MA in Film and Literature 2019-20  
Autumn Term  
Core Module: Film/Literature Encounters

Tutors: Erica Sheen; Lola Boorman

Screenings: Tuesdays 15.00-18.00 BS/005  
Thursdays 14:00-16:00 BS/005

Seminar: Fridays 14:00-16:00 BS/007 (*except Weeks 5 and 9, 15:00-17:00)

Week 2: Medium Specificity (Erica Sheen)

Screening: *Henry V* (dir. Laurence Olivier, 1944)  
Additional viewing: *Hamlet* (dir. Laurence Olivier, 1948)

In this first session, we introduce the concept of media specificity: what makes a film a film, a play a play, a novel a novel? What can films do that plays or novels can’t (or vice versa)? In this session we read theoretical studies of medium specificity alongside one of the most successful British films ever made, and we ask what aesthetic questions film asks, or answers about cinema, theatre and indeed Shakespeare as the exemplary ‘great’ author of English literary tradition.

Reading:
Week 3: Adaptation and the Screenplay (Erica Sheen)

Screening: The Third Man (dir. Carol Reed, 1949)
Additional viewing: Hamlet (dir. Grigori Kozintsev, 1964)

In this seminar we study one of the most obvious relationships between film and literature: the adaptation. Adaptations are, of course, films based on ‘books’ rather than ‘original’ screenplays — plays, like Henry V or Hamlet; novels, including graphic novels, like Blade Runner; even poems — though they all typically result in the production of a screenplay — usually by someone other than an ‘original’ author — as a mediation between a ‘source’ text and the subsequent film production. In this session we look at a novel, screenplay and film that complicates this situation: Graham Greene wrote his novella The Third Man, and the subsequent screenplay, in order to make the film. What questions does this raise about the status of adaptation in the process of filmmaking, or about the intellectual categories that have preoccupied adaptation studies, such as fidelity, intertextuality and transmediality?

Reading:
———, ‘The Third Man as a Story and a Film’ in New York Times (1950).
Michael Sinowitz, ‘Graham Greene’s and Carol Reed’s The Third Man: When a Cowboy Comes to Vienna’ in Modern Fiction Studies, Vol.53(3) (2007): pp.405-433
Week 4: Authorship (Erica Sheen)

**Screening:** *Rear Window* (dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1954)

**Additional viewing:** *Hitchcock/Truffaut* (dir. Kent Jones, 2015)

The term ‘author’ is central to the studies of both literature and film. What are differences and similarities between film and literary authorship? How do questions raised in our previous sessions — media specificity, adaptation — affect how we understand the questions of originality or creativity that typically define the notion of literary authorship in its application to role of the film director? What is the difference between the ideas that underpinned the French notion of ‘la politique des auteurs’ in the context of the French New Wave and its Anglo-American assimilation as ‘the auteur’? We will look at a film by one of the few American directors identified by French critics as an *auteur* alongside its ‘pulp fiction’ short-story ‘source text’, and try to decide if, or how, questions of style or originality offset Hitchcock’s status as a ‘Hollywood’ director.

**Reading:**


Week 5: Visual (Dis)Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (Lola Boorman)

Screening: Mulholland Drive (dir. David Lynch, 2001)
Additional Viewing: Sunset Boulevard (dir. Billy Wilder 1950)

Filmmakers employ many techniques to successfully convey their story to their audience but what happens when the objective of the filmmaker is not narrative cohesion but radical disruption? Playing on cinema’s voyeurism, the dreamscape, and the unreliability of memory, Lynch’s Mulholland Drive — originally conceived as a TV pilot — manipulates its audience’s gaze, directing it not only onto the spectacle of the femme fatale but onto the illusions of Hollywood itself. In this seminar, we will consider the many theoretical approaches to reading both literature and film and think about the ways in which Lynch’s film both plays to and confounds our expectations of what a narrative should be.

Reading:
**Week 6 Reading Week**

No screenings or seminars.

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**Week 7: Refocusing on Women (Erica Sheen)**

**Screening:** Les glaneurs et la glaneuse (dir. Agnès Varda, 2008)

**Additional viewing:** Cleo de 5 à 7 (dir. Agnès Varda, 1962)

Agnès Varda’s career began with French New Wave (though she is typically referred to as a member of the group called ‘Left Bank’), and continued uninterrupted until her death this year. Her work records the cultural and political issues that have affected women in the film industry, but also the aesthetics of changing technologies in filmmaking across this 50-year period. In her later work in particular, she explored the implications of digital film for what we might call the ecology of film; the presence, and impact of the filmmaker in/on her environment. How do we ‘refocus’ the questions we’ve asked in the previous seminars when we’re talking/in order to talk about women?

**Reading:**


**Week 8: Human/animal/machine (Erica Sheen)**

**Screening:** *Blade Runner* (dir. Ridley Scott, 1982)  
**Additional Viewing:** *Blade Runner 2049* (dir. Denis Villeneuve, 2017)

Ridley Scott’s ‘original’ *Blade Runner* (1982) was considered in its time to be a box office failure, but – alongside its constant re-issue as different versions of a ‘director’s cut’ in the changing formats from VHS to DVD — it has generated, first, a commentary that is both one of the most profuse in film criticism and one of the most responsive to changing cultural ideologies; second, Denis Villeneuve’s sequel, made two years before the date of the action in *Blade Runner* — 2019 — but set thirty years after it. Both *Blade Runner* and *Blade Runner 2049* can be identified as members of the genre ‘science fiction’ — but what questions about human, non-human, post-human fact, reality or history do these films raise? What categories of film and literary analysis do we need to use to ask them?

**Reading:**  
Philip K Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968)  
[novel and graphic novels – excerpts will be made available].  
Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, ‘Chapter Four: Cinema as Eye’ in *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses* (London: Routledge, 2010).


**Week 9: Reel to Real: Race and the Documentary (Lola Boorman)**

**Screening:** *I Am Not Your Negro* (dir. Raoul Peck, 2016)

**Additional Viewing:** *Tongues Untied* (dir. Marlon Riggs, 1989)

In this penultimate seminar on Raoul Peck’s documentary *I am Not Your Negro* (itself an adaptation of James Baldwin’s unfinished memoir about the Civil Rights movement) we will return to some of the key issues of medium specificity, adaptation, authorship, and narrative explored earlier in this module, this time through the lens of race, activism, and non-fiction filmmaking. Engaging with Baldwin’s own film criticism we will explore the various aesthetic and political choices (and trade-offs) Peck makes in his portrait of the writer and the role the documentary plays in solidifying Baldwin’s role as ‘prophet’ in the era of Black Lives Matter.

**Reading**


**Week 10: Post-Cinema: The Moving Image in the Age of Digital Dissemination**

**Screenings:** 88.88 (dir. Isaiah Medina), with an introduction by filmmaker Sam Kaufman (*NB. This screening will take place on Thursday 10:00-13:00 in BS/005)

Sam Kaufman will join our seminar for a discussion of Isiah Medina’s experimental film:

‘The elusive, elliptical 88:88 is a bold debut feature from Winnipeg-based experimental filmmaker Isiah Medina that audaciously rethinks the possibilities and language of cinematic form. Being selected for both the Locarno Film Festival and TIFF’s most immaculately curated section, Wavelengths — two of the most consistently forward-looking festival programmes — can only mean good things, and the indication is clear: a powerful and original new voice has been discovered.’ (BFI)

**Readings:**
