

MA option module:
Cold War Culture: Literature, Film and Theory in Cold War Europe

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Module description

Writing in the new journal *Hollywood Quarterly* in the immediate aftermath of World War 2, American writer John Howard Lawson observed that 'one of the first casualties of the conflict was the 'myth' of 'entertainment cinema'. 'What part,' he asked, 'will the motion picture play ... in the creation of new patterns of world culture and understanding?'

Within two years, this optimistic anticipation of a new international order had given way to the anxieties of the Cold War. In Europe in particular, writers and filmmakers struggled to find new styles and languages of film, literature and critical theory that could respond to the realities of life under the shadow of the bomb. In this module we will read and watch films, novels, stories, screenplays, poems, critical and theoretical writing that engage with that struggle. We will consider texts from the European Cold War 'theatre' – mainly France, Germany, Italy, England, but with some reference to Scandinavia, the Eastern Bloc and USSR, and the USA – and discuss their common and contrasting social, political and intellectual agendas.

Aims and objectives:

- To introduce the advanced study of the new cinemas of Cold War Europe
- To explore the historical, cultural and intellectual interrelations between these cinemas and contemporaneous European literary and critical cultures
- To place these interrelations in the context of the social and political reconstruction of post-war Europe and the rise of the Cold War
- To develop an appropriate critical, historical and theoretical framework for the analysis of individual literary, film and critical texts
- To develop individual and collaborative skills of argument and presentation

Subject content

- The textual and contextual analysis of post-war European film, literature and theory; a grasp of the formal and technical questions raised by

individual texts; an understanding of the broader aesthetic and political implications of these issues; a grasp of the critical field currently engaged in this area of research

Academic and graduate skills

- The capacity to identify relevant models of critical and theoretical analysis and to use them to produce sophisticated textual and contextual readings; the ability to carry on individual research in this field, to present it in seminars and to discuss it with seminar members

Texts will include films and writing by:

Howard Hawks, David Lean, Graham Greene, Stanley Kubrick, Robert Bresson, Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Marguerite Duras, Chris Marker, Roland Barthes, Andre Bazin, Jacques Derrida, Roberto Rossellini, Cesare Zavattini, Vittorio de Sica, Luchino Visconti, Federico Fellini, Alberto Moravia, Carlo Levi, Francesco Rosi, Michelangelo Antonioni, Bernardo Bertolucci, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Volker Schlöndorff, Margaretha von Trotta, Heinrich Boll, Ingmar Bergman, Milan Kundera, Jaromil Jireš, Vera Chytilová, Vladimir Nabokov, Andrei Tarkovsky, Grigori Kozintsev, Alexandr Sokurov, Susan Sontag, and Stanley Cavell.