

Sample Syllabi – Subject to Change
Cinema, Media and Society: A Global
Survey CMST 17200 94

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Course Description

This course will introduce you to what academic film and media studies looks like at the undergraduate level. It will expose you to a wide range of industries, cinemas, and formats (including independent documentaries, Hollywood and Bollywood features, and East Asian animation), and how to discuss these forms in relation to one another. It encourages the close analysis of camera techniques, materials, compositing, and formal attributes, and explores a range of questions pertaining to the production, distribution, and consumption of these audiovisual forms. Students will take advantage of multiple UChicago resources, such as screening rooms, editing labs, video installations, and VR platforms, as they construct both written and video essays in response to our course materials.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Become familiar with scholarship on cinematic form, film style, animation, and visual analysis of images
- Understand and use the terminology of film analysis and animation
- Describe sequences from classic and contemporary cinema using close analysis
- Recognize compositing techniques in animation from various eras and studios and incorporate these observations into analytical writing
- Construct both written and video essays about moving images

Assignments and Evaluations

1) Attendance and Participation:

Students are expected to attend all class sessions except in case of emergencies.

Participation includes the thorough preparation of readings, willing participation in

classroom discussions and group exercises, and completion of in-class activities and screenings.

2) Class Blog/Journal Posts:

All students will keep a screenings response journal through the course's UChicago Voices blog, in which they should a) record their reactions, thoughts, and questions regarding the assigned films, and b) respond to the insights of their classmates. In order to guide students' responses, the instructor might suggest more specific questions during particular times in the course. Keeping a response journal is beneficial to the reading and viewing process as well as to articulating thoughts and reactions to the concepts and theories we will be focusing on. It also provides a solid basis for productive classroom discussions.

Here are some general categories students may consider while reading the primary texts/films and when noting down responses after finishing engaging with assigned materials. These categories are meant to help articulate and organize reading responses (students do not have to limit themselves only to these categories):

- 1) purpose and meaning
- 2) materials, style, and film form
- 3) narrative strategy and structure or composition
- 4) narrative voice
- 5) representations of identity, gender, nationality, culture, and moments in history
- 5) your questions about the text/film

Another approach to a response could be to focus on and discuss one scene or image that particularly draws your attention (whether in a positive or negative way). Students should be able to illustrate all their observations and comments with examples (use of screenshots or clips from the films or supporting evidence are encouraged!)

3) Video Essay Projects:

In the final project for this course, you will demonstrate your ability to make an argument using visual images by composing a 5-6 min. video essay (using Mattias Stork's "Chaos Cinema" example as a model; more instructions, including access to Logan Center software will be discussed in class).

Week 1: Non-fiction, Documentary, and Making Images of Reality Move
Day 1

Introduction & in-class writing exercise: how would you define the terms "cinema" and

“animation”? How can you tell that what you are seeing is a “film” or a “cartoon”? What other sorts of “moving images” do you encounter that you would NOT consider “cinema” or “animation”?

- Read: **Maxim Gorky**, “In the Kingdom of Shadows”
- Watch: A selection of short animations, experimental video works, early silent films & commercials

Day 2

In-Class Activity using virtual optical illusions and philosophical toys

- Read: **André Bazin**, “**The Ontology of the Photographic Image**”
- Watch: *All the Memory of the World* (Alain Resnais, 1956, 22m)
Pasadena Freeway Stills (Gary Beydler, 1974, 6m)
Waltz with Bashir (Ari Folman, 2008, 90m)

Day 3

- Read: André Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image”
- Watch: *Blue* (Derek Jarman, 1993)
- Visit: Photography exhibition at the Smart Museum of Art (workshop on visual analysis)

Day 4

- Watch: *I Am Another You* (Nanfu Wang, 2017)
Estonia Dreams of Eurovision! (Marina Zenovich, 2002)
- Workshop: Class Blog Journal Entries & Making Film Analysis Charts

Day 5

- Performance Piece (to be performed in-class): Hollis Frampton, “A Lecture”
- Watch: *The Missing Picture* (Rithy Panh, 2013)

Week 2: Classic Hollywood, Modern Bollywood, & Other Commercial Cinemas

Day 1

- Read: George Eastman Museum, “Dye Transfer Printing” (with streaming video): <https://www.eastman.org/technicolor/technology/dye-transfer-printing>;
Scott Higgins, *Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow*, 22-47
- Watch: *La Cucaracha* (1934), *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960, 109m)
- Guest: Staff projectionists from the Film Studies Center

Day 2

- Read: Selections from **Ulka Anjaria**, *Understanding Bollywood: The Grammar of Hindi Cinema*
- Watch: *Sairat* (Nagraj Manjule, 2016)

Day 3

Editing Patterns: Continuity, Montage, and Chaos (part I)

Watch:

Moviola demo: <https://vimeo.com/117756839>

Steenbeck demo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUxbfiZ_-9Y

The Best of Walt Disney's True-Life Adventures (James Algar, 1975, 89m) – original 16mm print available from the FSC's own collection!

Read:

Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing*, 179-81

Day 4

Editing Patterns: Continuity, Montage, and Chaos (part II)

Watch:

Mattias Stork, “Chaos Cinema” video essay

Part I: <https://vimeo.com/28016047>

Part II: <https://vimeo.com/28016704>

Watch: *Speed Racer* (The Wachowskis, 2008)

Read: **David Bordwell**, “Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film”

-Small Groups Activity on Editing Music Videos

Week 3: Japanese Animation & Visual Novels

Day 1

- Read: Selections from **Tom Lamarre**, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*
- Watch: A selection of currently airing seasonal anime, from *shonen* to *shojo* genres

Day 2

- Read: **Kumiko Saito**, “Magic, "Shōjo", and Metamorphosis: Magical Girl Anime and the Challenges of Changing Gender Identities in Japanese Society”
- Watch: *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* (ep. 1-6)
- **Meme Exercise** for Class Blog: Find and analyze an anime meme and discuss how it circulates and operates on social media based on cultural understandings about anime characters or tropes

Day 3

- Read: Selections from **Tom Lamarre**, *The Anime Ecology: A Genealogy of Television, Animation, and Game Media*
- Watch: *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* (ep. 7-12)

Day 4

- Field Trip: Weston Games Lab for a demonstration of JRPGs
- Read: Japanese VN chapters & Original English Lang. Visual Novels (comparative analysis exercise)
- Conclusions; Student Presentations of Video Essays