FILM THEORY - FILM 447
Spring 2018

Sean O’Brien
Office Hours: M W 11:30-1:00 and by appointment in LA 110
Course meeting times: M,W from 9:00-11:20

Readings:
- Birth of Tragedy
- Moodle Readings
- Handout

Assignments:
- 8 review essays
- Class presentation
- 8-10 pg. film analysis
- In-class final comprehensive exam

Course Content: This course examines key approaches to film theory and criticism, and the theoretical roots of each. Classic and contemporary films will be assessed in the light of various aesthetic, psychoanalytic and political theories.

Course Goals and Outcomes: Students taking this course will be required to write clearly about the basic tenets of the various theories covered and to effectively analyze the films assigned in light of one or more of these theories. The particular film/theory pairings are intended to deepen the students’ appreciation of each film’s complexity as well as each theory’s scope.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. Please ask if you have a question about what constitutes plagiarism, but on the whole, if you consult another work for ideas, copy or paraphrase from another source, etc., then you need to acknowledge the source (including the work you consulted, the publication information, and the page number/s) in your paper with a footnote.

Schedule:

I. AESTHETICS

1/22 Intro
1/24 Conventions, Terminology, Realism/Formalism
Readings: Realism/Formalism handout

1/29  Realism/Formalism and neo-realism
Readings: Arnheim, 2 Bazin readings
The Bicycle Thief
1/31  Once

2/5  Discussion of Once/Nietzsche’s aesthetics
Readings: BOT, sections 1-9
Essay on Once due
2/7  Nietzsche’s aesthetics
Readings: BOT, sections 10-18
Nietzsche show and tell

2/12  Thin Red Line
2/14  Presentation #1 on Thin Red Line/discussion
Essay on Thin Red Line due

2/19  Holiday – President’s Day

II. FILM AND THE PSYCHOANALYTIC TRADITION

2/21  Freud
Readings: Freud readings

2/26  Fight Club
2/28  Discussion of Fight Club
Lacan and Zizek
Readings: Lacan and Zizek
Essay on Fight Club due

3/5  Solaris
3/7  Presentation #2 on Solaris/discussion
Essay on Solaris due

3/12  Mulvey
Readings: Mulvey
3/14  Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

3/19  Presentation #3 on Eternal Sunshine/discussion
Essay on Eternal Sunshine due
3/21  Viewer’s Choice
3/26-30 SPRING BREAK

III. POLITICS OF FILM

4/2 Materialist versus post-structuralist approaches to film
Readings: Materialist analysis readings

4/4 Michael Clayton

4/9 Presentation #4 on Michael Clayton
Essay due on Michael Clayton

4/11 Materialist versus post-structuralist approaches to film
Readings: Jamieson reading

4/16 No Country for Old Men

4/18 Presentation #5 on No Country/discussion
Essay due on No Country

4/23 A Buddhist Approach
Readings: 3 Buddhist readings

4/25 Her

4/30 Presentation #6 on Her/discussion
Essay on Her due

5/2 Summary and Review

There will be an in-class comprehensive final exam from 10:10-12:10 a.m., Tues 5/8.