

Englit 0530
Fall 2006
Anderson, M.

Film Analysis

ENGLIT 0530/Class Number 11224
Fall 2006 (2071)
Lecture & Screenings, WWPB 1501
Tuesdays, 1:00 PM to 4:50 PM

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Recitation Sections: Thursdays, 1:00 PM to 1:50 PM (CN 11225), LAWRN 209; Thursdays 2:00 PM to 2:50 PM (CN 11226), LAWRN 209; or Thursdays, 3:00 PM to 3:50 PM (CN 11227), LAWRN 209.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this age of instantaneous digital communications, motion pictures might appear to be a somewhat outmoded form of visual technology. Indeed, many critics believe that digital video will soon completely supplant the use of traditional photographic materials in motion-picture production and exhibition, thereby relegating the study of "films" to a historical interest in a past form of communication. But the cinema is not identical with or reducible to its traditional technological and material bases. The cinema is system of visual and aural communication developed over the last century, a communication system that crucially defines and determines our contemporary visual culture in practically all of its various forms. Movies continue to provide the most powerful examples of those visual narratives that shape our experiences and expectations in a media-saturated society. Because motion pictures still occupy such a central place in our everyday lives, we tend not to think about reading and understanding them in the same manner as we treat print or oral narratives. The purpose of this course, therefore, is to introduce you to the *language* of film and to some critical tools for discussing visual media. The primary objectives of this course are to introduce you to the study of narrative (and also non-narrative) film and to provide you with a critical vocabulary to discuss and write about this type of communication. Therefore, this is essentially a skills course. Hopefully, a better understanding of how films work will allow you to enjoy more films and different kinds of film.

About half the films screened for this course are Hollywood films. Since the end of World War I, Hollywood products have dominated the world economically, stylistically, and ideologically. The studio system that developed in Hollywood has, thus, had an enormous impact on our opinions, values, and beliefs, as well as those of other peoples and cultures. While other types of films (both narrative and non-narrative) are important, and while we will have numerous occasions to see and discuss them, this course will be primarily concerned with explicating the formal and stylistic systems of what has come to be known as the classical Hollywood cinema.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 7th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

Articles available through electronic reserve, Pitt Digital Library.

RECOMMENDED TEXT:

Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*. 6th ed. New York: Longman, 2007.

ATTENDANCE:

You are required and expected to attend all lectures and screenings. If you miss a class you are still responsible for all materials covered and all films screened. More than three absences can adversely affect your final grade. Be aware that not every film screened in this course is readily available for rental or for viewing at the Media Center of Hillman Library. Also, WWPB 1501 is a lecture hall and an exhibition space; it is not a commercial cinema. You should not bring food or drink into WWPB 1501. While affective responses (laughing, crying, screaming, etc.) to the films are encouraged, please refrain from conversation during screenings. Please turn off all cell phones before class, and if you must leave the theater during a lecture or film, please exit quietly.

All students in this course are required to be registered for a recitation section (CN 11225, 11226, or 11227). **You must attend that recitation section for which you have registered.** Sections meet every Thursday for fifty minutes to provide students an opportunity to raise questions with their section leader regarding the readings, lectures, and films. Your section leader will be evaluating your performance in this course, grading your written work, and assigning your final grade. Failure to attend your assigned recitation section will result in automatic failure of the course, regardless of your performance on exams and written analyses.

QUIZZES:

There will be seven unannounced quizzes during the term. Quizzes will usually be given during class meetings on Tuesdays, but they may also be given in recitation. They may be announced at any point during a class meeting (beginning, middle, or end), and there may be more than one quiz given on a single day. Quizzes typically consist of five or six multiple-choice questions about the reading assigned for that week and about the previous week's screening. **A quiz cannot be made up under any circumstances.** Because a student might miss or be unprepared for a quiz for any number of reasons, your two lowest quiz scores will be dropped from your final quiz average. Any evidence of cheating on a quiz will result in a "0" for that quiz, with repeat offenders failing the course.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

You will take two written examinations, a mid-term on **October 17** and a final exam on **Friday, December 15, at 2:00 PM**. Make-up mid-term exams can only be given to students with documented medical or other emergency excuses. You will also complete three analytical assignments during the semester: a segmentation, a shot analysis, and a shot-by-shot breakdown with analysis. General descriptions and guidelines for each of these assignments are included with this syllabus. Each analysis will be begun in recitation twelve before it is due (or, in the case of the third analysis, nineteen days before it is due) and completed on your own time. The segmentation will be begun in recitation on September 7 and is due in lecture on **September 19**; the analysis of a single shot will be begun in recitation on September 28 and is due in lecture on **October 10**; and the shot-by-shot analysis will be begun in recitation on October 26 and is due in lecture on **November 14**.

Any student with a disability who might require accommodation in this course is asked to contact both her/his instructor(s) and Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 216 William Pitt Union, 412.648.7890/412.383.7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS is charged with verifying student disabilities and determining reasonable accommodations. Their web address is <http://www.drs.pitt.edu>.

A note on plagiarism: Students should consult the university’s policies on plagiarism. The Academic Integrity Code of the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh states that a student may be found in violation of her/his obligations if the student “presents as one’s own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or words of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources”. We ask that you become familiar with Pitt’s Academic Integrity Code and that you come to us with your questions or concerns. The Academic Integrity Code can be accessed on the web at <http://www.fcas.pitt.edu/academicintegrity.html>. For a more nuanced treatment of the issue, you might also visit the Department of English’s page on avoiding plagiarism at <http://www.pitt.edu/~englit/plagarism.htm>.

COURSE GRADE:

Quizzes (Best five out of seven scores)	10%
Midterm examination	15%
Final examination	15%
Segmentation	10%
Shot description (300-word description of mise-en-scène & framing)	15%
Shot-by-shot with three-page analysis	25%
Attendance and participation	<u>10%</u>
TOTAL	100%

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Note: (x) designates a course reading available on electronic reserve through Pitt Digital Library.

August 29 Introduction to Film Form.

Screenings:

The New York Hat (US 1912, American Biograph Company, d. D. W. Griffith) 16 min.

The Graduate (US 1967, Embassy Pictures Corporation/Lawrence Turman Inc., d. Mike Nichols) 105 min.

September 5 Segmentation.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 59-66; 68-102.

Recommended Reading:

Short Guide, 39-43.

Screenings:

A Movie (US 1958, d. Bruce Connor) 12 min.

Citizen Kane (US 1941, RKO, d. Orson Welles) 119 min.

September 12 Mise-en-scène.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 176-220.

Recommended Reading:

Short Guide, 48-57.

Screening:

Gaslight (US 1944, MGM, d. George Cukor) 114 min.

September 19 Cinematography.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 229-83.

Recommended Reading:

Short Guide, 57-64.

Screening:

The Girl with a Pearl Earring (US/UK/Luxembourg 2003, Archer Street Productions/Delux Productions/
Film Fund Luxembourg/Pathé Pictures International/UK Film Council/Wild Bear Films, d. Peter
Webber) 100 min.

FORMAL SEGMENTATION DUE IN CLASS TODAY

September 26 Editing 1. Classical continuity.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 294-333; 415-18.

Recommended Reading:

Short Guide, 18-35; 65-72.

SCREENING:

His Girl Friday (US 1940, Columbia, d. Howard Hawks) 92 min.

October 3 Editing 2. Alternative continuities.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 333-4; 433-37.

- (x) Kristen Thompson and David Bordwell, "Space and Narrative in the Films of Ozu,"
Screen 17.2 (Summer 1976): 41-73.

Screening:

Tokyo Monogatari [*Tokyo Story*] (Japan 1953, Shochiku, d. Yasujiro Ozu) 140 min.

October 10 Editing 3. Montage and discontinuity.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 146-54; 334-43; 407-412; 478-81.

- (x) Lev Kuleshov, "The Principles of Montage," *Kuleshov on Film*. Edited and translated by Richard Levaco. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, 183-95.

Screenings:

Ballet mécanique (France 1924, d. Ferdinand Léger) 19 min.

Zemlia [*Earth*] (USSR 1930, WUFGU, d. Alexandr Dovzhenko) 71 min.

SINGLE SHOT ANALYSIS DUE IN CLASS TODAY

October 17 Film Sound.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 347-77.

Recommended Reading:

Short Guide, 72-6.

- (x) Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space" [PART 1], *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*. Edited by Elizabeth Weis and John Belton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, 162-9.

Screening:

Girl 6 (US 1996, 40 Acres & a Mule Filmworks, d. Spike Lee) 108 min.

MID-TERM EXAMINATION IN CLASS

October 24 Close Analysis and Formal Patterning.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 48-59; 389-401; 468-71.

- (x) Raymond Bellour, "To Alternate/To Narrate (on *The Lonedale Operator*)," *The Analysis of Film*. Edited by Constance Penley. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2000, 267-77.

Recommended Reading:

Short Guide, 90-92; 95-108.

Screenings:

The Lonedale Operator (US 1911, Biograph Company, d. D. W. Griffith). 17 min.

Lola rennt [Run Lola Run] (Germany 1998, X-Filme Creative Pool/Westdeutscher Rundfunk/Arte, d. Tom Tykwer) 80 min.

October 31

Point of view.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 389-401.

(x) Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Feminism and Film Theory*. Edited by Constance Penley. New York: Routledge, 1988, 57-70.

(x) Christian Metz, "Story/Discourse: (A Note on Two Kinds of Voyeurism)." Translated by Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1982, 91-8.

(x) Mary Ann Doane., "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space" [PART 2], *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*. Edited by Elizabeth Weis and John Belton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, 169-76.

Recommended Reading:

Short Guide, 46-7.

Screening:

Vertigo (US 1958, Paramount, d. Alfred Hitchcock) 129 min.

November 7

Realism.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 128-46;162-6; 446-52.

(x) Bill Nichols, "Art and the Perceptual Process" [abridged]. In *Ideology and the Image*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1981, 9-26.

(x) Virgilio Piñera, "The Ball," *Cold Tales*. Translated by Mark Schafer. Hygiene, Col.: Eridanos Press, 1988, 31-6.

Recommended Reading:

Short Guide, 92-95.

Screenings:

Miest kinooperatora [The Cameraman's Revenge] (Russia 1911, Khanzhonkov Company, d. Wladyslaw Starewicz) 12 min.

Winter Soldier (US 1972, Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winterfilm, Inc., d. Winterfilm Collective) 96 min.

November 14 Self-reflexivity.

Required Reading:

- (x) Bertolt Brecht, "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting Which Produces the Alienation Effect." Translated and edited by Jon Willet. *Brecht on Theatre*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964, 136-47. (Note: be sure to read all endnotes.)
- (x) David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson, "Analysis of *Tout va Bien*," *Film Art: An Introduction*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993, 436-42.

Screening:

Tout Va Bien (France/Italy 1972, Anouchka Films/Vicco Films[Paris]/Empire Films [Rome], d. Jean-Luc Godard) 95 min.

SHOT-BY-SHOT ANALYSIS DUE IN CLASS TODAY

November 21 Film authorship.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 33-41; 284-90.

- (x) Robert Stam, "The Author." Edited by Robert Stam and Toby Miller. *Film and Theory: An Anthology*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, 1-6.

Recommended Reading:

Short Guide, 89-92.

Screenings:

Meshes of the Afternoon (US 1943, d. Maya Deren) 18 min.
The Magnificent Ambersons (US 1942, RKO, d. Orson Welles) 88 min.

November 28 Genre.

Required Reading:

Film Art, 108-26; 452-7.

- (x) Jane Feuer, "Mass Art as Folk Art." *The Hollywood Musical*. 2nd ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993, 1-22.

Recommended Reading:

Short Guide, 87-9.

Screenings:

An American in Paris (US 1951, MGM, d. Vincent Minnelli) 114 min.

December 5

Contemporary challenges to narrative.

Reading:

(x) Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, "Postmodernism and Popular Culture," *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. London: Oxford University Press, 2001, 237-78.

(x) Robert Sklar, "Hidden History, Modern Hedonism: The Films of Hou Hsiao-hsien," *Cineaste* 27:4 (Fall 2002): 11-12.

Screening:

Zui hao de shi guang [*Three Times*](Taiwan/France 2005, 3H Films/Orly Films/Paradis Films/Sinomovie, d. Hsiao-hsien, Hou) 135 min.

FINAL EXAM in WWPH 1501 on Friday, December 15, at 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM

Segmentation Assignment

In recitation on Thursday, **September 7**, we are going to show you a lengthy section from one of the films already screened for this course. You will have a couple of opportunities to see this section of the film during class. You are also welcome to view the section again at the Media Center in the Hillman Library (G-26). In our judgment, you will only need to see this section three times in order to complete the assignment.

Begin by simply watching the film while trying to note the beginnings and endings of narrative segments as marked by fades, dissolves, irises, etc., or as indicated by the unity of space, time, action, form, and/or dramatic conflicts. The second time through, begin dividing the film into significant narrative parts. Use Bordwell and Thompson's analysis of *Citizen Kane* as a model if you wish. However, at the very least you should:

1. Clearly number each segment in the order it appears in the plot;
2. Note each cinematic mark of punctuation (fades, dissolves, wipes, etc.); and
3. For each segment, briefly describe the narrative action and where (and when) it takes place.
4. Finally, write a brief paragraph about the formal patterning of these segments, the rise of narrative expectations, and/or the development of motifs.

Your segmentation should be neatly constructed and present a usable blueprint of the film's formal organization and patterned development. Segmentations are due in lecture on Tuesday, **September 19**.

If you wish to view the section outside of class, simply ask for the study tape, "ENGLIT 0530, Segmentation Assignment (Narrative Form)" on reserve at the Media Center in Hillman Library.

Single Shot Analysis

This assignment has two parts, a descriptive part and an analytical part.

1) *Description: elements of mise-en-scène and cinematography.*

We will select a single shot from one of the films of this course for analysis. In recitation on Thursday, **September 28**, we will screen this shot multiple times in class so that you will have ample opportunity to make observations and take notes. We are asking you use the critical vocabulary of this course to describe the stylistic elements of this shot as fully as possible. We are primarily interested in aspects of mise-en-scène and cinematography.

As you inspect the shot, you should record in your notes as much information as you can about sets, the costumes, props, the blocking of the actors, figure movement and expression, lighting, cast shadows, camera angle, camera height, shot scale, camera movement, perspective, deep space, and depth of field. Since a single frame from any feature film (let alone a single shot) delivers an enormous amount of visual and aural information, you cannot, of course, note everything. Simply try to accurately describe those elements of the shot that seem to you of particular importance.

2) *Analysis.*

After you have finished the descriptive part of the assignment, you should use your notes to write a short, one- to two-page essay (250-500 words) that discusses how the stylistic elements of this shot are used to engage the viewer's attention and to shape her or his understanding of the immediate dramatic action and the larger narrative. Ideally, this analysis will seek to demonstrate how particular elements of mise-en-scène and cinematography work in tandem to convey story information. Just as you cannot possibly note every detail of film style in your descriptive notes, you will not be able to discuss all aspects of style. You will have to choose those aspects you find most prominent, important, or interesting. You might, for example, discuss the way the shot's framing and lighting shape our understanding of a dramatic conflict; or, on the other hand, you might want to show how props and the blocking of the actors in the shot work to create particular spatial relations that correspond to important narrative expectations. There are an infinite number of ways to approach this analysis. We are not looking for a particular approach to this shot, but we are interested in your ability to *accurately describe some of the stylistic elements of this shot within a coherent and well-written analysis that demonstrates how narrative information is conveyed through the pictorial elements within the frame.*

Analyses will be due in lecture on Tuesday, **October 10**. For those students who wish to study the shot further, two video copies of the shot will be placed on reserve at the Media Center in Hillman Library. Ask for the study tape, "ENGLIT 0530, Shot Analysis (Mise-en-scène and Cinematography)"

Shot-by-shot Breakdown

As with our last close analysis, this assignment has two parts.

1) *Description: shot-by-shot breakdown of a film segment.*

During recitation on Thursday, **October 26**, you will perform a close analysis of a segment from one of the films screened for our course. The segment will be screened multiple times during class so you will have several opportunities to make the necessary observations. At the very least you should record:

- a) shot scales and types of shots (e.g. MCU, 3/4-shot, insert, OTS, etc.);
- b) the angle of each shot and any new perspectives on repeated shots;
- c) any camera movements within each shot (pan, tilt, tracking, etc.) and the direction(s) of that movement (in, right, up, etc.);
- d) the transitions between shots.

Other things you might decide to note if they seem dramatically significant are narrative uses of deep space, lighting or other aspects of mise-en-scène, the direction of eye-lines, matched shots, foreground and background relations, off-screen sound, etc. You should prepare a clear and detailed breakdown of the segment to turn in with your analysis.

2) *Analysis.*

After you have finished the descriptive part of the assignment, use your shot-by-shot breakdown to write a short three-page essay (750 words) discussing how the stylistic elements of the segment (mise-en-scène, editing, mobile framing, point of view, etc.) are used strategically to engage the viewer's attention and to shape her or his interpretation of both the immediate dramatic action and the larger narrative of the film.

Here you can ask yourself several questions. Are there formal motifs introduced and developed in this segment? How do they cue the viewer's expectations? How does editing construct the space of the scene, and how does this space relate to the dramatic action? What patterns of repetition or difference are evident from your description of the scene? How is dramatic tension achieved and/or resolved through the staging of the shots? How do eyelines direct the viewer's expectations? Is point of view used for narrative purposes? Is the rhythm of the editing significant?

In short, you should analyze how aspects of film form and style *visually* express the narrative events, ideas, and themes presented in the segment. Your paper should present a coherent, well-constructed argument supported by concrete examples. You will likely want to refer to specific shots in the breakdown of the segment that will accompany your essay.

Analyses (including the shot-by-shot breakdown) are due in lecture on Thursday, **November 14**. For those students who wish to study the sequence further, two video copies of the sequence will be placed on reserve at the Media Center in Hillman Library. Ask for the study tape, "ENGLIT, Shot-by-shot breakdown (Editing