FILM STUDIES

Departmental Office: 513 Dodge; 212-854-2815
http://arts.columbia.edu/film (http://arts.columbia.edu/film/)

Director of Undergraduate Studies: Prof. Robert King, 509C Dodge Hall; 212-854-2815; rk2704@columbia.edu. Office hours: Wednesdays, 2–5 p.m.

The major in film studies is scholarly, international in scope, and writing-intensive. Students choose to major in film if they want to learn more about the art form, from technology to cultural significance; want to work in the film industry; or are interested in a major that combines arts and humanities.

Students usually declare the major toward the end of the second year by meeting with the departmental adviser; together, they create a program of twelve required courses within the major, often supplemented by courses outside the department. In the lecture classes and seminars, there tends to be a mixed population of undergraduate majors and graduate film students.

Students have the opportunity to gain additional experience by taking advantage of internship opportunities with film companies, working on graduate student films, and participating in the Columbia Undergraduate Film Productions (CUFP), an active, student-run organization that provides film-making experience to Columbia undergraduate producers and directors. In addition to careers in screenwriting, directing, and producing, alumni have gone on to work in film distribution, publicity, archives, and festivals, and to attend graduate school to become teachers and scholars.

The trajectory of the major is from introductory-level courses (three are required), to intermediate and advanced-level courses (two are required, plus seven electives). While film studies majors take workshops in screenwriting and film-making, the course of study is rooted in film history, theory, and culture.

The prerequisite for all classes is Introduction to Film and Media Studies (FILM UN1000) offered each term at Columbia as well as at Barnard, and open to first-year students. Subsequently, majors take a combination of history survey courses; workshops ("Labs"); and advanced classes in theory, genre study, national cinemas, auteur study, and screenwriting.

The educational goal is to provide film majors with a solid grounding in the history and theory of film; its relation to other forms of art; and its synthesis of visual storytelling, technology, economics, and sociopolitical context, as well as the means to begin writing a script and making a short film.

Students who wish to graduate with honors must take the Senior Seminar in Film Studies (FILM UN3900), writing a thesis that reflects mastery of cinematic criticism. The essay is submitted after the winter break. Students decide upon the topic with the professor and develop the essay during the fall semester.

Since film courses tend to be popular, it is imperative that students attend the first class. Registration priority is usually given to film majors and seniors.

Departmental Honors

In order to qualify for departmental honors, students must take FILM UN3900 Senior Seminar in Film Studies, have a GPA of at least 3.75 in the major and distinction in their overall achievements in film study. The department submits recommendations to the undergraduate honors committees for confirmation. Normally no more than 10% of graduating majors receive departmental honors in a given academic year.

Faculty

Vito Adriaensens
Nico Baumbach
Loren-Paul Caplin
Jane Gaines
Jerome Game
Ronald Gregg
Annette Insdorf
Caryn James
Robert King
Richard Peña
James Schamus
Edward Turk

Major in Film Studies

The major in film studies requires a minimum of 36 points distributed as follows:

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<thead>
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<th>Introductory Courses</th>
<th>History Courses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FILM UN1000</td>
<td>Film and Media Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FILM GU4000</td>
<td>Cinema History 1: Beginning-1930</td>
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<td>FILM UN2010</td>
<td>Cinema History 2: 1930-60</td>
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<td>Cinema History 4: after 1990</td>
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FILM UN1000 Introduction to Film and Media Studies. 3 points.
Lecture and discussion. Priority given to declared film majors. Fee: $75.

Prerequisites: Discussion section FILM UN1001 is a required corequisite. This course serves as an introduction to the study of film and related visual media, examining fundamental issues of aesthetics (mise-en-scene, editing, sound), history (interaction of industrial, economic, and technological factors), theory (spectatorship, realism, and indexicality), and criticism (auteurist, feminist, and genre-based approaches). The course also investigates how digital media change has been productive of new frameworks for moving image culture in the present. FILM UN1001 is required discussion section for this course.

FILM 1010 Genre Study. 3 points.
Fee: Course Fee - 75

Prerequisites: This lecture course will have 3 discussion sections, capped at 20, listed as UN 1011 Genre Study - Disc. There will also be a film screening, scheduled immediately after one of the lecture sessions. This course examines how globalization and the global success of American blockbuster films have affected Hollywood film production, stardom, distribution, and exhibition. The course will analyze blockbuster aesthetics, including aspects of special effects, 3-D, sound, narration, genre, and editing. We will also study the effects of new digital technologies on Hollywood and the cross-pollination among Hollywood, art house, and other national cinemas. Finally, we will examine the effects of 9/11, the “war on terrorism,” climate change and other global concerns on marketing, aesthetics and other aspects of this cinema.

FILM UN2010 Cinema History 1: Beginning-1930. 3 points.
Discussion Section Required

This course rethinks the “birth of cinema” from the vantage of “when old media was new.” Following standard approaches, it moves from actualities to fiction, from the “cinema of attractions” to narrative, from the cinématographe to cinema, from cottage industry to studio system. Units in silent film music, early genres, film piracy and copyright, word and moving image, and restoration—the film archivist’s dilemma in the digital era. FILM W2011

FILM UN2020 Cinema History 2: 1930-60. 3 points.
Discussion Section Required
Priority given to film majors. Fee: $75.

This course examines major developments and debates in the history of cinema between 1930 and 1960, from the consolidation of the classic Hollywood studio system in the early sound era to the articulation of emergent “new waves” and new critical discourses in the late 1950s. Our approach will be interdisciplinary in scope, albeit with an emphasis on social and cultural history—concerned not only with how movies have developed as a form of art and medium of entertainment, but also with cinema’s changing function as a social institution. FILM W2021
This course brings our survey of the development of the art, technology, and industry of motion images up to the present. During this era, most people no longer watched movies (perhaps the most neutral term) in theaters, and digital technology came to dominate every aspect of production, distribution, and exhibition. Highlighted filmmakers include Michael Haneke, Lars von Trier, Wong Kar-wei, and Steve McQueen. Topics range from contemporary horror to animation. Requirements: short (2-3 pages) papers on each film shown for the class and a final, take-home exam. FILM W2041

Spring 2020: FILM UN2040 Course Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment FILM 2040 001/16587 T 10:00am - 1:45pm Schamus 3 58/59 511 Dodge Building

FILM UN2190 Topics in American Cinema. 3 points.

Once associated with images of fishnet-costumed fans of The Rocky Horror Picture Show, the concept of the "cult film" has gone increasingly mainstream in recent years. This course seeks to assess the popularization of the phenomenon, asking: what exactly is a cult film? And what does the mainstreaming of the concept suggest about our changing relation to today's media environment? Whereas most types of film can be defined through widely recognized elements of story and setting (tumbleweed, deserts, gunfights: it's a western), this is far from being the case with cult. Some have defined the cult film as "created" by audiences (again, Rocky Horror); others in terms of nonclassical or aberrant modes of textuality (e.g. various forms of "bad taste" cinema). This course, however, seeks to go beyond audience- and text-based definitions, instead placing cult within a series of historical contexts: as an outgrowth of film industry practices that sustained the low cultural status of certain movie types during the classical Hollywood cinema (e.g. B movies, exploitation, etc.); as the product of audience reception practices, shaped by the politics of cultural taste and "camp" viewing practices that first coalesced during the "midnight movie" phenomenon of the late 1960s/1970s; as sustained by the transnational flow of media content, offering new frameworks for understanding "national" cinemas. In offering such an approach, this course seeks to isolate the different uses to which "cult" has been put, in order to indicate how pervasive and adaptable the idea has recently become. As we will see, the cult phenomenon implies both a perspective on the past, hence inseparable from the experience of nostalgia, as well as an engagement with our media-driven present. Corequisite FILM UN2191.

Spring 2020: FILM UN2190 Course Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment FILM 2190 004/44884 M 10:00am - 1:50pm James Schamus 3 26/60 511 Dodge Building

FILM UN2292 Topics in World Cinema: China. 3 points.

The international revelation of Chinese cinema in the 1980s was one of the great events both for film studies and film production in the past fifty years: the depth and richness of the classic cinemas of the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan were complemented by the emergence of exciting new films and filmmakers from each of those film cultures. This course will trace the history and development of filmmaking in mainland China and Hong Kong, from the Shanghai cinema of the 1930s to recent examples of digital media production, examining changes in film style and technique within the context of ever-shifting political currents and production models. A special focus will be the ongoing dialogue between Chinese film and international trends ranging from realism to postmodernism.

FILM UN2293 Topics in World Cinema: China Discussion. 0 points.

See above. This submission is to generate a course number for the discussion section to go with the lecture course.

FILM UN2294 World Cinema: Latin America. 3 points.

An overview of the major developments in the art and industry of cinema in Latin America, ranging from its earliest days to the most recent works of the digital era. The interaction of Latin American filmmakers with international movements such as neorealism, modernism, cinema vérité, and postmodernism will be addressed. Among the filmmakers to be studied are Luis Buñuel, Glauber Rocha, Raúl Ruiz and Lucrecia Martel.

Students will discover the major industrial trends as well as artistic currents that have defined Latin American cinema, as well as the chance to analyze a number of key works both in terms of their varying approaches to filmmaking as well as their resonance with political/social/historical issues.

FILM UN2295 World Cinema: Latin America - Discussion Section. 0 points.

Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Discussion section lead by a Teaching Assistant to review lecture, reading and screening.

FILM UN2310 The Documentary Tradition. 3 points.

Film screening, lecture, and discussion. Fee: $75.

This class offers an introduction to the history of documentary cinema and to the theoretical and philosophical questions opened up by the use of moving images to bear witness, persuade, archive the past, or inspire us to change the future.

How are documentaries different than fiction films? What is the role of aesthetics in relation to facts and evidence in different documentary traditions? How do documentaries negotiate appeals to emotions with rational argument? From the origins of cinema to our current "post-truth" digital age, we will look at the history of how cinema has attempted to shape our understanding of reality. FILM W2311

Spring 2020: FILM W2311 Course Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment FILM 2310 001/16596 M 2:00pm - 5:45pm Nico Baumbach 3 56/58 511 Dodge Building
EXERCISES IN THE WRITING OF FILM SCRIPTS.

The dramatic and cinematic principles of screen storytelling, including dramaturgy, character and plot development, use of camera, staging, casting, sound, editing, and music. Diverse narrative techniques, story patterns, dramatic structures, and artistic and genre forms are discussed, and students do screenwriting exercises. FILM UN2401 discussion section is required.

FILM UN2410 Laboratory in Writing Film Criticism. 3 points.
Priority is given to film majors.

Prerequisites: the instructor’s permission. Applicants must submit a writing sample, approximately 3 pages long, to cj2374@columbia.edu for permission to register.

Focusing on new and recent films, this course will help students improve their ability to analyze film, and to create strong arguments in an original voice (a skill that translates to other kinds of writing, including film pitches). In addition to screenings and discussions, we will do in-class writing, and evaluate recently published criticism. The course is based on the assumption that there is no right or wrong opinion, just better or worse arguments, which the course and the instructor’s individual comments on papers will help you refine. Regular writing assignments include short reviews and longer essays. Prerequisite: Non-majors require instructor’s permission. Submit a short writing sample to cj2374@columbia.edu. Film majors should register on-line, and you will be moved from the Wait List to the roster. Note: because permission is required, on-line registration may say the course is full when it is not.

FILM UN2420 Laboratory in Screenwriting. 3 points.
Open to film majors only.

Exercises in the writing of film scripts.

Fall 2019: FILM UN2420
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FILM 2420 001/98408 W 9:30am - 12:30pm 513f Dodge Building Chloé Sarbib 3 12/12
FILM 2420 002/98406 F 10:00am - 1:00pm 513f Dodge Building Mirika Bleakley 3 10/12

Spring 2020: FILM UN2420
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FILM 2420 001/16655 Th 2:00pm - 5:00pm 605 Dodge Building Charlotte Benbeniste 3 11/12
FILM 2420 002/16656 T 2:00pm - 5:00pm 504 Dodge Building Peter Forbes 3 11/12

FILM UN2510 Laboratory in Fiction Filmmaking. 3 points.
Open to film majors only. Fee: $75.

Exercises in the use of video for fiction shorts.

Fall 2019: FILM UN2510
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FILM 2510 001/98604 W 9:30am - 12:30pm 508 Dodge Building Tae Jung Choi 3 10/12

Spring 2020: FILM UN2510
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FILM 2510 001/16657 M 10:00am - 1:00pm 101 Prentis Hall Max Mogilnyray 3 13/12

FILM UN2520 Laboratory in Nonfiction Filmmaking. 3 points.
Open to film majors only. Fee: $75.

Exercises in the use of video for documentary shorts.

Spring 2020: FILM UN2520
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FILM 2520 001/16658 M 2:00pm - 5:00pm Room TBA Cameron Nelson 3 8/12

FILM UN3010 Auteur Study. 3 points.
Fee: $50.

Section 2 Kieslowski and Has Spring 2019

This seminar in Auteur Study explores the cinematic work of two renowned Polish artists. While Krzysztof Kieslowski is the more famous filmmaker—best known for such classics as Three Colors: Blue, White, Red and Decalogue—the motion pictures of Wojciech Has are ripe for rediscovery. His stylistically audacious adaptations include The Hourglass Sanatorium and The Saragossa Manuscript. Through in-class screenings, discussions, and readings, we will focus on the formal, political and thematic richness of these films. Requirements include weekly attendance, punctuality, classroom participation, a midterm paper (5 - 7 pages), and a final paper (10 - 12 pages).

Section 1 Spring 2020 LUBITSCH AND WILDER

The course focuses on romantic comedy, censorship, and the representation of sexual modernity in the Hollywood films of the directors Ernst Lubitsch and Billy Wilder. Additionally, the course explores the tensions between the Hollywood industry’s censorship code and Austrian/German Jewish emigre filmmakers’ strategies to subvert it.

Spring 2020: FILM UN3010
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
FILM 3010 001/16660 Th 10:00am - 1:45pm 403 Dodge Building Ronald Gregg 3 15/15
FILM UN3020 Interdisciplinary Studies. 3 points.
Fee: $75.

We will explore how films from a variety of countries—notably Germany, Poland, France, Italy and the U.S.—have attempted to grapple with the legacy of the Shoah. Through close reading of such motion pictures as THE SHOP ON MAIN STREET, THE PAWNBROKER, SEVEN BEAUTIES, PARTISANS OF VILNA, KORCZAK and GENGHIS COHN, we will discuss the possibilities and limitations of Holocaust representation onscreen.

FILM UN3900 Senior Seminar in Film Studies. 3 points.
Fee: $30.

A seminar for senior film majors planning to write a research paper in film history/theory/culture. Course content changes yearly.

FILM UN3910 Senior Seminar in Filmmaking. 3 points.
Prerequisites: FILM UN2420 or FILM UN2510
An advanced directing workshop for senior film majors who have already completed FILM UN2420 or FILM UN2510.

FILM UN3915 Advanced Film Production Practice. 3 points.
Prerequisites: FILM UN2510 or FILM UN2520
Advanced Film Production Practice is an advanced production and lecture course for students who wish to obtain a deeper understanding of the skills involved in screenwriting, directing and producing. Building on the fundamentals established in the Labs for Fiction and Non-Fiction Filmmaking, this seminar further develops each student’s grasp of the concepts involved in filmmaking through advanced analytical and practical work to prepare Thesis film materials.

Short films are the gateway for any writer/director or producer seeking a career in film. From pitch to script to final film, students learn the importance of identifying and developing producible ideas and scripts that feature a strong directorial “voice.” Starting with a close analysis of successful short films, students then apply those principles in writing, directing and producing their own Thesis short film. A study of the marketplace for short films (festivals and distribution) and the industry and academic options available to emerging filmmakers, enables students to develop an action plan for the completed Thesis short film.

FILM UN3920 Senior Seminar in Screenwriting. 3 points.
A seminar for senior film majors. Students will complete a step outline and minimum of 30 pages of their project, including revisions. Through reading/viewing and analyzing selected scripts/films, as well as lectures, exercises and weekly critiques, students will expand their understanding of dramatic writing and narrative-making for film and TV, including adaptations. They will learn appropriate structure for each specific screen-writing form, and endeavor to apply their understanding of drama, character, theme, and structure to their chosen narrative project.

FILM UN3925 Narrative Strategies in Screenwriting. 3 points.
Prerequisites: FILM W2420.
This workshop is primarily a continuation of Senior Seminar in Screenwriting. Students will either continue developing the scripts they began in Senior Seminar in Screenwriting, or create new ones including a step outline and a minimum of 30 pages. Emphasis will be placed on character work, structure, theme, and employing dramatic devices. Weekly outlining and script writing, concurrent with script/story presentation and class critiques, will ensure that each student will be guided toward the completion of his or her narrative script project.

FILM UN3930 Seminar in International Film. 3 points.
Section 001 taught by Annette Insdorf Spring 2018. This is a course about Polish Cinema.

Section 002 taught by Edward Turk Fall 2018. Study of major films in the seven-decade career of Jeanne Moreau, the performing artist who has also been a pioneering female director. Topics include: the value for film criticism and history of conceptualizing the performer as a creative auteur; Moreau’s manner(s) of film acting and role realization; the risks and the productive consequences of her serving as “muse” to such male directors as Louis Malle, François Truffaut, Orson Welles, Joseph Losey, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and Paul Mazursky, and as a creative partner to such female directors as Marguerite Duras and Josée Dayan; her embodiments and projections of sexuality and sensuality and how they differ from those of other so-called “screen love goddesses” (Brigitte Bardot, Elizabeth Taylor, Sophia Loren, Simone Signoret, Catherine Deneuve); Moreau’s own work as a director of feature-length films; the rewards and burdens of international stardom and the challenge of being expected to “represent” France and its cinema; growing old in the public eye and life-long strategies for career renewal and sustainability.
FILM 4000 Film and Media Theory. 3 points.

An introduction to some of the major texts in film theory, with particular attention to film theory's evolving relations to a number of philosophical issues: the nature of the aesthetic; the relation of symbolic forms to the construction of human subjectivities; narrative and the structure of experience; modernity, technology, popular culture, and the rise of mass political formations; and meaning, intention, and authorship. 

Fall 2019: FILM GU4000

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FILM 4300 African American Film & Media. 3 points.

This seminar will offer a survey and critical assessment of African American film and visual cultures from the early 20th century to the contemporary moment, covering early race films, intersections with Hollywood, independent filmmaking, and popular television. In this seminar, we will explore Black aesthetics and spectatorship, issues of representation, Black pain and suffering, the Black radical tradition, and intersections of race, gender and sexuality in media and visual culture.

Spring 2020: FILM GU4300

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FILM 4310 Experimental Film and Media. 3 points.

This course provides an overview of experimental moving images from the European “city symphonies” and abstract films of the 1920s to the flowering of the American postwar avant-garde; from the advent of video art in the 1960s to the online viral videos and digital gallery installations of today. The class thus surveys the artists, institutions, and viewers that have fostered moving image art throughout the history of film, and asks students to consider the historical, social, and institutional forces that have engendered oppositional, political, and aesthetically radical cinemas. A central premise of the course is that technological developments such as video and new media are not historical ruptures, but part of an ongoing tradition of moving-image art making. Other core topics include the consideration of the meaning and use-value of the avant-garde, the issue of “artists’ film and video” as opposed to “experimental film,” and the thorny relationship between avant-garde and commercial filmmaking.

FILM 4320 New Directions in Film and Philosophy. 0 points.

FILM 4910 Seeing Narrative. 3 points.

Prerequisites: the instructor’s permission.

An advanced film theory “workshop” in which we shall avoid reading film theory in favor of a selection of other texts, taken mainly from the domains of art history, philosophy, and literature. Our central question will be: What can filmmakers and film theorists learn from discourses about vision and its relation to narrative that pre-date the cinema, or that consider the cinema only marginally?

FILM 4940 Queer Cinema. 3 points.

This course examines themes and changes in the (self-)representation of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people in cinema from the early sound period to the present. It pays attention to both the formal qualities of film and filmmakers’ use of cinematic strategies (mise-en-scene, editing, etc.) designed to elicit certain responses in viewers and to the distinctive possibilities and constraints of the classical Hollywood studio system, independent film, avant-garde cinema, and world cinema; the impact of various regimes of formal and informal censorship; the role of queer men and women as screenwriters, directors, actors, and designers; and the competing visions of gay, progay, and antigay filmmakers. Along with considering the formal properties of film and the historical forces that shaped it, the course explores what cultural analysts can learn from film. How can we treat film as evidence in historical analysis? We will consider the films we see as evidence that may shed new light on historical problems and periodization, and will also use the films to engage with recent queer theoretical work on queer subjectivity, affect, and culture.
FILM GU4950 Visual Bodies: From Cinema to New Media. 3 points.
How is the human body, in its diversity, portrayed on screen? And how may filmic languages—from cinema to new media—be affected by the multifaceted experience of our embodied dimension? In this course we will examine the intricate relationship between cinema and the body as a paradigmatic way to study how moving images are seen, made, and experienced today. From a plurality of standpoints (historical, formal, theoretical) and across a wide range of corpus (documentary, fiction, experimental, new media, art cinema), we will ask ourselves how different filmic discourses are able to represent and explore the creative faculties but also the darker sides of the body, its gestures, desires, impulses or drives. We will investigate how they can account for the cognitive, gender, cultural, technological and political revolutions associated with the body throughout history, with a particular emphasis on contemporary contexts of new images, mediascapes, and practices. Focusing on several key-sites of the (post-)modern condition—cosmopolitan/metropolitan experiences, narrative technolo-gies, pluralist (dis-)identifications, transmedial mobility, immanent temporalities—the course will offer rich critical opportunities to make sense of contemporary bodies via moving images, and vice versa.

Theoretical/critical works read in class will include texts by Bergson, Epstein, Pierce, Deleuze, Bellour, Elsaeser, Doane, Lastra...

The course is organized around lectures/seminars and film screenings. Students are expected to participate fully by carrying out assessed readings and writing assignments, actively involve in classroom discussions/viewings, and give scheduled oral presentations.

FILM GU4951 NEW MEDIA ART. 3 points.
The rapid democratization of technology has led to a new wave of immersive storytelling that spills off screens into the real world and back again. These works defy traditional constraints as they shift away from a one-to-many to a many-to-many paradigm, transforming those formerly known as the audience from passive viewers into storytellers in their own right. New opportunities and limitations offered by emergent technologies are augmenting the grammar of storytelling, as creators wrestle with an ever-shifting digital landscape.

New Media Art pulls back the curtain on transmedial works of fiction, non-fiction, and emergent forms that defy definition. Throughout the semester we'll explore projects that utilize Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality and the Internet of Things, alongside a heavy-hitting selection of new media thinkers, theorists, and critics.

The course will be co-taught as a dialogue between artistic practice and new media theory. Lance Weiler, a new media artist and founder of Columbia's Digital Storytelling Lab, selected the media artworks; Rob King, a film and media historian, selected the scholarly readings. It is in the interaction between these two perspectives that the course will explore the parameters of emerging frontiers in media art and the challenges these pose for existing critical vocabularies.

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