Description:

Recent trends in critical theory applied to the study of film, television, literature, popular music, and other types of “cultural production.” In-depth analyses of specific literary, visual, and musical texts are situated within structures of power among communities, nations, and individuals. Exploration of how identities of locality, gender, ethnicity, race, and class are negotiated through cultural forms.

This course sets forth the goal of conceptualizing and understanding classic and contemporary film and media theory through the practice of watching and analyzing film and television. Special attention will be paid to the negotiation of sexual, gender, and racial representation as we trace both the current and historical constitution of media, exploring the possibilities and prohibitions of cinematic embodiment.

We aim to recognize the importance of media literacy in contemporary society by developing a critical eye, capable not only of critiquing the messages disseminated throughout a variety of media but also of reconstructing and integrating components of these messages into new forms of cultural production.

Objectives:

1. Conceptualize and apply film and media theory frameworks to in-class screenings, while identifying and critiquing concurrent discourses regarding gender, race, and sexuality.
2. Express a compelling argument about a particular film sequence in relation to its broader film and historical context.
3. Understand the broader societal functions of film as a medium.
4. Analyze constructions of gender, race, and sexuality as deployed through cultural discourses.
5. Develop skills in close reading, argumentation, critical thinking and writing through written work and class discussions.
6. Demonstrate the ability to actively listen and observe, and to work respectfully with your peers and instructor, via class lectures, discussion, and film screenings.

DISCLAIMER: THIS COURSE REQUIRES YOU TO MATURELY AND CONSTRUCTIVELY ENGAGE WITH EXPLICIT MATERIAL. SHOULD YOU HAVE OBJECTIONS TO THE SEXUAL AND OTHERWISE GRAPHIC CONTENT IN ANY OF THE REQUIRED COURSEWORK, PLEASE ENROLL IN A DIFFERENT CLASS. NO ONE WILL BE EXCUSED FROM READING OR VIEWING THE ASSIGNED MATERIALS FOR ANY REASON.

Required Texts:

All readings will be available in the documents folder on Blackboard.

You must bring the texts to class on days they are to be discussed.

Requirements:

Throughout the semester, students will be expected to: 1) attend class meetings, 2) complete reading assignments and written assignments on time and bring them class on the day they are due, 3) complete the midterm paper and a final project 4) respect the classroom context by refraining from activities unrelated to the course (like texting, napping).

I welcome questions and conversations about the course, its topics, and its assignments both in office hours and over email. Please use an appropriate salutation (i.e. Dear Ryn, Hello Ms. Silverstein, etc.), sign emails with your full name, and please be patient if it takes me a day or two to respond.

Assignments/Grading:

15% Attendance/Participation
Attendance in lectures is mandatory and noted. You have two “freebie” absences, which you may use whenever you like; any more will count against your grade. As class is so short, being more than fifteen minutes late counts as an absence. Participation in class discussion is highly encouraged for full credit. You must attend a minimum of six screenings, though you are encouraged to attend all. Be sure to attend the screening if you can’t access a particular film yourself outside of class. You are required to take notes when watching films—see the handout on this subject on Blackboard. I may call upon you to show them to me at my discretion.

20% Blackboard Viewing Responses
You will write five responses to the films we’ve seen over the course of the semester, before the due dates indicated in the syllabus. Responses should be between 300 and 500 words in length. These responses will be posted using Blackboard’s discussion board tool. Please refer to the prompts that have been posted to formulate your response. Poor responses simply summarize the film (thanks, but I’ve seen it already). Average responses tell me your opinion of the film—
not really what I’m looking for. Excellent responses pull together connections between what you’ve seen, what we’ve discussed in class, and the readings. Evaluate, don’t just opine.

25% Midterm Paper
You will write a 5-7 page paper in which you analyze one of the films we’ve seen together within the context of film and/or media theory.

10% Final Project Proposal and Workshop
This 1-2 page short paper is designed to get you thinking towards the final project. What methods do you expect to engage with as your topic develops? What tools and skills are you going to require in order to complete this project—for example, will you need video-editing software such as iMovie? Do you have the skills to put together a short video using such a program? What questions and concerns do you have that can be addressed in our workshop sessions? Your proposal must put forth a reasonable framework for the form/structure of your final project. Any changes to your final project proposal after you have turned it in are subject to my approval. We will hold two workshops, during which you will engage in peer review with your fellow students.

30% Final Project
While you may write a 8-10 page paper if you choose to do so, you are encouraged to experiment in terms of genre—your final project can be multimodal in form, and can address any number of issues that have come up over the course of the semester. You may, for example, choose to make a video, remixing found footage with quotes from one of our readings. You may conduct a historical research project, recontextualizing your findings into a self-produced podcast, presentation, or blog. All ideas must be approved by me prior to undertaking the final project, and will be workshopped in concurrent sessions later in the semester (see above). This assignment is an invitation, if you will, to develop your own queer praxis—to explore non-standardized methodologies in your examination. Unless you opt to undertake a 8-10 page paper, your final project must be accompanied by a 2-3 page reflection paper, in which you will provide a rationale for the artistic and creative choices you have made.

Grading Standards for Written Work:
All out-of-class papers should be typed, polished work, i.e. free of mistakes, typos, spelling and grammatical errors in addition to expressing your thoughts as clearly as possible. Proofread your work and have a friend or classmate proofread it for you. Papers that fall short of, or go over, the assigned length will be marked down.

 FORMAT: MLA, APA, or Chicago format (including your name, my name, course number, date) with correct citations, double-spaced, last name and page # in upper right-hand corner, 1 inch margins all around, 12 pt. Times New Roman font. For help, see: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/

An “A” paper has a unique argument (thesis) to make on the topic, an organized structure, and evidence to support all claims. It has no significant errors in spelling, grammar, format or general presentation. The overall format of the essay includes an essay title, an introduction, well-developed paragraphs, and a conclusion. Active voice is apparent. The writing engages the reader and inspires them to contemplate the subject further. All quoted material is properly documented and cited, and the paper does not overuse quotations.

A “B” paper makes an argument on the topic and has a structure and evidence to support claims, but it may have sections where the structure becomes confusing or ineffective, or the evidence to support claims is deficient. In addition, it may contain some errors in spelling, grammar, format and/or general presentation. Quotations may be slightly overused, but they are properly cited in most cases.
A “C” paper has an argument to make on the topic with some viable claims. However, there may be serious deficiencies in the evidence provided and a notable absence of structure, as well as several errors in spelling, grammar, format and/or general presentation. Quotations may be overused and/or fail to be properly cited in a few cases.

A “D” paper has no real argument to make and deficiencies in every area.

An “F” paper has no argument and fails to reach the minimum requirements, or is a paper that is not turned in, or is a paper that has one or more plagiarized ideas or sections.

Grading System:

- A: 94-100
- A-: 90-93
- B+: 87-89
- B: 84-86
- B-: 80-83
- C+: 77-79
- C: 74-76
- C-: 70-73
- D+: 67-69
- D: 64-66
- D: 60-63
- F: 0-59

Reading and Discussion Questions:

While every person will likely be interested in different aspects of the readings, there are some questions that I would like you to keep in mind as you read. Completing these questions ahead of class will a) improve your understanding and analysis of the readings, b) facilitate class discussion, and c) ensure good performance on pop quizzes. Below is a general list of questions; from time to time more specific questions will be provided for particular readings.

1. What was the context (year/era/place/purpose) in which the piece was written?
2. What are important elements of the author’s background and experience? Why did the author write the piece?
3. What is/are the main point(s) or argument(s) of the reading?
4. How does this reading connect to, reinforce, or challenge previous readings and/or class discussions/activities? Be specific – have particular readings, discussions, films, activities, etc. in mind.
5. What does this piece contribute to your understanding of cinema and media theory in a broader context?
6. What, if anything, about the reading surprised you, pushed you to think about something differently, or confirmed your previous thinking?
7. What is confusing? What would you like to have explained more or discuss?

Attendance and Assignment Policy:

Absences and late assignments will adversely affect your grade and more than two are not excused unless a medical note is provided. If you need to miss class for a religious observance, please discuss it with me at least two weeks prior. Late assignments are penalized one letter grade per day.
The active and official copy of the syllabus (with page numbers for readings) will be maintained on Blackboard. I will announce any changes in class but you will be responsible for referring to Blackboard to verify assignment details and due dates.

All written assignments due in class should be placed on my desk at the beginning of class the day they are due. If you cannot attend class due to a University sponsored activity or religious observance let me know in advance and turn in any assignments by 12pm the day they are due in my mailbox in 1055 Humanities. They must be typed and printed out double-spaced and single-sided; use a standard typeface (Times New Roman or Calibri, no smaller than 12pt), black ink, one inch margins, and plain white paper. Staple multiple pages. A heading at the top of the page should give your full name, the name of the course, the date, and a title for the assignment. You must cite references but are free to choose any standard citation style (MLA, Chicago, or APA).

**Disability Accommodation:**
If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. [http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/dss_services.shtml#academic](http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/dss_services.shtml#academic)

**Academic Integrity:**
Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at [http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/](http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/)

**Critical Incident Management:**
Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. See the Student Code and Undergraduate Bulletin for more information about policies and expectations: [http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/ucs/docs/2013%20University%20Student%20Conduct%20Code.pdf](http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/ucs/docs/2013%20University%20Student%20Conduct%20Code.pdf) [http://sb.cc.stonybrook.edu/bulletin/current/policiesandregulations/policies_expectations/index.php](http://sb.cc.stonybrook.edu/bulletin/current/policiesandregulations/policies_expectations/index.php)

**Resources for help:**
Printing: [http://it.stonybrook.edu/services/ printing](http://it.stonybrook.edu/services/ printing)
Writing: The Writing Center: [https://sunysb.mywconline.com/](https://sunysb.mywconline.com/)
Blackboard: Division of Information Technology: [http://it.stonybrook.edu/services/blackboard](http://it.stonybrook.edu/services/blackboard)

**Email:**
All email sent to you via Blackboard will be sent to your @stonybrook.edu email address. Be sure to check your Stony Brook University email account frequently and regularly. The following is a notice from the Interim CIO and Assistant Provost for Teaching, Learning + Technology, Stony Brook University:

“Electronic Communication: Email and especially email sent via Blackboard ([http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu](http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu)) is one of the ways we will officially communicate with you
for this course. It is your responsibility to make sure that you read your email in your official University email account. For most students that is Google Apps for Education (http://www.stonybrook.edu/mycloud) but you may verify your official Electronic Post Office (EPO) address at: http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/checking-or-changing-your-mail-forwarding-address-in-the-epo. If you choose to forward your official University email to another off campus account, I am not responsible for any undeliverable messages to your alternative personal accounts. You can set up email forwarding using these DoIT-provided instructions found at: http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/settin-up-mail-forwarding-in-google-mail’
If you need help accessing your @stonybrook.edu email account, or for other technical assistance, please contact Client Support at 631-632-9800 or SupportTeam@stonybrook.edu.

Minimal Undergraduate Student Responsibilities
The University's statement of Minimal Instructional and Student Responsibilities was updated by the University Senate's Undergraduate Council in Fall 2008. Please review it carefully, especially the sections on Responsibilities in the Classroom, Absentee Policy, and Course Responsibilities. Consult the ‘Academic Policies and Regulations’ section of the on-line Undergraduate Bulletin: http://sb.cc.stonybrook.edu/bulletin/current/policiesandregulations/policies_expectations/min_instructional_studentResp.php

Student Success Resources
A brief guide to 'Student Success Resources' on campus may be found at: https://ucolleges.stonybrook.edu/links/academic-success-resources.pdf. On academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/

Conduct:
Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. See the Student Code and Undergraduate Bulletin for more information about policies and expectations: http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/ucs/docs/2013%20University%20Student%20Code%20Code.pdf http://sb.cc.stonybrook.edu/bulletin/current/policiesandregulations/policies_expectations/index.php

Resources for help:
Computer access: http://www.studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/res/computing.shtml
Printing: http://it.stonybrook.edu/services/printing
Writing: The Writing Center: https://sunysb.mywconline.com/
Blackboard: Division of Information Technology: http://it.stonybrook.edu/services/blackboard

Films and Television:
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Robert Wiene, 1920)
Dance, Girl, Dance (Dorothy Arzner, 1940)
Pan’s Labyrinth (Guillermo del Toro, 2006)
Persona (Ingmar Bergman, 1966)
Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954)
History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige (Rea Tajiri, 1991)
Señorita Extraviada (Lourdes Portillo, 2001)
Mothlight (Stan Brakhage, 1963)
Night Music (Stan Brakhage, 1986)
Thriller (Sally Potter, 1979)
Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982)
Get Out (Jordan Peele, 2016)
Moonlight (Barry Jenkins, 2016)
Inglorious Basterds (Quentin Tarantino, 2009)
The Diving Bell and the Butterfly (Julian Schnabel, 2007)
Black Mirror, “San Junipero” (Owen Harris, 2016)

MEETING SCHEDULE:

Week 1: What are media?
Aug. 28: Introduction
Screening: The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Robert Wiene, 1920)

Week 2: Montage
Sep. 4: Labor Day = NO CLASS, NO SCREENING
Sep. 6: Eisenstein, Sergei, “From Film Form” (pg 13-40)

Week 3: Auteur Theory
Screening: Dance, Girl, Dance (Dorothy Arzner, 1940)

Week 4: Genre Theory
Sep. 18: Altman, Rick. “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre” (pg 552-563)
Screening: Pan’s Labyrinth (Guillermo del Toro, 2006)
Sep. 20: Williams, Linda. “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, Excess” (pg 602)

Week 5: Psychoanalysis
Sep. 25: Metz, Christian. “From The Imaginary Signifier” (pg 694-710)
Screening: Persona (Ingmar Bergman, 1966)

Week 6: Spectatorship
Oct. 2: Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (pg 711-722)
Screening: Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954)

Week 7: Documentary
Screening: History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige (Rea Tajiri, 1991), Señorita Extraviada (Lourdes Portillo, 2001)
Oct. 11: Corrigan, Timothy. A Short Guide to Writing About Film. Work on midterm paper!

Week 8: Avante-garde and Art Cinema
Oct. 16: Midterm Paper Due
Screening: Mothlight (Stan Brakhage, 1963), Night Music (Stan Brakhage, 1986), Thriller (Sally Potter, 1979)
Week 9: Gender Theory
Screening: Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982)

Week 10: Critical Race Theory
Screening: Get Out (2016)
Nov. 1: Benshoff, Harry. “Blaxploitation Horror Films: Generic Reappropriation or Reinscription?”

Week 11: Queer Theory
Nov. 6: Final project proposal due. Sullivan, Nikki. “Queer: A Question of Being, or a Question of Doing?”
Screening: Moonlight (Barry Jenkins, 2016)

Week 12: Media Theory I
Screening: Inglorious Basterds
Nov. 15: Peretz, Eyal, “What is a Cinema of Jewish Vengeance? Tarantino’s Inglourious Basterds”

Week 13: Media Theory II
Screening: The Diving Bell and the Butterfly
Nov. 22: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14: Digital Cinema
Screening: Black Mirror, “San Junipero” (Owen Harris, 2016)

Week 15:
Dec. 4: Final project workshop
Screening: no screening
Dec. 6: Final project workshop

DECEMBER 13: FINAL PROJECTS/PAPERS DUE