

Film/Media: Theory and Aesthetics Winter 2015

Course Number: SAA 568

Faculty: Ranjani Mazumdar

Class Timings: Monday – 2 - 4pm (Lecture), 4 - 6pm (Screening); Wednesday – 11am -1pm (Lecture)

Office Hours: Friday, 11am-1pm (except on faculty meeting days)

Email: ranjani.mazumdar@gmail.com

Course Description: This required M.A course is an advanced journey through the theoretical debates on film and media aesthetics. We will explore the ontological status of Cinema, its relationship to other media forms and its transformed nature in the digital age. The technological basis of cinematic and media practice will be central to the framing of aesthetic concerns. At the end of the 19th century, technologically mediated moving images ushered in a fundamental transformation in the spheres of public life and human experience. The aesthetic question no longer remained limited only to the formal and stylistic features of a tangible object but to a transformation of sensory perception. When viewed from the vantage point of the contemporary digital age, new issues come to the fore. In this journey from celluloid to the digital, the moving image will be positioned as a form of modern magic, as an indexical art, as an inter-medial surface, as a historical archive, as collage, as assemblage, and as a site of terror, thrill, and enchantment. We will focus on key theoretical formulations and specific historical conjunctures along with close analysis of filmic and media material. The course is only open to those who have already done **Introduction to Film Studies**.

Requirements and Assessment:

- i) Class participation in discussions
- ii) One midterm presentation in class.
- iii) A 3000-4000 words final research paper to be submitted at the end of the term. The paper must follow a consistent style for its footnotes and bibliographic entries.
- iv) A Final examination at the end of the term to be taken in class at the end of the term (Dates will be finalised with the rest of the Exam schedule)

Grade plan:

Class participation + midterm presentation = 1 credit (25%)

Final Research Paper = 1 Credit (25 %)

Final Examination = 2 Credits (50%)

WEEK 1

Session 1. Monday, January 12. Introducing Film/Media Aesthetics

Miriam Hansen “Why Media Aesthetics” *Critical Inquiry* 30, Winter 2004, 391-395

Tom Conley “Cinema and Its Discontents: Jacques Ranciere and Film Theory” *SubStance*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Issue 108, 2005, 96-106

WEEK 2

Session 2. Monday, January 19. Framing Cinema

Andre Bazin “Painting and Film” from his book *What is Cinema* Vol.1, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1967, 164-9

Thomas Elsaesser “Cinema as Window and Frame” from Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses* New York and London: Routledge, 2010, 13-34

Screening: *Paris Qui Dort* (Rene Clair, 1924, 35 Mts. France)

Session 3. Wednesday, January 21. Early Encounters and Debates on the Medium

Tom Gunning “Loie Fuller and the Art of Motion: Body, Light, Electricity, and the Origins of Cinema” in Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey ed. *Camera Obscura Camera Lucida: Essays in Honor of Annette Michelson* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003, 75-89

Siegfried Kracauer “The Establishment of Physical Existence” from his book *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* New York: Oxford University Press, 1960, 41-59

Hugo Munsterberg “Why we go to the Movies” from Alan Langdale ed. *Hugo Munsterberg on Film: The Photoplay, A Psychological Study and Other Writings*, New York, London: Routledge 2002, 171-190

Rudolf Arnheim “Film and Reality” from his book *Film as Art* Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2006, 8-33

Bela Balazs “The Face of Man” from his book, *Theory of The Film: Character and Growth of a New Art*, London: Dennis Dobson Ltd. 1952, 60-88

WEEK 3

Session 4. Wednesday, January 28. The Cinematic Avant Garde of the 1920s and 30s

Sergei Eisenstein “Dickens, Griffith and Film Today” from his book *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* edited and translated by Jay Leyda, San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977, 195-256

Annette Michelson “From Magician to Epistemologist: Vertov’s Man With A Movie Camera” in P. Adams Sitney ed. *The Essential Cinema* New York: New York University Press, 1975, 95-111

Robert Farmer “Jean Epstein – Great Director Series” in *Senses of Cinema* December 2010

Dietrich Scheunemann "The Double, the Décor, and the Framing Device: Once More on Robert Wiene's The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" from Dietrich Scheunemann ed. *Expressionist Film: New Perspectives* Camden House, 2003, 125-156

Rachel O. Moore "The Moderns" from her book *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000, 12-25

WEEK 4

Session 5. Monday, February 2. Mass Culture and Cinema I

Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002, 94-136

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" reprinted in Andrew Utterson ed. *Technology and Culture: The Film Reader* London and New York: Routledge, 2005, 105-126

Siegfried Kracauer "The Cult of Distraction" from his book *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* Cambridge, Massachusetts, London and England: Harvard University Press, 1995, 323-330

Screening: *The Crowd* (King Vidor, 1928, 98 Mts. U.S.A)

Session 6. Tuesday, February 3. Mass Culture and Cinema II – 1960s and the turn to Ideology *

Guy Debord, "Commodity as Spectacle and "Unity and Division within Appearances" from Guy Debord *Society of the Spectacle* New York: Zone Books, 1995, 25-46

Jean Louis Comolli "Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field" in Bill Nichols ed. *Movies and Methods Vol. II*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985, 40-57

Fredric Jameson "Reification & Utopia in Mass Culture" from *Signatures of the Visible* New York & London: Routledge, 1992, 9-34

WEEK 5

Session 7. Monday, February 16. Political Modernism and the Brechtian Turn in Cinema

David N. Rodowick "The Discourse of Political Modernism" from his book *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory* University of California Press, 1994, 1-41

Dana Polan "A Brechtian Cinema? Towards a Politics of Self Reflexive Film" in Bill Nichols ed. *Movies and Methods Vol. II* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985, 661-671

Robert Stam "The Pleasures of Subversion" from his book *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, 209-254

Screening: *Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomas Gutierrez Alea, 1968, 97 Mts. Cuba)

Session 8. Wednesday, February 18. The Neo-Avant Garde

P. Adam Sitney "Structural Film" in P. Adam Sitney ed. *Film Culture Reader* New York, Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1970, 326-348

Annette Michelson "Film and the Radical Aspiration" in P. Adam Sitney ed. *Film Culture Reader* New York, Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1970, 404-422

Mani Kaul "Towards a Cinematic Object" in Aruna Vasudev and Philippe Lenglet ed. *Indian Cinema Super Bazaar*, Stosius Inc/Advent Books Division, 1983, 126-132

Paul Willeman "An Avant-Garde for the 90s" from his book *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press and BFI Publishing 1994, 141-161

David N. Rodowick "The Crisis of Political Modernism" from his book *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory* University of California Press, 1994, 271-302

WEEK 6

Session 9. Monday, February 23. Mapping the Postmodern

Andreas Huyssen "Mapping the Postmodern" From his book *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986, 179-221

Ann Friedberg "The End of Modernity: Where is your Rupture" chapter from her book *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1994, 157-179

Jean Baudrillard "Simulacra and Simulations" chapter 7 from Mark Poster ed. *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988, 166-184

Screening: *Run Lola Run* (Tom Tykwer, 1998, 80 Mts. Germany)

Session 10. Wednesday, February 25. Cognitive Film Theory

Gregory Currie "Cognitivism" in Robert Stam and Toby Miller ed. *A Companion to Film Theory* Blackwell Publishing, 1999, 105-122

David Bordwell "Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory" in David Bordwell and Noel Carol ed. *Post Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, 3-36

Ira Bhaskar "Historical Poetics: Narrative and Interpretation" Robert Stam and Toby Miller ed. *A Companion to Film Theory* Blackwell Publishing, 1999, 387-412

WEEK 7

Session 11. Monday, March 2. Television and Video Theory

Anna McCarthy "From Screen to Site: Television's Material Culture, and Its Place" in *October*, Vol. 98, Autumn, 2001, 93-111

Marsha Kinder "Music Video and the Spectator: Television, Ideology and Dream" *Film Quarterly* Vol.38, No.1, Autumn 1984, 2-15

Caetlin Benson Allott "Introduction: Opening up to Home Video" from her book *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013, 1-24

Screening: *The Truman Show* (Peter Wier, 1998, 103 Mts. U.S.A)

Session 12. Wednesday, March 4. Sound Theory

Thomas Elsaesser "Cinema as Ear - Acoustics and Space" from Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses* New York and London: Routledge, 2010, 129-148

Michel Chion "The Three Listening Modes" in Jonathan Sterne ed. *The Sound Studies Reader* London and New York: Routledge, 2012, 48-53

Stephen Putnam Hughes "Music in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Drama, Gramophone, and the Beginnings of Tamil Cinema" *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 66 No. 1 Feb, 2007, 3-34

Shikha Jhingan "Lata Mangeshkar's Voice in the Age of Cassette Reproduction" in *Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies* Vol.4 No.2, July 2013, 97-114

WEEK 8

Session 13. Monday, March 16. The Post Celluloid Moment

Lev Manovich "Digital Cinema and the History of a Moving Image" from his book *The Language of New Media* Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 2001, 293-308

D.N Rodowick "The Virtual Life of Film", chapter from his book *The Virtual Life of Film* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000, 1-25

John Belton "If Film is Dead, What is Cinema?" in *Screen* 55(4), Winter 2014, 460-470

Laura Mulvey "Passing Time: Reflections on the Old and the New" in Clive Myer ed. *Critical Cinema Beyond the Theory of Practice* London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2011, 71-81

Screening: *Side by Side* (Christopher Kenneally, 2012, 99 Mts. U.S.A)

Session 14. Wednesday, March 18. Media Sensorium

Marshal McLuhan "Medium is the Message" chapter from his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: MIT Press, 1994, 7-21

Marshal McLuhan “Media Hot and Cold” chapter from his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: MIT Press, 1994, 22-32

Marshal McLuhan “The Gadget Lover: Narcissus as Narcosis” chapter from his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: MIT Press, 1994, 41-47

Friedrich Kittler “Gramophone, Film, Typewriter” *October*, Vol. 41, Summer 1987, 101-118

Henri Jenkins “Worship at the Altar of Convergence: A New Paradigm for Understanding Media Change” from his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* New York and London: New York University Press, 2006, 1-24

WEEK 9

Session 15. Monday March 23. Embodiment and Affect

Susan Buck-Morss “The Cinema Screen as Prosthesis of Perception: A Historical Account” in C. Nadia Seremetakis ed. *The Senses Still: Perception as Material Culture in Modernity* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, 45-62

Vivian Sobjack “The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Photographic, Cinematic and Electronic “Presence” “from her book *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2004, 135-162

Laura U. Marks “The Memory of Images” from her book *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and Affect*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 24-77

Nigel Thrift “Understanding the Material Practices of Glamour” in Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth ed. *The Affect Theory Reader* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010, 289-308

Screening: *Nostalgia for the Light* (Patricio Guzman, 2010, 90 Mts. Chile)

Session 16. Wednesday, March 25. Media Archaeology I

Jonathan Crary “Techniques of the Observer” in *October* Vol. 45 Summer 1988, 3-35

Jussi Parikka “Media Archaeology of the Senses: Audiovisual, Affective, Algorithmic” from his book *What is Media Archaeology* Polity Press, 2012, 19-40

Tomas Elsaesser “The New Film History as Media Archaeology” in *Cinemas: Journal of Film Studies* Vol. 14, No. 2-3, 2004, 75-117

Anne Freidberg, “The Multiple” from her book *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft*. MIT Press, 2006, 191- 239

WEEK 10

Session 17. Monday, March 30. Media Archaeology II

Bill Brown “Materiality” in W.J.T Mitchel and Mark B.N Hansen ed. *Critical Terms for Media Studies* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010, 49-63

Hito Steyerl “In Defense of the Poor Image” from her book *The Wretched of the Screen*, Sternberg Press, 31- 45.

Ariel Rogers “Digital Cinema’s Heterogenous Appeal: Debates on Embodiment, Intersubjectivity, and Immediacy” from her book *Cinematic Appeals: The Experience of New Media Technologies* New York, Columbia University Press, 2013, 91-139

Sudhir Mahavevan “Traveling Showmen, Makeshift Cinemas: The Bioscopewallah and Early Cinema History in India” in *Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies* Vol.1, No. 1, January, 2010, 27-47

Screening: *Ghost in the Shell* (Mamoru Oshii, 1995, 80 Mts. Japan)

Session 18. Wednesday, April 1. The Cultural Politics of Speed

Paul Virilio “The Dromocratic Revolution” from his book *Speed and Politics* Translated by Marc Polizotti, Semiotext(E) Foreign Agents Press, 1977, 27-48

Enda Duffy “Introduction: The Adrenalin Aesthetics: Speed and Culture” from his book *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009, 1-16

Karen Beckman “Crash Aesthetics: *Amorres Peros* and the Dream of Cinematic Mobility” from her book *Crash: Cinema and the Politics of Speed and Stasis*, 179-204

WEEK 11

Session 19. Monday, April 6. The Archive Effect and Memory

Jamie Baron “Introduction” from her book *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* London and New York, Routledge, 2014, 1-15

Jamie Baron “The Digital Archive Effect: Historiographies and Histories for the Digital Era” from her book *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* London and New York, Routledge, 2014, 138-172

Ranjani Mazumdar “Retro in Contemporary Bombay Cinema” in Toby Miller ed. *Routledge Companion to Global Popular Culture* Routledge, 2015, 166-178

Screening: *Reconstruction* (Irene Lusztig, 2001, 90 Mts. Romania)

Session 20. Wednesday, April 8. The Aesthetics of Surveillance

Gilles Deleuze “Postscript on the Societies of Control” in *October* Vo. 59, Winter 1992, 3-7

Thomas Y. Levine “Rhetoric of the Temporal Index: Surveillant Narration and the Cinema of “Real Time” from Thomas Levine, Ursula Frohne and peter Welbet ed. *CTRL Space: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother* Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 2002, 578-593

Catherine Zimmer “Surveillance Cinema: Narrative between Technology and Politics” in *Surveillance & Society* 8(4), 2011, 427-440.

Lorna Muir “Control Space? Cinematic Representations of Surveillance Space between Discipline and Control” in *Surveillance & Society* 0(3), 2012, 263-279

WEEK 12

Session 21. Monday, April 13. Forensic Aesthetics

Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman *Mengele’s Skull: The Advent of Forensic Aesthetics* Sternberg Press/Portikus, 2012

Eyal Weizman *Forensic Architecture: Notes from Fields and Forums* Documenta 13, Hatje Kantz, 2012, 1-20

Screening: *Old Boy* (Park Chan-wook, 2003, 120 Mts. Korea)

*** This class is on Tuesday the 3rd instead of Wednesday the 4th of February. We will meet from 4.30 to 6.30.**