trajectory. Topics include the legacy of World War II in Japan and cinema as a mode for narrating history; the rise of global youth culture in the context of postwar economic growth; cinema and protest against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty; the aesthetic use of sex, violence, and politics to shock mainstream culture; documentary as a site for radical experimentation; the studio system, independent filmmaking, and transformations of the Japanese film industry; and what is meant by “modernist” and “avant-garde” in New Wave cinema.

FILM 901a or b, Individual Research  Staff

FILM 973b / ENGL 973b, Modernity and the Time of Literature  Robert Williams
This course examines transformations in temporality that occurred in the sciences and arts during the twentieth century. From the arrival of Einsteinian relativity to more contemporary proofs on quantum nonlocality, the question of time in the twentieth century threatened to overturn some of our oldest assumptions about cause and effect, duration, history, presentness, and futurity. These new temporalities were as scientifically and philosophically vexing as they were rife with spiritual and aesthetic possibility – a dynamic reflected in the literary and artistic forms that were central to these transformations. Our reading reflects this deeply cross-cultural and interdisciplinary trajectory, including histories of science and technology (Peter Galison, N. Katherine Hayles, David Kaiser), philosophies of time (Heidegger, Bruno Latour, Bernard Stiegler, McLuhan, Luhmann), critical theories of temporal form (Derrida, Adorno, Jameson, Pamela Lee, Kojin Karatani), a wide array of literary texts (William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, Ursula K. Le Guin, Tom McCarthy, and others), as well as important cinematic innovations (Jodorowsky, Godard, Kubrick). What is the "time" of literature? of film? How does art transform or reinforce theories of temporal flow? How do new technologies of composition and circulation alter the temporal effects of a given work? What was the "End of History"?