**Film Studies – Course Syllabus/Outline**

**2021/2022 Academic Year: Semester II (Spring)**

**Doble Grado en Periodismo y Comunicación Audiovisual (Group 50)**

Course Instructors: Christopher Meir (Lectures), Luis Cemillán Casis (Seminars)

Office Hours: Christopher Meir: Tuesdays 1–3 PM, and/or by e-mail appointment

Luis Cemillán Casis: Thursdays 12-2 PM, by e-mail appointment

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will seek to acquaint students with four influential paradigms in the discipline of Film Studies and in so doing also seek to demonstrate the process of using theoretical paradigms to better understand film texts and vice versa. In adopting a structure that focuses on four concepts in Film Theory instead of surveying a wider variety of theoretical ideas, the course will allow students to delve deeper into the various ideas explored in the class than the survey format typically allows. This will in turn help to orient students in the wider field of Film Studies, effectively introducing them to four important subfields in the discipline while also preparing them for the rigorous theoretical exploration expected of final year students in their coursework as well as their Trabajos del Fin de Grado (TFG) which they will be undertaking in the second semester of the fourth year. Additionally, the course will help to prepare prospective graduate students in Film Studies for the rigors of advanced research in this area.

The course will be divided into four parts and every class meeting will be dedicated to discussing a specific film within the context of a specific critical reading.

**Weeks 2-4** will be concerned with the larger paradigm of Film Aesthetics with a more specific focus on Sound and Image relationships in cinema. As such, it will concern itself with three films that are particularly notable examples of the creative and/or influential use of film sound.

**Weeks 5-8** will place films within the contexts of national and transnational cultural and industrial formations. Herein we will analyze various instances of the relationship between film and nation, surveying examples from various parts of the globe, films which also take a range of artistic approaches to their respective subject matter.

**Weeks 9-11** will examine the ways in which films are part of larger social, cultural and historical discourses around masculinity and sexuality. In various ways, films examined in this section of the course reflect and actively intervene in debates about how men *should* act in society.

**Weeks 12-14** will seek to explore genre theory as it relates to films and the film industry. The case study selected in this case is the superhero genre, the single most popular type of film in contemporary cinema. In these three weeks we will attempt to define the formal characteristics of this genre while also interrogating the ideologies expounded by these films.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

* Understand and utilize the four critical paradigms studied for the course.
* Generally understand and utilize formal and contextual methodologies to understand and appreciate film texts.
* Express and defend critical opinions about films and film theory.
* Carry out independent research into films and film theory.

**ASSESSMENT**

**50% Coursework/Continuous Evaluation**

10% Class attendance.

20% In-Class Quizzes. From Week 2 onward students will be quizzed every week on that week’s reading and viewing assignments. Quizzes will take place in the first ten minutes of the seminar (prácticas) part of the class.

20% 2000-2500 research essay due **May 16th.** Essay must analyze a film not viewed for class within one of the four paradigms discussed in the course (Film Sound Theory and Practice; National/Transnational Cinema; Sexuality; or Superhero Film Genre Theory and Practice). All essays will be subjected to review by Turnitin technology to prevent plagiarism and/or multiple submissions of the same essay.

All students are required to have their films approved by Chris in person or by email by **May 2nd.**

**50% Final Exam –** Exam will consist of two essay questions. More details will be provided during the course.

**STUDENTS WHO DO NOT PASS THE COURSEWORK (CONTINUOUS EVALUATION) COMPONENT OF THE COURSE CAN TAKE THE MAY EXAM WEIGHTED AS 60% OF THE FINAL GRADE, OR THE JUNE EXAM WEIGHTED AS 100% OF THE FINAL GRADE.**

**COURSE CALENDAR**

**Lectures: Wednesdays: 2:30-4:00 PM – 17.1.04**

**Seminar Meetings: Wednesdays: 4:15-5:45 PM – 17.1.04**

Assigned Reading is subject to change. All reading texts will be made available on Aula Global in PDF form or via hyperlink. Films are available in the Campus Library and/or freely via YouTube. Details on accessing films will be provided in class meetings and on Aula Global. Students are expected to see the films and do the assigned reading before the Wednesday meetings. **Weekly quizzes will refer to the assigned readings and films.**

**Week 1 – February 2nd**

**Topics: Course Introduction; Why, and how, do we study films? Which films are the important ones?**

**Unit I: Film Aesthetics: Film as a Sound Art Form**

**Week 2 – February 9th**

**Topic: Classical Sound Design**

**Screening: *Singin’ in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952)**

**Reading: Excerpts from Michel Chion, *Film, A Sound Art.***

**Week 3 – February 16th**

**Topic: Robert Bresson and Sound minimalism.**

**Screening: *A Man Escaped* (Robert Bresson, 1953)**

**Reading: Chion on *A Man Escaped***

**Week 4 – February 23rd**

**Topic: Maximalistic Sound Design**

**Screening: *Nashville* (Robert Altman, 1975)**

**Reading: Rick Altman on *Nashville*.**

**Unit II: Cinema in National and Transnational Contexts**

**Week 5 – March 2nd**

**Topic: Cinema and Nation**

**Screening: *Pather Panchali* (Satyajit Ray, 1955)**

**Assigned Reading: Andrew Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema”, Screen, Vol. 30, Issue 4, Autumn 1989, Pages 36–47.**

**Week 6 – March 9th**

**Seminar on Race and Spanish Cinema**

**Screening, reading to be announced.**

**Week 7 – March 16th**

**Topic: Third Cinema and the State of the Nation Film**

**Screening: *Xala* (Ousmane Sembene, 1975)**

**Assigned Reading: Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Toward a Third Cinema,” *Cinéaste* 4, 3 (Winter 1970-71) 1-10.**

**Week 8 – March 23rd**

**Topic: Transnational Cinema: International Mobility**

**Screening: *The Motorcycle Diaries* (Walter Salles, 2004)**

**Assigned Reading: Mette Hjort, “On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism”, in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, Nataša Ďurovičová and Kathleen Newman (eds.), London: Routledge, 2010: 13-33.**

**Unit III: Cinema and Sexuality**

**Week 9 – March 30th**

**Topic: Heteronormativity and the “Celluloid Closet”**

**Screening: *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944)**

**Assigned Viewing: *The Celluloid Closet* (Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 1995)**

**Week 10 – April 6th**

**Topic: Intersectionality: Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality**

**Screening: *Moonlight* (Barry Jenkins, 2016)**

**Reading: Pamela Demory on *Moonlight.***

**April 13th – NO CLASS – SEMANA SANTA**

**Week 11 – April 20th**

**Lecture: Queer Histories and Representations**

**Screening: *120 BPM* (Robin Campillo, 2017)**

**Assigned Reading: Extract from Robert Rosenstone, *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995 and Chase Ledin, “Retroactivism and Futurity in *120 BPM* and *Théo et Hugo*,”  
*Modern & Contemporary France*, November 2021. DOI: 10.1080/09639489.2021.2000952**

**Unit IV: Genre, Industry and Ideology**

**Week 12 – April 27th**

**Topic: Defining and Analyzing the Superhero Film**

**Screening: *Iron Man* (Jon Favreau, 2008)**

**Assigned Reading: Steve Neale on Genre.**

**Week 13 – May 4th**

**Topic: Gender and the Superhero Film**

**Screening: *Wonder Woman* (Patty Jenkins, 2017)**

**Assigned Reading: Courtney Brannon Donoghue, “Gendered Expectations and Female Driven Films: Risk and Rescue Narratives around Warner Bros. *Wonder Woman*,” *Feminist Media Studies* (July 2019).**

**Week 14 – May 11th**

**Topic: The Anti-Hero Film and Genre Hybridity**

**Screening: *Joker* (Todd Philips, 2019)**

**Assigned Reading: David Bordwell on the Art Film**