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| Academic Year | 2018-2019 | Semester | 1 |
| Course Coordinator | Michelle Chiang | | |
| Course Code | HL3001 | | |
| Course Title | Theatre of the Absurd | | |
| Pre-requisites | HL1001 Introduction to the Study of Literature | | |
| No of AUs | 3 | | |
| Contact Hours | 39 (weekly seminars of 3 hours) | | |
| Proposal Date | 19 January 2018 | | |

Course Aims

The course will help you acquire the skills necessary to understand how film theories are constructed. This knowledge and understanding of writings about cinema will equip you with the skills to analyse and interpret a wide range of films. Upon successful completion of the course, you will be able to apply these ideas to key questions asked throughout the history of film theory, as well as generate new ways of thinking about films, both old and new.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify and interpret stylistic elements of films.
2. Acquire knowledge of key writings about cinema.
3. Evaluate writings about cinema critically and employ those ideas creatively in your analyses of films.
4. Develop an appreciation for the birth and development of film theory.

Course Content

This course will introduce to you the history and key debates of film theory. You will be exposed to various ways of thinking and writing about films. The course is divided into four thematic units: Ontology (What is film?), Epistemology (How do films create meaning?), Aesthetics (What makes a film 'powerful,' 'poignant,' or 'sublime?'), and Ideology (How does a film relate to society and politics?). We will attempt to answer these questions (and many more) as we watch selected films.

Assessment (includes both continuous and summative assessment)

| Component | Course LO Tested | Related Programme LO or Graduate Attributes (See English Programme's LOs) | Weighting | Team/Individual | Assessment Rubrics (See English Programme's assessment rubrics) |
|-----------|------------------|---|-----------|-----------------|---|
| 1. Essay | 3, 4 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 | 40% | Individual | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13 |

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| 2. Presentation | 3, 4 | 4, 5, 6, 9, 12 | 20% | Group | 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 |
| 3. Participation | 1, 3 | 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13 | 20% | Group | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 14 |
| 4. Weekly Response | 2, 3 | 2, 3 | 20% | Individual | 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 |
| Total | | | 100% | | |

Essay (40%):

In your essay, you will engage critically with a film essay and a film of your choice. Your essay must begin with a thesis statement, and all points must be structured coherently with clear topic sentences.

Presentation (20%):

Working in a pair, you will identify and analyze three key ideas in the film essay. At the end of the presentation, you will take questions from your classmates.

Participation (20%)

Participation is important in this class, and you will be evaluated during in-class discussions and peer feedback at the end of your classmates' presentations.

Weekly Response (20%)

At the beginning of each class, you will submit the first half of your one-page response paper. At the end of your classmates' presentation, I will return your response paper to you and you will have 15 minutes to complete the second half. The purpose of this two-part format is to allow you to measure your learning and reflect on aspects of the film essays that you might not have considered when you were reading them for the first time. You will keep these papers in a folder, then submit it to me twice: right before Recess and on Week 13.

Formative feedback

Feedback from peers generated during in-class discussions will be helpful to check your understanding of the film essays. Written feedback will also be given when I return your response folders to you and when you receive your final grade.

Learning and Teaching approach

| Approach | How does this approach support students in achieving the learning outcomes? |
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| Lecture | You will be introduced to the writers of the week in a 1.5 hour lecture. I usually begin with several points that I want to make about the author of the text we are working on, the period the author is writing in – and the major theoretical issues the author is engaged in. |

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| Discussion | The next hour is devoted to close-reading and discussion. Each of you will bring 1 question and share it with the rest of the class. We will make a list of questions on the board, then try to answer them together. These questions could help generate ideas for your final essay. |
| Presentation | Each week, a pair of you will introduce three key ideas in a prescribed film essay to the class. Presentations are 10 – 15 minutes. If you are not presenting that day, you are expected to contribute to class discussion at the end of each presentation. You can do so by asking and responding to questions, as well as giving constructive feedback to one another. Such discussions are also opportunities to formulate and test out potential ideas for the research essay. |
| Response Paper | The response papers will allow you and me to check your progress, specifically your understanding of the prescribed readings. |

Reading and References

This is a provisional list.

Primary Text:

1. Brady, Leo and Marshall Cohen, eds. *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eighth Edition. Oxford UP, 2016.

[Additional readings will be distributed in class.]

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

(1) General

You are expected to complete all assigned pre-class readings and response papers. You will attend all seminar classes punctually. If you must miss a seminar session, you are responsible for following up with course notes, assignments and course related announcements. Since Engagement is one of the assessment components, you are expected to participate actively in all seminar discussions and activities.

(2) Absenteeism

Attendance will be taken each week. Absence from class without a valid reason will affect your course grade significantly. Valid reasons include falling sick supported by a medical certificate and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies.

If you must miss a seminar, you must inform me (the course instructor) via email prior to the start of the class.

Academic Integrity

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

You must recognise your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. One needs to actively equip oneself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the [academic integrity website](#) for more information. You could also consult me if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

Course Instructors

| Instructor | Office Location | Phone | Email |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--|
| Michelle Chiang | SoH 03-69 | 67906714 | michellechiang@ntu.edu.sg |

Planned Weekly Schedule

| Week | Topic | Course LO | Readings/ Activities |
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| 1 | Introduction: What is Film Theory? | 2, 4 | |
| 2 | Ontology: What is Film? | 1, 2 | Vsevolod Pudovkin, "On Editing" from <i>Film Technique</i> Sergei Eisenstein, "Beyond the Shot" and "The Dramaturgy of Film Form" Screening: <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> (1925) |
| 3 | Ontology: Image and Sound | 2, 4 | André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," "The Myth of Total Cinema," and "De Sica: Metteur-en-scène" Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Grigori |

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| | | | Alexandrov, "Statement on Sound" Christian Metz, "Aural Objects" |
| 4 | Ontology: Film and other media | 1, 2 | Siegfried Kracauer, "The establishment of physical existence" (303) Rudolf Arnheim, "Film and Reality" (322) Andre Bazin, "Theater and Cinema" (418) Seymour Chatman, "What novels can do that films can't (and vice versa)" (445) Dudley Andrew "Adaptation" (1984) Screening: Stan Kubrick's <i>The Shining</i> (1980) |
| 5 | Epistemology: Role of the Auteur | 2, 3 | Stephen Prince, "The discourse of pictures: Iconicity and Film Studies" (87-105) Andrew Sarris "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962" (561) Peter Wollen "The Auteur Theory" (565) Screening: Alfred Hitchcock's <i>Psycho</i> (1960) |
| 6 | Epistemology: Meaning Making I | 2, 3 | Gilles Deleuze, "Preface to the English Edition," "The Origin of Crisis," "Beyond the Movement-Image" (240-69) Screening: David Lynch's <i>Blue Velvet</i> (1986) |

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| 7 | Epistemology: Meaning Making II | 2, 3 | [Response Folder due this week] Christian Metz, "Some Points on the Semiotics of Cinema" Jean-Louis Baudry "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema" (1970) Noel Carroll, "Jean-Louis Baudry and 'The Apparatus'" (1988, 224-39) Screening: Coen brother's <i>Barton Fink</i> (1991) |
| 8 | Aesthetics: Judging a film | 1, 3 | Stanley Cavell, "Photograph and Screen," "Audience, Actor, and Star," "Types; Cycles as Genres," Ideas of Origin" (344-52) Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator" |
| 9 | Aesthetics: Visual Pleasure | 1, 3 | Laura Mulvey. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975, 837-48) Tania Modleski, "The Terror of Pleasure: The Contemporary Horror Film and Postmodern Theory" (1984, 764) Screening: David Cronenberg's <i>Videodrome</i> (1983) |
| 10 | The Politics of Film I | 2, 3 | Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935, 791) Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism" (1969, 812) |

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| | | | Screening: Louis Malle's <i>Au revoir les enfants</i> (1987) |
| 11 | The Politics of Film II | 3, 4 | Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction" (1977, 877-891) Tania Modleski, "The Master's Dollhouse: Rear Window" (849) Screening: Hitchcock's <i>Rear Window</i> (1954) |
| 12 | World Cinema | 3, 4 | Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media Stereotype, Realism, and the Struggle Over Representation" Rey Chow, "Film and Cultural Identity" Wimal Dissanayake, "Issues in World Cinema" (1998) Screening: Abbas Kiarostami's <i>Taste of Cherry</i> (1997) |
| 13 | Conclusion | 1, 2, 3, 4 | Essay and Response folder are due this week. |
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