Enquire Teaching Timetable

Course Outcome

COMM 2930 - Understanding Movies

Learning Outcome

1. Students will be able to develop cine-literacy and analyze movies through the comprehension of film languages.
2. Students will be able to relay the movies to their broader contexts of production and consumption and through which to understand the culturaldiversity.
3. Students will be able to critically reflect upon ideologies underlying the film texts.
4. Students will be able to discuss existing and emergent challenges facing by human world through the discussion of the relationship of movies and current thoughts such as feminism and post-modernism.
5. Students will be able to produce a critical film analysis that reflects upon political, social and cultural issues embedded in film texts.

Course Syllabus

The course consists of three main parts: (I) film form and aesthetics (week 1 to 4); (II) two main categories of movies (week 5 and 6); (III) critical theories (week 7 to 12). The first part equips students with specific film languages for film appreciation. The discussion of avant-garde movies and genre draws students' attention to the dynamics as well as the competition between the two major modes of cultural productions. The last part introduces a variety of critical theories that will lead the understanding of movies to the rethinking of significant issues of human concerns. Key concepts will be introduced so that students can apply them in formulating their film analysis. The sequence of these issues implies a progression of knowledge from film specific to interdisciplinary approach and from film appreciation to critical evaluation.

The following is an outline of the course:

(1) Introduction: Film Styles: Realism and Formalism

This lecture will introduce the two major styles of films: realism and formalism. It aims to explain how film is being perceived as an art form and as a representation of reality. The introduction leads students to think of the nature of movie.

Key concept: film style, formalism and realism

Movies: *The Rules of the Game* (1939), *Last Year at Marienbad* (France/Italy 1961),《香港製造》(1997),《天水圍的日與夜》(2008),《東邪西毒》(1994),

(2) Film Narrative

This lecture will talk about how story is being narrated in movies through the elaboration of film structure. The concept of motif is highlighted to direct students to pay attention to how visual elements are contributed to the story telling in movies.

Key words: narrative Structure, story and plot, motifs,

Movies: *Rashomon* (1950), *Confessions* (告白，2011)

(3) Film Style: mise-en-scene

This lecture will present a major concept used in film appreciation—mise-en- scene. It explains how various visual elements including set design, costume, make-up, framing, cinematography, lighting etc. are articulating the meaning of the movies.

Key word: mise-en-scene

Movies: *The Conformist* (1970), *Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Old Boy* (2003), *the Artist* (2002)

(4) Film Style: Editing and Sound

This lecture will elucidate how post-production techniques such as editing, sound mixing and music can create meaning. The concepts will be related to the two major film styles of realism and formalism.

Key words: montage, continuity

Movies:*the Battleship Potemkin* (1925), *Psycho* (1960), *Godfather* (1972), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Run Rola Run* (1998)

(5) Auteur Theory and Avant-garde Movies

After introducing basic film languages in the previous lessons, this lecture will introduce auteur theory and avant-garde movies to exemplify movie as art. Auteur theory stresses the importance of understanding movies as imprints of film directors' aesthetic policy and creative

deployment of film languages. The discussion will lead to examination of the nature of avant-garde movie that embraces experimental spirit.

Keywords: auteur theory, avant-garde

Movies: *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), *Breathless* (1960), *Kika* (1993), *Volver* (2007)

(6) Film genres and blockbusters

This lecture introduces the opposite of avant-garde movies – genre movies. It also relates conventional making with Hollywood movies production

Keywords: genres, spectatorship.

Movies: *Chicago (2003)*, *Perhaps Love* (2005), *Sin City* (2005)

(7) Movies: Film and Ideologies: Class and Ethnic

This lecture aims to go beyond film languages by relate films to broader social contexts. The concept of ideology will be introduced to allow students to critically examine the power relations underpinning film texts. Class and racial stereotypes in movies will be used to demonstrate the ideological contestation and identity politics in movies.

Key Words: Ideology, stereotype

Movies: *Color Purple* (1985), *Titanic* (1997),

(8) Movies: Gender and Sexuality

This lecture continues the discussion of identity politics by analyzing how gender and sexuality are being represented and constructed in movies. Feminism and queer theory will be introduced not only to address the subject matters but also explain the transformation of film critiques from ideological approach to broader cultural studies of institutions and audiences.

Key concepts: feminism, gender, sexuality, queer theory, camp

Movies: 《金枝玉葉》(1994), *Boys Don't Cry* (1999)

(9) Movies and the Nation

This lecture will introduce how the idea of national cinema is expressed and transformed. It problematizes the nation-state, sensitizing students' awareness of the nation as constructed imagined communities of which the cinema takes a central place.

 Keywords: nation-state, imagined communities

 Movies: *The Birth of a Nation (*1915), 《賽德克·巴萊》(2011)

(10)   Movies and Globalization:

While the previous lecture delineates the significance of movies in building national identity, this lecture will discuss the consequence of the growing trend of globalization of movies production. Issues such as cultural homogenization and heterogenization, the clash of civilizations and local appropriation would be addressed.

Keywords: globalization, cultural homogenization and heterogenization, crash of civilization

Movies: *Infernal Affairs* (2003), *the Departed* (2006), *Avatar* (2005), the *Innocence of Muslims* (2012)

(11)   Movies and Post-modernism

This lecture will address how movies are responded, aesthetically and thematically, to issues brought about by the distrust of modernism and the over-development of modernity. The discussion will address particularly the crisis of self-identity.

Key words: post-modernism, deconstruction, self-identity

 Movies: *Metropolis* (1927), *the Matrix* (1999), *Suzhou River* (2000)

(12) Synthesis: Citizen Kane

      This lecture uses the classical movie "Citizen Kane" to illustrate the complex nature of movie and the synthesis of multiple language systems in film texts.

Movies: *Citizen Kane* (1941)

(13) Group Presentation

Assessment Type

	Assessment Type	Current Percent
1	Essays	0
2	Essay test or exam	0
3	Homework or assignment	0
4	Others	0

Feedback for Evaluation

1. Course and Teaching Evaluation Survey
2. Internal Course Review

Required Readings

Week 1

Giannetti Louis (2011), Understanding Movies, Boston: Allyn & Bacon (12th edition)

Lehman Peter & Luhr William (2008), *Thinking about Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying*, Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub, 3rd edition, Chapter 1: Photography, pp. 1-43

Week 2

Reading: Prince Stephen (1997), Movies and Meaning: an introduction to Film, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Ch. 6 "the Nature of narrative in films", pp. 184-213

Week 3

Giannetti Louis (2011), Understanding Movies, Boston: Allyn & Bacon (12th edition)

Lehman Peter & Luhr William (2008), *Thinking about Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying*, Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub, 3rd edition, Chapter 2 & 3, "Mise-en-scene" and "movement", pp. 44-130

Week 4

Giannetti Louis (2011), Understanding Movies, Boston: Allyn & Bacon (12th edition)

Lehman Peter & Luhr William (2008), *Thinking about Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying*, Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub, 3rd edition, Chapter 4 & 5 "Editing" and "Sound" , pp. 132-236

Week 5

Verrone William (2011), Ch.1 Defining the Avant-Garde Film in *Adaptation and the Avant-Garde: Alternative Perspectives on Adaptation Theory and Practice*, New York: Continuum, pp. 7-14

Wollen Peter (2004), From Signs and Meaning in the Cinema: the Auteur Theory in Braudy Leo & Cohen Marshall (eds) *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, New York: Oxford University Press

Week 6

Lehman Peter and Luhr William (2008), *Thinking about Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, Chapter 5: Genres

Week 7

Giannetti Louis (2011), Understanding Movies, Boston: Allyn & Bacon (12th edition)

Lehman Peter & Luhr William (2008), *Thinking about Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying*, Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub, 3rd edition, Chapter 10: Ideology

Wiegman Robyn (1998), Race, ethnicity and film in Hill John & Gibson P. H. eds *The Oxford Guides to Film Studies*, Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, pp. 158-168

Week 8

White Patricia (1998), Feminism and film in Hill John & Gibson P. H. eds *The Oxford Guides to Film Studies*, Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, pp. 117-131

Lehman Peter & Luhr William (2008), *Thinking about Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying*, Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub, 3rd edition, Chapter 12: Gender and Sexuality

Week 9

Crofts Stephen (1998), "Concepts of national cinema" in Hill J. and Gibson P. C. (eds) *the Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, pp. 385-394

Week 10

Hill John (1998), "Film and Postmodernism" in Hill J. and Gibson P. C. (eds) *the Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, pp. 96-105.

Week 11

Lehman Peter & Luhr William (2008), *Thinking about Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying*, Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub, 3rd edition, Chapter 16, Globalization, Digitalization, Convergence: Current Trends: the Matrix

Week 12

Giannetti Louis (2011), Understanding Movies, Boston: Allyn & Bacon (12th edition)

Lehman Peter & Luhr William (2008), *Thinking about Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying*, Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub, 3rd edition, Chapter 12, *Synthesis Citizen Kane*

Recommended Readings

.