



The Education Tripos

Part I and Prelim to Part II

Film, Culture and Identity

Paper Overview: Before the early 1940s, with the advent of the work of André Bazin, film criticism consisted of little more than industry-subsidized promotion and gossip-laden articles on the off-screen exploits of popular stars. However, since that time cinema has increasingly been respected as an art form on a par with literature or painting. Although a number of theorists had written on film before Bazin, most attempted to judge it by the standards of other art-forms, such as poetry, literature, theatre, and art. Bazin recognized the need to create distinct criteria by which to analyse and judge the cinema and to establish the study of film as a respectable intellectual and academic pursuit. More than anyone else in the early days, he legitimized film scholarship. Bazin wanted the spectator to become aware of lighting, camera, set design, editing, music, script, acting and direction. But, as well as making people aware of the technical processes on which any aesthetics of film is based, the film critic may also draw attention to the psychological, sociological, and economic factors that influence both production and reception.

Students who take this course will also be studying English Literature, and some will be Drama students too. Many of the skills you learn on those courses will be transferable, but there will also be some new skills and technical terms you will need to learn. And, although, in the past, film studies have largely taken their cues from literary studies, increasingly, film studies have been transformed by the encounter with ‘cultural studies’ (an umbrella term for critical projects such as feminist theories, queer theory, critiques of nationalism, colonialism and post-colonialism etc.). As well as the specific films we screen for you as case studies (looking at both form and content), the sorts of theories we will be introducing and utilizing in seminars will consider issues such as the following: genre, *auteur* theory, stardom, spectator theory (e.g. as it relates to women/men, and/or gay and/or black), cinematography, adaptation etc. We will discuss the roles film plays as part of popular culture, as well as considering what defines an ‘art-house’ picture (e.g. can we automatically assume that a Hollywood film is ‘bad’ and an independent film is ‘good’?). Some Hollywood films embody complicated and contradictory social relations and can by no means be simply dismissed because of their corporate roots. We need to consider the complex ways in which films make their appeals to us as viewers in the multiple and specific places in which we incorporate cinema into our everyday lives. There will be opportunities to consider issues such as cinema and class, gender issues (e.g. women in front of and behind the camera and/or masculinities and femininities as

represented in film), how heterosexuality and homosexuality are represented in film.

There are two major focuses for our exploration of film. The first is **genre and its theories**. The first significant essays of genre criticism about film were Robert Warshow's articles on the gangster film and the western (first published in the *Partisan Review* in 1948 and 1954, respectively) and Bazin's two essays on the western in the early fifties. As film studies developed in the 1970s critical interest began to focus on formal concerns, a shift from what a film 'means' to how it produces meaning. Genre theory can be useful here, since genre codes provide one of the main ways in which meanings are structured (and indeed played with or questioned) Although there is considerable critical debate as to exactly what constitutes genre in film, it is clear that different genres enable filmmakers to shape reality in distinctive forms. The way such genres are made to operate can shift between different historical moments, picking up different cultural nuances and challenging viewers' perceptions in new ways. The course provides opportunity to explore the operation and transformation of genres within war films, documentary, naturalism, film noir and animation particularly.

The second focus is **childhood and cinema**, designed to link with issues and concerns raised in other areas of the Education Tripos. From its inception, cinema lays claim to the child. What happens when the analogical resources of the moving image are brought to bear on the figure of the child? What is the child for cinema? What does cinema want of the child? Beginning with the cinematic depiction of childhood in largely domestic contexts, the course goes on to explore how children are positioned in relation to school environments. The drive in films portraying schools is often towards critique and satire, as well as including comedic depictions of conflict that can offer more harmonious resolutions. The concept of 'childhood' is also extended to consider the space of 'adolescence', a realm of separation between adult and youth cultures that has proved to be of particular concern for film narratives in the post-war years. Issues of authority, rebellion, social cohesion and alienation are explored in vivid ways that connect with emerging new cultural formations in films.

Overall the course is designed to give students the opportunity to increase their understanding and appreciation of film, by extending the range of their viewing experience and relating this to the study of relevant film theory and criticism. We aim to stimulate students to become the critically and educationally informed audiences of the future. In addition, this course serves as a strong foundation for future post-graduate work, including the University of Cambridge's Screen, Media and Cultures MPhil.

Teaching

Teaching is by seminar and supervision. We arrange screenings of key films and also point you to other films that extend knowledge of key issues in film history and theory. The Faculty Library holds borrowable copies of films plus a range of critical material.

Assessment The paper is divided into two sections: section A corresponds to the theories of genre focus and section B corresponds to the childhood and cinema focus. Candidates will be required to answer three questions, one of which needs to be answered from section A, one from section B, and the third one can be from either section. The examination paper may be replaced by a dissertation of appropriate range and scope.

Useful Background Reading for this course:

Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds) *Film Theory and Criticism* 6th edition (Oxford University, Press, 2004)

Timothy J. Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* (Pearson, 2007)

Andrew Dix, *Beginning Film Studies* (Manchester University Press, 2008)

J. Monaco, *How to Read a Film* (Oxford University Press, 1981)

Robert Stam, *Film Theory: an Introduction* (Blackwell, 2000)

MICHAELMAS TERM

Section one: Noir and neo-noir

Film noir is a term coined by French critics when, after World War II, France gained access to the kinds of films Hollywood had been making in the early 1940s, and was to continue to make for the next decade or so. These films, often cheaply made, were remarkable for their portrayal of a world of moral uncertainty, of flawed human beings in pursuit of dark ends. Is 'film noir' a genre, or just a group of films with some sophisticated lighting effects in common? This section of the course will discuss the pertinence of genre as a way of interpreting some Hollywood films in terms of both their style and the social context of their production. The later fate of the 'genre' will also be discussed as 1970s *cinéaste* directors tried out their talents recreating the look and feel of 'noir'

Core films

Double Indemnity US d. Billy Wilder (1944)

Kiss Me Deadly US d. Robert Aldrich (1955)

China Town US d. Roman Polanski (1974)

Further films of relevance

The Maltese Falcon US d. John Huston (1941)

Out of the Past US d. Michael Curtiz (1945)

The Third Man UK d. Carol Reed (1949)

Useful starting points for reading

Sheri Chinen Beisen, *Blackout: World War II and the Origins of World War II* (JHU, 2005)

Joan Copjec (ed) *Shades of Noir: A Reader* 3rd edition (Verso, 1996)

E.A. Kaplan (ed) *Women in Film Noir* (bfi publishing, 2005)

James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (University of California, 1998)

A. Silver & J. Ursine (eds) *Film Noir: Reader* 3rd edition (Limelight, 1997)

Section Two: Animation: forms and meanings

Animation has a long history, going back to the origins of cinema, although the first full length animated feature, Disney's *Snow White*, was not made till 1937. Animation is currently enjoying something of a golden age, with many animated films rivalling the best live action productions in terms of artistic quality. Indeed the line between live action and animation has become increasingly fluid, given the number of films that include Computer Generated Images (CGI). In this section we examine the enhanced expressive range that animation techniques allow, look critically at the legacy of Disney films developing animated features competing with live action genres, and reflect on the fluidity of genre codes as these are incorporated within different forms of animation.

Core films

Snow White and the Seven Dwarves Disney Studios USA (1937)

A Close Shave Aardman Studios, UK (1993)

Princess Mononoke Ghibli Studios, Japan (1997)

Further films of relevance

Ghost in the Shell Japan (1995) Mamoru Oshii

Grave of the Fireflies Japan (1988) Isao Takahata

Watership Down UK (1978) Martin Rosen

Useful starting points for reading

Lord, P and Sibley, B (no date) *Cracking Animation* London, Thames and Hudson

McCarthy, H (2002) *Hayao Miyazake: Master of Japanese Animation* Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press

Napier, H (2001) *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke* London: Palgrave.

Pilling, J ed. (1997) *A Reader in Animation Studies* London: John Libbey

Wells, P (2002) *Animation and America* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Section Three: Projections of War

The West has known two world wars since the birth of cinema and has also been involved in various combats with regard to decolonisation. 'War films' may glorify or put forward the heroics of a particular triumphant nation, or may show the horrors of war, and thus be classified as anti-war films. War films may promote revolutionary causes, or represent the notion of a just war. In the 1940s, for example, some Hollywood studios began to make explicitly interventionist movies. We consider the potential of the cinema as a medium of propaganda and consider issues such as such as spectator identification. We also debate whether propaganda can ever be art, or whether the two are mutually exclusive.

Core films

All Quiet on the Western Front USA d. Lewis Milestone (1930)

The Great Dictator USA d. Charles Chaplin (1940)

The Battle of Algiers Italy and Algeria d. Gillo Pontecorvo (1965)

Further films of relevance

J'Accuse France d. Abel Gance (1919)

The Mortal Storm USA d. Frank Borzage (1940)

Imagining Argentina USA/Spain d. Christopher Hampton (2003)

Apocalypse Now US d. Francis Ford Coppola (1979)

Useful starting points for reading

Susan L Carruthers, *The Media at War* (Palgrave/Macmillan, 2000)

James Chapman, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939-1945* (I.B. Tauris, 2008)

Andrew Kelly, *Cinema and the Great War* (Routledge, 1997)

Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes To War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War Two Movies* (University of California Press, 1990)

Barry Langford, 'The War/Combat Film: Genre and Nation; in *Film Genre Hollywood and Beyond* (Edinburgh University Press, 2005)

Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logic of Perception* trans. Patrick Camiller, Verso, 1994)

LENT TERM

Theme One: Celluloid Childhood

By the beginning of the twentieth century, when films began to be made commercially for a mass market, the image of the child had long figured within literary contexts as a touchstone for lost innocence, a victim highlighting different forms of social oppression, and a symbol of freedom or imaginative vitality, vulnerable to the forces ranged against it. Film picks up and develops these themes in different ways that both reflect the cultural contexts within which the films were produced and may encourage a critical consciousness that is distinctive to the film medium. In this section of the course we trace the development of this consciousness within a range of different cinematic modes and contexts.

Core films

The Kid US d. Charles Chaplin (1920)
My Childhood UK d. Bill Douglas (1972)
Etre et Avoir France d. Nicholas Philibert (2002)

Further films of relevance

The Innocents US Jack Clayton (1961)
The Long Day Closes UK Terence Davies (1992)
My Neighbor Totoro Japan Hayao Miyazake (1989)
Spellbound US Jeffrey Blitz (2002)

Useful Starting points for reading

Armstrong, R. *Understanding Realism* (London, bfi, 2005)
Dick, E. Noble, A, and Petrie, D., *Bill Douglas, A Lanternist's Account* (London, bfi publishing, 1993)
Kimber, J. *The Art of Charlie Chaplin* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2000)
Klevin, A *Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film* (Wiltshire, 2000)
Sinyard, Neil, *Children in the Movies* (London, 1992)
Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, NI Indiana University Press, 2001)
Paul Ward, *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* (Wallflower, 2005)

Theme Two: School on the Screen

Children end up in school and so film-makers have often followed them there. Understanding school as both a 'location' (often imprisoning), and as a model for political and cultural institutions in adult life, school films have been satirical, anarchic, naturalistic and even voyeuristic. We look at a variety of such films exploring the different ways (emotionally, politically, morally) in which they represent childhood in institutions, and the institutions themselves.

Core films

Zero de Conduite France D. Jean Vigo (1933)
...If UK d. Lindsay Anderson (1968)
Kes UK d. Ken Loach (1969)
Bad Education Spain d. Almodovar (2004)

Further films of relevance:

To Sir with Love UK d. Clavell (1967)

The Browning Version UK d. Asquith (1951)
The Belles of St Trinian's UK d. Launder (1954)

Useful starting points for reading

There is little on the 'genre' of school film but a considerable amount on particular films and directors. Note particularly:

Michael Temple, *Jean Vigo* Manchester:MUP (2005)
Jacob Leigh *The Cinema of Ken Loach: Art in the Service of the People* London:Wallflower (2002)
Lindsay Anderson *Never Apologise (Collected Writing)* London:Plexus 2005
Hedling, Erik, *Lindsay Anderson: Maverick Film-Maker* London, 1998
Lambert, Gavin, *Mainly About Lindsay Anderson* London: Faber, 2000
Frederick Strauss (ed) *Almodovar on Almodovar* London:Faber, 2006
Paul Julian Smith *Desire Unlimited: The Cinema of Pedro Almodovar* Verso, 1994

Theme Three – The Cinema of Adolescence

This section examines films which all deal with the difficulties of growing up in various ways. This will include discussions of the death of childhood as figured in the films, and experiments in form. How do the various films represent cinematically issues such as peer pressure, policing of gender roles, and rebellion against authority figures. We will also consider the market; for example the 'teen film' made specifically for teenage customers.

Core Films

Ratcatcher UK d. Lynne Ramsay (1999)
Sweet Sixteen UK d. Ken Loach (2002)
Rebel Without a Cause US d. Nicholas Ray (1955)

Further films of relevance

Fishtank UK d. Andrea Arnold (2009)
The Last Picture Show U.S. d. Peter Bogdanovich (1971)
The Breakfast Club US d. John Hughes (1985)

Useful starting points for reading

David M. Considine, *The Cinema of Adolescence* Mcfarland, (1985)
Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: the Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* Temple University Press, (2002)
Ruth Goldstein and Edith Zornow, *The Screen Image of Youth: Movies about Children and Adolescents* The Scarecrow Press, (1980)
Timothy Shary, *Teen Movies: American Youth on Screen* Wallflower, (2005)
Emma Wilson, *Cinema's Missing Children* Wallflower Press, (2003)

Course team: The course will be taught by Pam Hirsch, Steve Watts and David Whitley