Spring 2010 Film-related Graduate Seminars:

Film Theory and World Cinema [CORE COURSE for the GRADUATE CERTIFICATE in CINEMA STUDIES]
16:195:522:01
Instructor: Derek Schilling

Placed at the crossroads of aesthetics and politics, psychology and economics, the history of technology and popular culture, film has arguably emerged as the interdisciplinary object of study par excellence. In this introduction to film theory we will examine some of the principal areas of focus around which scholars, critics, and practicing filmmakers have congregated, such as film language, realism, authorship, the star system, genre, spectatorship, technology and globalization. Emphasis will be placed both on the extent to which the history of the medium and its expression through various national and transnational cinemas may inform a given “theoretical” program, but also on the contribution of such longstanding disciplines as art history, philosophy, or literary studies to a dialogue with the seventh art. More incidentally, we will ask what operations and assumptions might be said to distinguish film criticism and comment from film theory proper, and whether the discourse on film, now just over a century into its development, has risen to a position of autonomy and self-differentiation that justifies broad representation in the structure of the university.

Outside of weekly readings collected in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen’s Film Theory & Criticism (7th edition, Oxford UP, 2009: purchase only this edition please!) or posted separately on Sakai, students should expect to screen between 3-4 hours of audiovisual materials. One title per week, to be placed on reserve at the Media Library, will be screened by all participants; the other film will be chosen by the individual student from a brief list of suggested titles. Short written analyses related to the week’s readings will be assigned on a bi-weekly basis, and all seminar participants are encouraged to undertake for the final paper (15-20 pp.) and corresponding in-class presentation research relevant to their graduate course of study and disciplinary background. No prior experience in film studies is required.
Derek Schilling is Associate Professor of French and Cinema Studies. The author of the monograph Eric Rohmer (2007), which focuses on the French director’s approach to André Bazin’s realism, he has published on the representation of suburban space in France, theories of everydayness and everyday life, and various figures in modern and contemporary French literature, including a study of experimentalist Georges Perec entitled Mémoires du quotidien : les lieux de Perec (2006).

Language of instruction: English
Readings: English

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Graduate Seminar description, spring 2010

Description for “Victorian Fiction, the British Nation, and National Film”

In this course, we will read novels that inscribe the shifting status of the nation, cultural tradition, and rank or class in nineteenth century Britain. We will ask how the nineteenth-century novel helped consolidate notions of the nation, national identity, and the nation as central to imperial projects. We’ll ask whether the nation-state continues to be a useful rubric with which to think about geopolitics during an age of globalization, or whether we should instead theorize the post-national. We’ll ask what constitutes a national cinema and whether the literary adaptation or heritage film can be viewed as serving the functions of national cinema. We will pair our novels with their film adaptations, noting the ways in which post-Victorian remediation performs cultural work different than that done by these novels in their own historical moment of production and reception. Although 1990s filmmakers used heritage film’s codes and conventions to endorse late-century conservative values, they also critiqued, rehistoricized, or lampooned notions of the nation, tradition, and rank; celebrated or questioned representations of paternal benevolence, deference due to rank, and social restraint; glorified or interrogated the value of upper-class, later state, ownership of cultural goods. We’ll ask, as well, whether film adaptations differentiate their texts from Hollywood’s products in a transnational multimedia marketplace. Like the Victorian novel, the film adaptation registers the embeddedness of the reader or spectator in his or her own historical moment and cultural location.

We will read Victorian fictions as historically embedded and as performing specific cultural work, their filmic and televsual adaptations as appropriating and repurposing these stories for different markets, modes of consumption, and cultural tasks.
Requirements: Students will be expected to prepare all texts, attend all class meetings, and participate in discussion. We will decide whether to screen our films as a group or on our own. You will write a paper proposal, an annotated bibliography, and a final paper of 20-25 pages.

Readings may include:
Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*
Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*
William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*
Henry James, *Wings of the Dove*
E. M. Forster, *Howards End*
Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, selections
Theoretical/historical essays on “the nation” and on class and culture by Ernest Renan, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbaum, Pierre Bourdieu, and others
Psychoanalytic essays on group identification and social consolidation