CINEMA STUDIES

Director, Associate Professor Steve Wurtzler

Advisory Committee and Faculty: Associate Professors Dean Allbritton (Spanish) and Audrey Brunetaux (French Studies); Assistant Professor Elena Monastireva-Ansdell (Russian); Visiting Instructor Erin Murphy (Cinema Studies)

Program Affiliated Faculty: Professor Laurie Osborne (English); Associate Professors Arne Koch (German), Mouhamédoul Niang (French Studies), and Maple Razsa (Global Studies)

Few art forms have had a greater impact on modern culture than cinema. Over the course of cinema’s relatively brief history, film criticism and theory have grappled with some of the issues most central to the humanities, including how to represent and transform the world and how technological changes have affected the production and consumption of images. As an academic discipline, cinema studies has addressed these and attendant issues through a range of strategies, directing attention both to the highest form of rarified art practice and to the most popular forms of entertainment and diversion.

The minor in cinema studies focuses on the history, theory, and culture of film and related media such as digital media and photography. It makes coherent both the historical and aesthetic dimensions of cinema, including the mutual influence of cinema with its cultural, technological, national, and transnational contexts. As a distinct field of study influenced by a range of disciplines—among them art history, English, and the sciences—the minor draws its strength from connections among departments, while at the same time providing a core of courses foundational to the discipline of cinema studies itself.

Requirements for the Minor in Cinema Studies

Six courses, including Cinema Studies 142, 251 or 252, 321, one non-U.S. cinema studies course, and two electives selected from the list of courses approved for the minor or approved by the director. No more than two courses can count toward both the cinema studies minor and another minor or major.

Courses Approved for the Minor in Cinema Studies

Art
- 285 History of Photography

English
- 386C Special Topics: Documentary Radio
- 411 Shakespeare on Screen
- 412 Global Shakespeares
- 493A Seminar: Literature and Film Adaptation

French
- 237 Francophone African Cinema
- 323 Holocaust in French Cinema

German
- 234 German Culture through Film

Religious Studies
- 319 Bollywood and Beyond: South Asian Religions through Film

Russian
- 242 Back to the Future: Recent Russian Cinema

Spanish
- 266 Language of Spanish Cinema
- 362 All about Almodóvar

Course Offerings

CI142fs  Introduction to Cinema Studies  An introduction to the discipline of cinema studies, its history, and dominant approaches. Functions as a gateway to the minor and serves as a prerequisite for the required film theory course.  Four credit hours.  A.
[CI215]  The Image of Women and Men in American Film  How Hollywood films of "the Sixties" (1958-1978) reflected and helped determine the vast social and psychological changes that women, men, and the country were experiencing—or were denying experiencing—during a tumultuous period of U.S. history. Topics include gender roles, race, genre, directorial style, historical background, the effects of camera placement, movement and lighting, and the function of narrative—how to "read" a film. A few additional required screenings will be scheduled and some class meetings may be extended for longer films or double features.  

Three credit hours.

[CI241]  Cameraless Film  We explore the practice of cameraless filmmaking — making movies without the use of a camera or other image capture, or making movies by hand. Drawing and painting on celluloid, scratching, bleaching, dyeing, and otherwise distressing pre-existing footage, physically splicing strips of 16mm film, operating analogue projectors — these will be our primary activities as we also read about, screen, and discuss examples of cameraless cinema. Students will learn some techniques of experimental cinema, some of the history of alternative cinema, and gain an understanding of the mechanics and aesthetics of analogue cinema.  

Three credit hours.

[CI242f]  Back to the Future: Recent Russian Cinema (in English)  Listed as Russian 242.  

Four credit hours.  

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[CI243]  Narrative Film Production  Students will learn the essential skills required to produce a compelling narrative short film through development of preproduction skills from initial idea, to writing a script, to storyboarding, to creating a shot list. We will learn the basics of cinematography, casting, and directing. Finally, students will learn how to edit and manage a postproduction workflow. Previously offered as Cinema Studies 297 (2014).  

Three credit hours.

[CI245f]  Documentary Video Production: An Editor's Perspective  Students will produce and edit short documentaries about Allen Island and mid-coast Maine. Topics may include art, the environment, food production, or island life. Students will learn the basics of video production, although the focus will be on video editing. Students will learn the art of revision, as well as technical skills such as using a camera, shooting a scene, and interviewing subjects. Students’ videos will be informed by best practices in the documentary genre. One overnight trip to Allen Island is required.  

Four credit hours.  

MURPHY

[CI247s]  Visual Storytelling: Found Materials and the Archive  In the past century, humans have created (and lost) so many visual objects — from 16mm films of vacations, to snapshots of graduations and birthdays, to scrapbooks from childhood, to postcards from abroad. More recently we have created and forgotten about Snapchats, Facebook posts, and digital videos. We will take these ephemeral materials and bring them back to life through the art of visual storytelling. We will use materials from our own lives, from the Colby archive in Special Collections, and from the Northeast Historic Film archive to tell new and compelling stories. Students will also learn how to shoot and edit digital video. Previously offered as CI298A (Spring 2018).  

Four credit hours.  

MURPHY

[CI248f]  Digital Publishing: Telling Stories Online  Explores the many methods and tools available for creating digital stories. Students learn the basic skills of multimedia production and develop strategies for conceiving original and creative projects. They explore the potential uses of digital storytelling, including promoting nonprofits, marketing a new business, and developing social justice campaigns. Projects include the creation of animated .gifs, photo manipulations, audio soundscapes, digital video mash-ups, and promotional web videos. Students also become fluent in a variety of platforms, including Photoshop, Audacity, and Final Cut X, and engage with a variety of publishing platforms including Vine, Flickr, WordPress, Vimeo, and Tumblr. Previously listed as Cinema Studies 298.  

Four credit hours.  

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MURPHY

[CI251]  History of International Cinema I  The first of a two-semester survey of the history of global cinema, providing a broad overview of the development of cinema as an art form from the beginning of cinema (c. 1890) to 1945. Students will develop an understanding of the historical, national, economic, aesthetic, and cultural contexts of films produced and received by international audiences in the first half of cinema history. They will also gain proficiency in written and oral communication and develop their skills in critical thinking.  

Four credit hours.  

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[CI252s]  History of International Cinema II  The second of a two-semester survey of the history of global cinema. Provides students with a broad overview of the development of cinema as an art form from the midpoint of cinema's history (1945) to the present. Students will develop an understanding of the historical, national, economic, aesthetic, and cultural contexts of films produced and received by international audiences in the second half of cinema history. They will also gain proficiency in written and oral communication and develop skills in critical thinking.  

Four credit hours.  

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WURTZLER

[CI280]  Topics in Global Cinema  While the specific focus will change, offerings will emphasize the history of contemporary practice of non-U.S. cinemas. Individual courses might emphasize European silent cinemas, post-war 'New Wave' cinemas, contemporary African cinemas, global 'film noir,' etc. Prerequisite: Cinema Studies 142 or English 142.  

Four credit hours.
[CI283]  Film Authors  Explores the post-World War II debate about film authors and the difficulty of assigning authorship to a single person in what is so frequently a collaborative medium. Largely inaugurated by a small group of French critics turned filmmakers, the debate about cinema authors has continued in various forms with historians, theorists, and critics looking to both cinema's rich international history and its globalized present to determine the value of authorship as a critical concept. Students will explore cinema aesthetics, economics, and spectatorship by focusing intensively on the work of one or more film authors.  Four credit hours.

[CI284]  Documentary Film: History and Theory  Examines documentary cinema through historical and theoretical perspectives. We explore the dominant aesthetic approaches to global nonfiction filmmaking and how they changed over time. Students will encounter different theoretical perspectives on the relationships between cinema, reality, ideology, and power, and we will consider the social and ethical issues raised by documentary film. Through writing assignments (both short informal writings and longer argumentative papers) and class discussions, students will critically and creatively engage with an important category of cinema. Prerequisite: Cinema Studies 142.  Four credit hours.

[CI285]  Experimental Cinema  Explores the international history of experimental cinema from the European modernists of the 1920s to contemporary practices. We focus on cinema's relationship to the other arts (poetry, painting, photography, dance) and the aesthetic approaches of a variety of films that are more comfortable in an art gallery than in a multiplex. Through writing assignments (both short informal writing and longer argumentative papers) and class discussions, students will critically and creatively engage with this important category of global cinema. Prerequisite: Cinema Studies 142.  Four credit hours.

[CI286]  U.S. Cinema: The Studio System, 1930-1960  Explores the most successful era of U.S. cinema and the ways in which a handful of companies were able to limit competition and largely control the production and exhibition of films in the U.S. and abroad while also making some of the most popular films of all time. Students encounter cinema as an entertainment form but also as a powerful articulation of an ideological system. The class will explore the variety of types of films (animation, newsreel, documentary, serials, feature narrative films) produced during the height of U.S. cinema's popularity and the ways in which U.S. cinema both articulated and shaped American culture.  Four credit hours.

[CI287]  1930s U.S. Media  Throughout the 1930s, filmmakers, writers, musicians, photographers, and artists grappled with the aftermath of the stock market crash of 1929 and the prospect of war in Europe. For many, forms of expression became tools to document the realities faced by U.S. citizens. Often this documentary impulse functioned at the service of various movements for social change. Media not only raised public awareness about social conditions but also served broader attempts to intervene in society. We will focus on various types of film in relation to nonfiction writing, poetry, short fiction, theater, radio, photography, and recorded sound.  Four credit hours.

[CI321A]  Topics in Film Theory: Cinema/Landscape  Individual courses offered under the rubric of Topics in Film Theory will change in specific focus but keep consistent the rigorous engagement with a theoretical issue central to cinema studies. Students collaboratively engage with a set of questions regarding the nature of cinema and its relationships with power. Through both informal and formal analytical writing as well as class discussions and formal presentations, students not only develop a greater understanding of cinema but also enhance their written, critical, and verbal skills. Prerequisite: Cinema Studies 142 or equivalent.  Four credit hours.

[CI321Cf]  Topics in Film Theory: Film Noir  After a brief survey of the constituent features of the film noir, we will explore a number of different film theories for what they can reveal about this cycle of films. Genre, literary adaptation, authorship, ideology, theories of 'the gaze' and sound, as well as postmodernism provide a series of theoretical frameworks to reconsider these films and by implication the multifaceted nature of cinema. Prerequisite: Cinema Studies 142 or equivalent.  Four credit hours.  WURTZLER

[CI491f, 492s]  Independent Study  Individual topics in areas where the student has demonstrated the interest and competence necessary for independent work.  One to four credit hours.  FACULTY