

FILM ANALYSIS: ENHANCING YOUR ENJOYMENT OF FILMS

Alternate Fridays – 1:15-3:15 p.m. - RGC 19

Instructor: Ann De Vaney, UCI Adjunct Professor, Department of Education and Professor Emerita, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Brochure Description

The goal of this course is to learn film analysis to heighten your visual literacy and enhance your enjoyment of films. It will focus on formal analysis of films, i.e., description of what shots, transitions, scenes, etc. contribute to the meaning of films. Clips of films from the Great Depression when Hollywood presented glamour and fantasy to ease the Great Depression blues and current Independent Films that reflect the Great Recession through film realism will be utilized in the course. This program will follow the Friday morning Film Classics program and should be of interest to all you film and video buffs!

Sept. 25 Oct. 9 Oct. 23 Nov. 6 Nov. 20 Dec. 11

COURSE OVERVIEW

We will explore all topics in this class by means of minimal lecture, handouts, class discussion and screening of film clips to illustrate the topics being discussed. We will view clips from Great Depression and Great Recession films, and from any film that serves to illustrate the topic being addressed.

Sessions One and Two

Simple formal or structural elements of film such as type of shot, edits, or scene contribute as much to the meaning of a film as does the plot. Elements of film form have definitions as well as a history of use in art and photography. Like words they accrue their meaning from usage. In these sessions we will define and identify the basic elements of film and explore their meanings. Additionally we will consider visual literacy and some of its basic concepts drawn from human perception theory

Topics

1. Form and meaning in film and photography
2. Elements of the shot and their meaning
 - a. Frame – open, closed. (What is inside and what is outside)
 - b. Focal length – close, middle range, long
 - c. Angle – high, “on the level,” low
 - d. Focus – (deep, shallow) (sharp, soft)
 - e. Lighting – high, “natural,” low
 - f. Motion – pan, tilt, zoom, roll, dolly, etc.
3. Introduction to Visual Literacy
 - a. Concepts from perception theory
 - b. “Reading” a still or motion image

Sessions Three and Four

In these sessions we continue to explore both formal film elements and visual literacy. We consider film realism for the first time. Film elements have connotative as well as denotative meaning, and their usage in art and photography, as well as film, supply their connotations. Realism has two separate meanings in film, one of which is unique to film.

1. Shot transitions or edits
 - a. Match cut – continuity editing
 - b. Fade – perhaps change of place and location
 - c. Jump cut – basis of montage
 - d. Special effects, wipe, super imposition, iris in or out, etc.
2. Building the scene
 - a. Assembling the shots
 - b. Rhythm of edits
 - c. Bracketing the scene
 - d. Mise-en-scene

3. Realism
 - a. In literature and art
 - b. In film - two definitions
4. Romanticism
 - a. In literature and art
 - b. In film

Sessions Five and Six

In these sessions we consider film narrative as well as film form by contrasting non-realistic and realistic films. Drawing from Hollywood escapist films from the Depression era and Independent neo-realistic contemporary films, we examine the differences.

1. Film narration
 - a. Film topic
 - b. Plot
 - c. Protagonist(s) and antagonist(s) or antagonistic force(s)
 - d. Characters
 - e. Tone and style
 - f. Theme(s)
2. Hollywood in the Thirties
 - a. Musicals
 - b. Screwball Comedies
 - c. Exceptions, i.e. *Grapes of Wrath* (1940)
3. Contemporary Neo-Realism
 - a. Treatment of social issues in film
 - b. Early film realism
 - c. Contemporary Independent Films

Tentative List of Films from which Clips will be Selected

<i>Swing Time</i>	<i>His Girl Friday</i>
<i>It Happened One Night</i>	<i>Potemkin (Potyomkin)</i>
<i>The Thin Man</i>	<i>Nosferatu</i>
<i>My Man Godfrey</i>	<i>Grapes of Wrath</i>
<i>Grand Hotel</i>	
<i>Treeless Mountain</i>	<i>Sugar</i>
<i>Goodbye Solo</i>	<i>Old Joy</i>
<i>Wendy and Lucy</i>	<i>Chop Shop</i>

Instructors References

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- Arnheim, R. (1969) *Visual Thinking*. Berkeley, CA; University of California Press.
- Bordwell, D. and Thompson, K. (2008) *Film Art an Introduction; Eighth Edition*. Boston; McGraw Hill.
- Burch, N. (1969) *Theory of Film Practice*. Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press.
- Charney, L. and Schwartz, V. (eds) (1995) *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Berkeley, CA; University of California Press.
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- Gombrich, E., Hochberg, J. and Black, M (1972) *Art, Perception, and Reality*. Baltimore; The Johns Hopkins University Press.
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- Monaco, J.(1977) *How to Read a Film; Fourth Edition*. New York; Oxford University Press.
- Turner, G.(1988) *Film as Social Practice*. London; Routledge.