

University of Calgary

Department of Communication, Media, and Film

Film Studies (FILM) 331 L01

*Film Theory to 1950*

Fall 2016

September 13 – December 8 (excl. November 10)

Screenings (Labs): Tu 3:30 – 6:15 in SS203

Lectures: Th 3:30 – 5:20 in SS203

Dr. Ryan Pierson

Office: SS 214

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Office hours: T/Th 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

### Course Description

*From the course calendar:* an introduction to theoretical perspectives on film before the mid- twentieth century. This course connects film with broader debates on aesthetics, medium specificity, genre, and realism, and includes theories developed in the first half of the 20th century related to silent film, Formalism, Montage, Critical Theory, and Auteur theories.

This course surveys the first broad phase of theoretical writings on cinema, featuring certain key texts of classical film theory. As such, we will examine an extensive range of critical commentary, engaging with fundamental questions about the film medium: what is the proper material, or ‘essence’ of cinema? What are its key methods and techniques? Is it an art equal to the other arts? What forms can cinema take, and what are the medium’s possibilities? What can be considered the purpose or value of cinema? How do films affect individual viewers and culture at large? By taking this course, students will become familiar with the significant concepts and debates that constitute early film theory, while fulfilling the course objectives outlined below.

### Additional Information

The story of early film theory is, in part, the story of how various aspects of film form (mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, sound) came to be conceptualized. As such, you should be fluent in the basic film terms from FILM 201.

### Objectives of the Course

The primary skill this course will develop is the close reading and analysis of theoretical texts. Early film theory covers a bewildering array of issues, areas of specialization, and styles of writing. As such, the writings of early film theorists are often hard to make sense of. This course will work to discern the major concepts, questions, concerns, and stylistic predilections of the “major” film theorists up through the mid-twentieth century. Toward this goal, **it is essential to bring the week’s readings to class every day, because we will be looking closely at them.**

## **Textbooks and Readings**

*Critical Visions in Film Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Edited by Timothy Corrigan, Patricia White with Meta Mazaj. (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2011). Designated as 'CVFT' on the course schedule. Available at University Bookstore.

Other course readings will be available on D2L and will be so noted.

## **Internet and electronic communication device information**

No electronic devices of any kind are allowed in class. *This includes computers: you will need to bring D2L readings to class on paper.*<sup>1</sup>

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

Grades will be determined as follows:

**Participation: Weekly, 10%.** Because participation is a necessary component of the course, students are expected to attend lectures and screenings, as well as participate in classroom discussion. Each day of discussion, you will be marked on the following scale:

10/10: present, makes at least one substantial contribution to discussion, brings course readings on paper

5/10: present, does not contribute to discussion *or* does not bring course readings

3/10: present, *neither* contributes to discussion *nor* brings course readings

Marks will be determined by the quality<sup>2</sup> and quantity of your participation, as well as whether or not you bring the course readings on paper.<sup>3</sup> Students who attend but do not participate can expect no more than a 5/10; students who do not regularly bring the course readings on paper, even if they speak, can expect the same.

You are allowed up to three absences, for any reason. Absences accumulated thereafter will result in deductions from your final participation grade, one point for each missing

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<sup>1</sup> *On paper?*

Yes. On paper.

*But what if I just pull it up on my phone?*

On paper.

*What if I just pull it up on my laptop, where I can make cool highlights and extra notes?*

On paper.

*What if my printer runs out of ink and/or I run out of money with library printers and my laptop is right there in my bag where I can pull it up and make cool highlights and extra notes?*

On paper.

*What if I just look over at my neighbor's paper?*

On your own paper.

<sup>2</sup> "Quality" here simply means "a complete subject-predicate thought that is about the course material." "Yes" or "no" responses do not count as "quality" participation. "I liked this" or "I found that confusing" do not yet count as quality participation (as they are statements about you and not the material); but they are excellent starting points for quality participation, since they imply specific points about the material that may be clarified.

<sup>3</sup> See note 1.

day (e.g., if you miss one extra day and your participation average is 8/10, it will be dropped to 7/10).

**Discussion boards:** Bi-weekly, **15%**. Every other week, you will post to the discussion board on the week's reading. Focus on one passage, and try to find an angle from which you can analyze, question, or investigate it. How does a particular idea compare with an idea by an author we've previously discussed? How does the author choose to form his sentences and paragraphs, and how do those choices shape his thoughts? What kinds of issues or questions does the author seem to care most about? What aspects of the week's film seem to fit especially well with, or go especially against, the author's ideas? Any of these questions is fair game for a starting point. **Each post must be at least 200 words, quote some portion of the reading, and be submitted by 9 a.m. Thursday, or it will not count.**

**Quizzes:** Weeks 4 and 7, **15%** each. These will test your basic comprehension of some of the major issues and theorists covered in weeks 1-3 and 4-6, respectively. The quizzes are non-cumulative.

**Take-home test:** Due week 10 (Nov. 15, 1 p.m.), **20%**. This will test your ability to summarize and synthesize major concepts from the first 9 weeks, with a particular focus on sound.

**Take-home Final Exam:** Due December 12, 4 p.m., **25%**. The final exam will cover core concepts and issues from the entire semester.

If you miss a quiz or test (with an excused absence), you have one week to make arrangements for a makeup, after which you will be given a zero. Late take-home tests will be accepted up to seven calendar days late, with half a letter grade deducted for each 24-hour period. Zero-grades for the midterm or final will result in automatic failure of the course.

**Registrar-Scheduled Final Exam:** No.

**Note:** All assignments and exams must be completed by the end of the term or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

**Submission of Assignments:** Please submit your discussion board posts to D2L as per the instructions. For take-home tests, please hand in your answers directly to the instructor. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

### **Policy for Late Assignments**

See above.

### **Student Accommodations:**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

### **Writing Skills Statement**

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented as per MLA guidelines. If you need help with your writing, you are strongly encouraged to use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

### **Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film**

Final grades are reported as letter grades. Tests will be graded as raw scores; discussion board posts as letter grades.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

<b>Grade Point Value</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*</b>	<b>Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *</b>
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
<b>3.70</b>		<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
<b>3.30</b>		<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>		<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>		<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>		<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>		<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	0-49.99%	0%

\* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

\*\* These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

### **Plagiarism**

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

### Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Police Service</li> <li>• Emergency Text Messaging</li> <li>• Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>• Safewalk Program</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> 403-220-5333 <b>403-266-1234      Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a> If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort ( <b>220-5333</b> ). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a>
<b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a> 403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Support Services</li> <li>• Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>

<p><b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<p><a href="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a></p>
<p><b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Services</li> <li>• Health Services</li> <li>• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</li> <li>• Online resources and tips</li> </ul>	<p><b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a></p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a></p> <p><b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b></p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a></p> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>

## Schedule

Week 1, Sept. 13/15:

Theorizing film: beginnings and speculations

Read: Maxim Gorky, "The Lumiere Cinematographe"; Riccioto Canudo, "Manifesto of the Seven Arts" (D2L)

Screen: *Lumiere and Company* (various, 1995)

Week 2, Sept. 20/22:

Vachel Lindsay's pictorialism

Read: Vachel Lindsay, "The Picture of Religious Splendor," "Thirty Differences between the Photoplay and the Stage" (D2L)

Screen: *The Battle* (D.W. Griffith, 1912), *Judith of Bethulia* (D.W. Griffith, 1913)

Week 3, Sept. 27/29:

Hugo Munsterberg on selective attention and musical aesthetics

Read: Munsterberg, "The Means of the photoplay," "Attention" (D2L)

Screen: *The Cheat* (Cecile B. DeMille, 1915)

Week 4, Oct. 4/6:

Rudolf Arnheim and Gestalt forms

Read: Arnheim, "Film and Reality" (CVFT); "Motion" and "Gestalt and Art" (D2L)

Screen: *The Docks of New York* (Josef von Sternberg, 1928)

\*\*\*Quiz 1\*\*\*

Week 5, Oct. 11/13:

Jean Epstein: what is "photogenic"?

Read: Epstein, “On Some Characteristics of Photogenie,” “For a New Avant-Garde” (D2L); “Photogenie and the Imponderable” (CVFT)  
Screen: *Paris qui dort* (Rene Clair, 1924), *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Jean Epstein, 1928)

Week 6, Oct. 18/20:

Sergei Eisenstein and the dialectics of montage

Read: Eisenstein, “The Dramaturgy of Film Form” and “Beyond the Shot” (CVFT); “Methods of Montage” (D2L)

Screen: *Strike* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)

Week 7, Oct. 25/27:

Dziga Vertov’s kino-eye

Read: Vertov, “Film Directors: A Revolution” (CVFT); “Kino-Eye,” “Kino-Eye on *Strike*”; Sergei Eisenstein, “The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form” (D2L)

Screen: *Kino-Eye* (Vertov, 1924), *The Man with the Movie Camera* (Vertov, 1929)

**\*\*\*Quiz 2\*\*\***

Week 8, Nov. 1/3:

Siegfried Kracauer on distraction and mass culture

Read: Kracauer, “The Mass Ornament,” “Cult of Distraction”

Screen: *The Crowd* (King Vidor, 1928)

Week 9, Nov. 8:

Caesura—the problem of sound

Read: Arnheim, “A New Laocoon: Artistic Composites and the Talking Film”;

Eisenstein et al., “Statement on Sound”

Screen: *Shirin* (Abbas Kiarostami, 2008)

**\*\*\*take-home test handed out Nov. 8\*\*\***

*Reading Days Nov. 10-13*

Week 10, Nov. 15/17:

Walter Benjamin on aura and reproducibility

Read: Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”

Screen: *People on Sunday* (Robert Siodmak, 1930)

**\*\*\*take-home test due\*\*\***

Week 11, Nov. 22/24:

Bazin on realism and the photograph

Read: Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” (CVFT); “The Evolution of the Language of Cinema” (D2L)

Screen: *Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio de Sica, 1948)

Week 12, Nov. 29/Dec. 1:

Bazin on style

Read: Bazin, "William Wyler, the Jansenist of mise-en-scene" (D2L)

Screen: *The Little Foxes* (William Wyler, 1941)

Week 13, Dec. 6/8:

After Bazin, toward contemporary film theory

Read (optional): Annette Michelson, "What Is Cinema?", "Bodies in Space: Film as Carnal Knowledge"

**\*\*\*take-home final handed out Dec. 8; due Dec. 13, 4 p.m.\*\*\***