FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES

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

Chair
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Senior Lecturer Marc Lapadula

Lecturers Oksana Chefranova, Brian Meacham, Camille Thomasson

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 “Program of Study” section of the application, the applicant should choose Film and Media Studies as well as another department, since all students in the program must select a second program to combine with Film and Media Studies. All applications, including writing samples, are read by the admissions committees in both programs.

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 603a / AMST 814a, Historical Methods in Film Study  Charles Musser
A range of historiographic issues in film studies, including the roles of technology, exhibition, and spectatorship. Topics include intermediality and intertextuality. Consideration of a range of methodological approaches through a focus on international early cinema and American race cinema of the silent period. Particular attention to the interaction between scholars and archives.

FILM 63ob / RUSS 714b, Soviet Cinema and the Distribution of Perception  John MacKay
Soviet filmmakers and theorists in the 1920s were preoccupied with the way that the established cinema harnessed perception in socially determined, class-specific ways, and sought a variety of alternatives. This course examines those alternatives and their limitations, as postulated in theory and realized on film, as well as their long-term, global influence on theoretical and moving image practice. We examine films and writings by such figures as Vertov, Eisenstein, Shub, Pudovkin, Kuleshov, Room, Ruttmann, Liu Na’ou, Grierson, Buñuel, Cavalcanti, Peixoto, Deren, Jacobs, Dorsky, Godard, Farocki, Burnett, Akerman, and Wang Bing.

FILM 710b / AFAM 537b, Contemporary Art, Race, and the Philosophy of Media  Rizvana Bradley
This course draws from a diverse range of writing in philosophy (especially the philosophy of media), contemporary critical theory (phenomenology, new materialism), contemporary feminist thought, queer theory, and black studies in order to question underlying assumptions about the body and embodied spaces in contemporary art and culture. Drawing from film, literature, performance, and contemporary art, students think about a range of philosophical and critical themes, including the role of the body, the virtual construction of time and space, questions of affect, and sensation, all of which inform concerns over representation, embodiment, and materiality.

FILM 73a and FILM 73b / 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 754a or b / AFAM 805a or b / AFST 800a or b, Novel, Film, and History in French Africa  Christopher Miller
African history as represented in historiography, novels, and films. Limited to French and Francophone Africa. Themes include empire and epic; orality and literacy; the slave trade; contact, conquest, and resistance; the Congo Free State; the role of colonial intermediaries; the two world wars; decolonization and neocolonialism; and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

FILM 760b / CPLT 905b / GMAN 760b, Intermediality in Film  Brigitte Peucker
Film is a hybrid medium, the meeting point of several others. This course focuses on the relationship of film to theater and painting, suggesting that where two media are in evidence, there is usually a third. Topics include space, motion, color, theatricality, tableau vivant, ekphrasis, spectatorship, and new media. Readings feature art historical and film theoretical texts as well as essays pertinent to specific films. Films by Fassbinder, Bergman, Murnau, von Trier, Rohmer, Godard, Kiarostami, and others, concluding with three films by Peter Greenaway.

FILM 774a / RUSS 775a, Post-Stalin Literature and Film  Katerina Clark
The main developments in Russian and Soviet literature and film from Stalin's death in 1953 to the present.

FILM 800a / CPLT 921a, Styles and Techniques in Recent Art Cinema  Dudley Andrew and Oksana Chefranova
How much does the art of cinema in the twenty-first century resemble that of the previous half-century? Have massive changes visible in production, distribution, and exhibition also affected the goals and ambitions of film artists? Or do today’s auteurs and cinematographers work as their counterparts did decades ago, deploying whatever techniques current technology permits in a quest for a style that may bring out something authentic about themselves, the world, or the medium? Analyzing films by such contemporary auteurs as Olivier...
Assayas, Claire Denis, Carlos Reygadas, Lav Diaz, David Lynch, and Hong Sang-soo, we measure new styles against techniques deployed by classic and modern auteurs like Mizoguchi, Welles, Cocteau, and Hitchcock. What new aesthetic (and practical) issues face filmmakers as they conceive their projects? We look at screen format, including 3-D; elastic temporality, especially slow motion; special effects, including forms of animation; superimposition, including multiple screens; long-takes and camera movement; montage and alternatives to cutting; advances in sound design. Have the new narrative forms and the new types of subject matter associated with our century’s most difficult films (L’Intrus, Werckmeister Harmonies, La Mort de Louis XIV, Twin Peaks) given rise to the styles of major directors, or are they the by-product of these styles? Does style matter in the way it did during cinema’s first century?

**FILM 804a / MUSI 837a, Opera: Explorations of a Technical Medium**  Gundula Kreuzer
Opera has been assigned – and might yet assume – various roles in genealogies of technical media. This seminar explores both what media archaeology and other recent approaches in media studies and science and technology studies hold for an understanding of the nature of opera, and what opera might in turn contribute to a historically expanded perspective on modern and digital multimedia. In addition to such theoretical topics as the role of architecture, strategies of acoustic immersion, the development of illusionist devices, the orchestra as technology, and Wagner’s theories, we examine the medial configurations in select operatic scenes and their renditions, from the illusionist picture-frame stage to present-day mobile or site-specific conceptions. Projects are tailored to students’ interests and disciplines. Reading knowledge of Western musical notation is helpful but not required of students from outside the Music department.

**FILM 806a / AMST 853a / WGSS 853a, Archives: Histories, Practices, Theories, and Formations**  Laura Wexler
This seminar studies the co-constitution of objects-with-documents and undocumented people. We explore theoretical, historical, material, practical, methodological, and curatorial questions related to the operation and status of the archive in this migration of objects and people. Students are asked to work collaboratively in and with archives as sources and tools, and to experiment with creating archives of their own. The seminar involves some travel to Brown and some irregular hours that are mentioned in the syllabus.

**FILM 810b / AMST 729b / WGSS 746b, Visual Kinship, Families, and Photography**  Laura Wexler
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.

**FILM 830a / CPLT 916a / ITAL 590a, Literature into Film**  Millicent Marcus
When watching a film based on a book we have read and loved, the usual response is one of disappointment, if not outright anger at the liberties taken in adapting a text to the screen. This course aims to challenge that approach by vindicating the filmmaker’s freedom to interpret the textual source, and to question the thinking that places literature above cinema in the hierarchy of artistic forms.
Our curriculum involves case studies of adaptations that pose ingenious solutions to the problem of transforming written texts into audiovisual spectacles. With one exception, we screen films on Monday evenings and do a comparative study in the Wednesday class period, developing an overall approach to the filmmaker’s adaptive strategy and making extensive use of video clips to do detailed visual analysis of scenes in the light of their corresponding textual sources. Rather than develop a general theory of adaptation, we apply methodologies on a case-by-case basis, taking each literature-into-film example as a response to a sui generis set of requirements. In the process, we use a variety of analytical tools, including those deriving from psychoanalysis, feminism, ideological criticism, historiography, genre study, semiotics, etc. There are two papers—a shorter one of a critical nature (approximately 5 pages) and a final research paper (approximately 20 pages). Conducted in English. Texts are available in Italian and English, and all films are subtitled.

**FILM 833a, Semiotics**  Francesco Casetti
The seminar discusses the most relevant concepts and categories elaborated by semiotics in order to provide analytical tools for “close readings” of verbal or visual texts, narrative forms, cultural objects, artifacts, and social situations. Semiotics’s foundational goal consisted in retracing how meaning emerges and circulates in connection with a variety of objects, from literary works to social rituals, from natural phenomena to artificial languages. In an attempt to revamp semiotics’s main task, we begin from the opposed conceptualization of “sign” in the Saussurean and Peircean traditions and from the opposed ideas of “semiosis” that they elicit. Then, moving from “sign” to “text,” we analyze the structures and the dynamics of discourses—whether verbal, visual, musical, etc. A particular stress is put on the semantic and syntactic structures of narrative texts in an attempt to draw from them a model of human and nonhuman action. The third section retraces the way enunciation produces subjectivity and deixis, in order to gain a better understanding of the context-bound nature of discourses and some tools for the analysis of context itself as a semiotic entity. We end by discussing the complex strategies that allow a discourse to tackle “reality” and “truth” – in the hope of dismantling the current use of naïve epistemologies. Analytical tools are tested in class through close readings of a great variety of texts and situations, from Melania Trump’s depictions to Genesis, from short novels to social encounters.

**FILM 842b / HSAR 712b, Approaches to the Urban Screen**  Francesco Casetti and Craig Buckley
What distinguishes the urban screen— in terms of spatiality, economics, phenomenology, and technology—from other screens proliferating today? The course aims to think genealogically about the emergence and descent of large-scale urban screens as forms of public display and as new metropolitan interfaces. Today we are witnessing long-standing conceptions of the screen as a surface for the play of representations ceding ground to ecological understandings of the screen as an environmentally embedded node and as a point of dynamic mediation between actors and the world. Considering materials from film history, architectural history, art history, and urban history, the seminar considers the urban screen as a crucial part of the broader redefinition of the screen. Urban screens can be understood in terms of a rupture and recovery of screen history, wherein the fracturing of the screen (as movie screen) is coextensive with the recovery of older and alternate understandings of the screen (as facade, as protection, as shelter, as furniture, as filter, as masquerade, as control
mechanism). A key aspect of the seminar is to work through the existing frameworks for thinking about urban screens and to propose new approaches that might shape this nascent area of study. In revisiting alternate histories of the screen, the course explores emerging screen cultures and their implications for the future of screen studies. Field trips to the Yale Art Gallery, Yale Center for British Art, Peabody Museum, and Beinecke Library.

**FILM 881a, Japanese Cinema before 1960** Aaron Gerow
The history of Japanese cinema to 1960, including the social, cultural, and industrial backgrounds to its development. Periods covered include the silent era, the coming of sound and the wartime period, the occupation era, the golden age of the 1950s, and the new modernism of the late 1950s.