



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

December 2025

TEMPLATE FOR CURRENT COURSE CONTENT

Academic Year	2025-2026	Semester	2
Course Coordinator	Dr David Ocón		
Course Code	HH4015		
Course Title	Film: A Global History		
Pre-requisites	HH1001 What is History?		
No of AUs	4		
Contact Hours	52 (weekly seminars)		
Update	01 December 2025		

Course Aims

Two central ideas animate this course. First, that film was the pre-eminent international cultural form of the twentieth century—one that shaped modernity, influenced politics, generated new artistic languages, and connected audiences across continents. Second, historians must be able to interpret both visual and textual sources. Film, as both an aesthetic object and a historical document, offers a unique window into the social worlds that produced it.

Film: A Global History brings these ideas together by introducing students to major debates in the history, aesthetics, and philosophy of cinema, while simultaneously equipping them with practical skills for analysing film as historical evidence. Through case studies from a wide range of national and transnational film traditions—including Hollywood, European art cinema, South and East Asian cinemas, African filmmaking, Latin American movements, and diasporic and independent film cultures—students learn how cinema reflects, shapes, and critiques global histories.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you (as a student) will be able to:

- 1) Describe major themes and events in film history
- 2) Assess and critique the changing relationships between film technology, economics, politics and cultural values
- 3) Identify, evaluate and employ effective ways to use the moving image in historical research
- 4) Construct robust historical arguments using visual archives

Course Content

- The global history of film as a technology, as a form and as an industry
- Key methods, concepts and theories of film
- How to identify and make use of film and visual archives
- Development of original, comparative, historical arguments

Assessment (includes both continuous and summative assessment)

Component	Course LO Tested	Related Programme LO or Graduate Attributes (See History Programme's LOs)	Weighting	Team/ Individual	Assessment Rubrics (See History Programme's assessment rubrics)
1. Individual Essay including shot-by-shot analysis	1, 2, 4	3, 4, 6, 8	30%	Individual	2, 3, 4, 5
2. Seminar Discussions and Participation	1, 3, 4	1, 2, 7, 8	20%	Individual	2, 4, 11, 12
3. Weekly Written Responses	1, 2, 3, 4	2, 4, 5, 6	10%	Individual	1, 2, 4, 11, 12
4. Final project	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8	40%	Group	1, 2, 4, 11, 12
Total			100%		

Essay including shot-by-shot analysis – 30%:

This assignment consists of two interconnected components designed to help you analyse film as a historical document. First, you will produce a shot-by-shot close reading of a short but significant sequence from one of the films screened in the course. Second, you will situate your close reading within its broader historical context. This requires outlining relevant information about the film's production, circulation, and reception, and then connecting your analysis to larger themes discussed in class—for example, the use of film as a social or educational tool, the relationship between film industries and technological or economic change, or the construction of national, colonial, or transnational cinematic traditions.

Seminar Discussions and Participation – 20%:

Active class participation is a key component of this course and will contribute to your final grade. Peer-to-peer learning is central to our work together—students are expected to learn from one another by sharing ideas, listening actively, and engaging respectfully with different perspectives.

This requires arriving fully prepared, having completed all assigned readings, and contributing thoughtfully to discussions and argument-building.

Weekly Written Responses – 10%:

Starting from Week 3, you will submit a written response to one of the films assigned each week. Guiding question(s) and detailed submission instructions will be provided on NTUlearn. These responses will be graded on a **Pass/Fail** basis. Completing all weekly responses will earn you full marks.

Final project – 40%:

In groups of five to six, students will produce a 10–20 minute short film that creatively engages with a theme, movement, or aesthetic tradition studied in the course. The project may take the form of a historical re-creation, a stylistically inspired short film, or a mini-documentary/video essay on a global film movement. While technical polish is welcome, the primary goal is to demonstrate clear historical understanding and thoughtful engagement with global cinema. Each group will also submit a brief written commentary (1,000–1,500 words) explaining the film’s historical context, conceptual choices, and connection to course materials.

Formative feedback

You will receive individual formative written or verbal feedback for your assignments and presentations. You will receive summative feedback on your group work after the module concludes.

Learning and Teaching Approach

Approach	How does this approach support you in achieving the learning outcomes?
Seminar Discussions and Participation	The seminar format fosters critical engagement with films, course readings and themes through active participation, discussion, and debate. It emphasises peer-to-peer learning, encouraging students to share ideas, listen actively, and respond thoughtfully to different perspectives. This approach supports the development of analytical skills, critical thinking, and respectful academic discourse, while also preparing students to collaborate effectively in later group work.
Weekly Written Responses	These weekly written responses help students engage consistently with the course’s films, strengthening their ability to interpret visual sources, recognise key historical themes, and articulate informed critical observations. The short, regular format encourages sustained analytical practice and reinforces core concepts in global film history.
Group Project	This group project requires students to translate historical knowledge into audiovisual form. By researching a global film movement and creatively engaging with its themes, aesthetics, and contexts, students deepen their understanding of film history while critically examining how technology, politics, economics, and culture shape cinematic traditions. Producing and analysing their own moving-image work also strengthens their ability to use visual sources effectively and to construct historically grounded arguments

	through film.
Individual Work	This assignment deepens students' ability to interpret films as historical sources, combining detailed visual analysis with contextual research. By linking a close reading to wider historical debates, students learn to examine how technology, politics, economics, and culture shape cinematic forms. The task strengthens their capacity to use moving images effectively in historical inquiry and to construct clear, evidence-based historical arguments grounded in visual material.

Select bibliography

- I. Aitken, *The British official film in South-East Asia: Malaya/Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong* (2014)
- G. Alexander *Academic Films for the Classroom: A History* (2010)
- R. Allen and D. Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (1985)
- Tilman Baumgärtel (Ed.) *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema* (2012)
- J. Caughie (Ed.) *Theories of Authorship* (1981)
- I. Christie (Ed.), *Audiences. Defining and Researching Screen Entertainment Reception* (2012)
- J. Corner *The art of record: a critical introduction to documentary* (1996)
- T. Corrigan, *The Essay Film. From Montaigne, After Marker* (2011)
- M. Cowan, *Walter Ruttmann and the Cinema of Multiplicity: Avant-garde – Advertising – Modernity* (2014)
- T. Day (Ed.) *Cultures at War: The Cold War and Cultural Expression in Southeast Asia* (2010)
- T. Elsaesser (Eds.) *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (1990)
- O. Gaycken *Devices of Curiosity: Early Cinema and Popular Science* (2015)
- D. Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System* (1986)
- A. Higson, *Waving The Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (1995)
- S-H. Jeong, *Cinematic Interfaces: Film Theory After New Media* (2013)
- E. Jenkins, *Special Affects: Cinema, Animation, and the Translation of Consumer Culture* (2014)
- R. Maltby, *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* (2011)
- R. Maltby, *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity: New Perspectives on European Cinema History* (2011)
- G. Nowell-Smith, *The Oxford history of world cinema* (1996)
- M. Rabiger, *Directing the Documentary* (1987)
- P. Smith (ed.) *The Historian and Film* (1976)
- D. Strieble *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States* (2012)
- H. Wasson and C. Acland *Useful Cinema: Expanding Film Contexts* (2011)

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

(1) General

You are expected to complete all assigned pre-class readings and activities, attend all seminar classes punctually and take all scheduled assignments and tests by due dates. You are expected to take responsibility to follow up with course notes, assignments and course related announcements for seminar sessions you have missed. You are expected to participate in all seminar discussions and activities.

(2) Absenteeism

Absence from class without a valid reason can affect your overall course grade. 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 miss a lecture, you must inform 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 as a student 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.

As a student, it is important that you recognize 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. You need to actively equip yourself 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. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

The use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) is permitted in this course, provided it is **declared** and **acknowledged correctly** in accordance with the department's guidelines. Students may use GAI tools for the following purposes:

- Generating initial ideas or brainstorming
- Identifying relevant materials or sources of information
- Refining grammar and syntax

All use of GAI must be transparently documented using the official **GAI Declaration Form**. This includes submitting a digital paper trail (e.g., prompts and outputs) and citing any substantial input from GenAI tools in footnotes or references.

Improper or undeclared use of GAI will be treated as a breach of academic integrity and may be subject to disciplinary action. Students are expected to ensure that their final submissions reflect their **own intellectual contributions**.

Course Instructors

Instructor	Office Location	Phone	Email
DR DAVID OCÓN	SOH #03-82A		david.ocon@ntu.edu.sg

Planned Weekly Schedule (tbc)

Week	Topic	Course LO	Readings/ Activities
1	INTRODUCTION	1,2,3,4,5	Introduction to the course, self-introduction, and discussion of syllabus and expectations
2	EARLY CINEMA & THE BIRTH OF FILM (1895-1910s)	1,2,3,4,5	Seminar Screenings/Critiques/Discussions
3	GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM (1919-1933)	1,3,4,5	Seminar Screenings/Critiques/Discussions
4	SOVIET MONTAGE CINEMA (1925-1930)	1,2,3,4,5	Seminar Screenings/Critiques/Discussions
5	CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD CINEMA (1927-1960)	1,2,3,4,5	Seminar Screenings/Critiques/Discussions
6	ITALIAN NEO-REALISM (1943-1952)	1,2,3,4,5	Seminar Screenings/Critiques/Discussions
7	JAPANESE POSTWAR CINEMA & THE GOLDEN AGE (1945-1965)	1,2,3,4,5	Seminar Screenings/Critiques/Discussions
8	THIRD CINEMA & ANTICOLONIAL FILM MOVEMENTS (1960s-1980s)	1,2,3,4,5	Seminar Screenings/Critiques/Discussions
9	THE FRENCH NEW WAVE (1959-1968)	1,2,3,4,5	Seminar Screenings/Critiques/Discussions
10	GROUP FIELDWORK	1,2,3,4,5	
11	NEW HOLLYWOOD & GLOBAL AUTERISM (1967-1980)	1,2,3,4,5	Seminar Screenings/Critiques/Discussions

12	CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL ART CINEMA (1990s-Present)	1,2,3,4,5	Seminar Screenings/Critiques/Discussions
13	Team Projects Presentations	1,2,3,4,5	