Expressive Culture: Film

Class Code
CORE-UA 9750

Instructor Details
Dr Megan Carrigy
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Consultations by appointment.
Please allow at least 24 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails.

Class Details
Expressive Culture: Film

Monday, 3:00 – 7:00pm (4 hours per week including film screening)
September 1 to December 8
Room 304
NYU Sydney Academic Centre
157-161 Gloucester St, The Rocks 2000

Prerequisites
None

Class Description
How has Australian cinema engaged with significant and often contested historical, political and cultural events in the nation’s past? The films in this course offer critical perspectives on the history of colonisation in Australia; the legacies of the Stolen Generations; the controversies surrounding Australia’s role in World War One; as well as Australia’s relationships with its Pacific Asian neighbours. We will focus on films that have marked significant shifts in public consciousness about the past such as Gallipoli (1981), Rabbit-Proof Fence (2002) and Balibo (2009). We will also draw on films that have employed innovative narrative and aesthetic strategies for exploring the relationship between the past and the present such as Ten Canoes (2006) and The Tracker (2002). Throughout the course, students will develop their understanding of the basic methods and concepts of cinema studies. In particular, students will develop a critical vocabulary for analysing how filmmakers have approached the use of memory, testimony, re-enactment, researched detail, allegory and archives across a diverse range of examples.

Desired Outcomes
By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Apply the basic vocabulary of film form.
- Grasp the mechanics of structuring a written argument about a film’s meaning.
- Engage with different approaches to thinking and writing about cinema and film.
Reflect upon their viewing position and their application of interpretive strategies to films from diverse historical and cultural contexts.

Utilize a critical vocabulary for analysing representations of the relationship between the past and the present on film.

Critically analyse the ways that representations of the past shape and are shaped by their historical, political and cultural contexts.

Research and investigate aspects of the Australian cinema and communicate their findings in a coherent, well-structured written form.

Situate contemporary Australian cinema in its national, regional and international contexts.

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**Assessment Components**

**Class Participation:** (10%) Assessed throughout the semester.

**Sequence Analysis:** 4-6 pages (20%) Due in class Session 7.

**Critical Paper:** 4-6 pages (20%) Due in class Session 10.

**Proposal for Final Paper:** 2-3 pages (10%) Due in class Session 12.

**Final Paper:** 10-12 pages (40%) Due by 5pm Monday 15 Dec (Exam Week).

**Class Participation** Students are required to demonstrate accountability and responsibility in their preparation for, and engagement with, the course. Students are expected to engage in active discussion and to listen to and respect other points of view. Students will receive a midterm participation grade, worth half of your total participation grade, after the first seven weeks of classes.

**Sequence Analysis (Session 7)** Students will identify a sequence from a film presented in the first six weeks of the course and critically analyse how the sequence reflects key themes, issues, concepts and/or aesthetic strategies introduced in Sessions 1 - 6. Students will pay close attention to the formal (stylistic and technical) qualities of the sequence, demonstrating their understanding of the specificities of film form, style and narration.

**Critical Paper (Session 10)** Students will select two readings from the selection provided by the instructor and write a short critical essay in which they identify and analyze the key arguments, ideas, concepts and issues raised by the authors. Students will compare the arguments of the different authors and offer their own assessment of the authors’ claims and conclusions. The paper should be written in an appropriate academic style with consistent scholarly referencing and bibliography. This assignment will help to develop students’ critical reading, thinking and writing skills, essential for the final paper in this course.

**Proposal for Final Paper (Session 12)** Students will submit a 2-3 page outline (minimum 500 words) indicating how they intend to approach their chosen question. These will be workshopped in class and students are required to schedule a follow up meeting with the instructor for additional feedback.
Final Paper (Exam Week) Questions for the final papers will be released in Session 10.

Students are required to apply their analysis to specific, carefully selected case studies and film examples and to demonstrate their critical thinking, analysis and evaluation skills. Students are expected to situate their argument in relation to the relevant required readings and undertake additional research and reading on their topic.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component will result in failure of the class.

The College Core Curriculum is designed to provide students with an intellectually rigorous general education in the liberal arts. Because Core courses seek to stretch you beyond your previous schooling and major course of study, they will likely be among the most academically challenging experiences you undertake as an undergraduate. The following guidelines outline our common expectations concerning the evaluation of students’ work across the curriculum.

The grade of A marks extraordinary academic performance in all aspects of a course and is reserved for clearly superior work.

As a faculty, we are similarly concerned to reserve the mark of B+ to signify very good work. It is our hope and desire that the majority of students will want and be able to do good work in their Core classes, work in the B range. Because these courses are intended by design to foster your intellectual development, the difference between merely satisfactory and good work will frequently depend on outstanding effort and class participation. For this reason, class participation is typically a substantial component of the overall grade in Core courses.

The grade of C denotes satisfactory work—regular attendance, ordinary effort, a minimum of demonstrated improvement across the semester. It is expected that every student is capable of and motivated to perform at least at this level.

Grades below C are reserved for less than satisfactory and, in the D range, for poor work and effort, and mark a need for improvement.

The grade of F indicates failure to complete the requirements for a course in a creditable manner. It marks a judgment about the quality and quantity of a student’s work and participation—not about the student—and is therefore in order whenever a student fails to complete course requirements, whatever his or her intentions or circumstances may be.

The temporary mark of I (Incomplete) is given only when sudden and incapacitating illness, or other grave emergency, prevents a student from completing the final assignment or examination for a course. It must be requested by the student in advance; all other course requirements, including satisfactory attendance, must have been fulfilled; and there must be a reasonable expectation that the student will receive a passing grade when the delayed work
is completed. Students must make arrangements with the faculty member to finish the incomplete work as soon as circumstances permit within the following semester. If not completed, marks of I will lapse to F.

NYU Sydney uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Late Submission of Work

Written work due in class must be submitted to your instructor during class time.

Late work should be submitted in person to the Assistant Director, Academic Programs during regular office hours (9:00am-5:00pm, Monday-Friday). In the absence of the Assistant Director, Academic Programs, another member of the administrative staff can accept the work in person. The NYUS staff will mark down the date and time of submission in the presence of the student. Students must also submit an electronic copy of late written work to Turn-It-In within 24 hours.

Work submitted after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale (for the assignment) for each day the work is late.

Written work submitted beyond five (5) weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.

Plagiarism Policy

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU Sydney. NYU Sydney policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

It is a serious academic offense to use the work of others (written, printed or in any other form) without acknowledgement. Cases of plagiarism are not dealt with by your instructor. They are referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty (up to and including failure in the course as a whole) taking into account the codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges.

All written coursework must to be submitted in hard copy AND in electronic form. All students must submit an electronic copy of each piece of written work to the plagiarism
detection software turn-it-in via NYU Classes. Instructions will be provided to you in class.

**Class Attendance**

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centres is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students’ semester grades. The class roster will be marked in the first five minutes of class and anyone who arrives after this time will be considered absent. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalized by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

**Classroom Expectations**

This is a seminar subject and requires the active participation of all students. It also requires engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view. Your behaviour in class should respect your classmates’ desire to learn. It is important for you to focus your full attention on the class, for the entire class period.

- Arrive to class on time.
- Once you are in class, you are expected to stay until class ends. Leaving to make or take phone calls, to meet with classmates, or to go to an interview, is not acceptable behaviour.
- Phones, digital music players, and any other communications or sound devices are not to be used during class. That means no phone calls, no texting, no social media, no email, and no internet browsing at any time during class.
- Laptop computers and tablets are not to be used during class except in rare instances for specific class-related activity expressly approved by your instructor.
- The only material you should be reading in class is material assigned for that class. Reading anything else, such as newspapers or magazines, or doing work from another class, is not acceptable.
- Class may not be recorded in any fashion – audio, video, or otherwise – without permission in writing from the instructor.

**Required Texts**

• Pilkington, Doris (1996) *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*. Queensland University Press
• Pramaggiore, Maria and Tom Wallis (2011) *Film: A Critical Introduction* (3rd edn.) London: Lawrence King Publishing

**Supplemental Texts (Available in NYUS Library)**

• Cook, Pam (ed), *The Cinema Book*, London: British Film Institute, 2007
• Donald, James and Michael Renov (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Film Studies*. Sage, 2008.
• Langton, Marcia, ‘Well, I heard it on the Radio and I saw it on the Television...’ An essay for the Australian Film Commission on the politics and aesthetics of filmmaking by and about Aboriginal people and things. Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993.

• Screening the Past: [http://www.screeningthepast.com/](http://www.screeningthepast.com/)

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**Session 1  Gallipoli – Film Analysis, Historical Film and National Myth**

**Monday September 1**

Film: *Gallipoli* (Peter Weir, Australia, 1981, 110 min)

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Session 2  Australia – Narrative Form, the Historical Epic and the Blockbuster**

**Monday September 8**

Film: *Australia* (Baz Luhrmann, Australia, 2008, 165 min)

**Required Reading:**
- Maria Pramaggiore & Tom Wallis, Ch. 4 ‘Narrative Form,’ in *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 65-85.

**Recommended Reading:**


**Session 3  Balibo – Mise-en-Scene, Historical Reconstruction and Researched detail**

**Monday September 15**

**Film:** *Balibo* (Robert Connolly, Australia, 2009, 111 min)

**Required Reading:**

- Maria Pramaggiore & Tom Wallis, Ch. 5 ‘Mise-en-Scene,’ in *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 91-124.

**Recommended Reading:**


**Session 4  The Story of the Kelly Gang – The Biopic and the Ned Kelly Story**

**Monday September 22**

**Films:** *Ned Kelly* (Gregor Jordan, Australia, 2003, 110 min) & *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (Charles Tait, 1906, restored NFSA 2006, 30 min)

**Required Reading:**

- Pramaggiore, Maria and Tom Wallis, Ch. 6 ‘Cinematography,’ *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 129-183.
- Bingham, Dennis, ‘Introduction,’ *Whose Lives Are They Anyway? The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre*, Rutgers University Press, 2010, pp. 3-28 (also available online via NYU Libraries)
- Maria Pramaggiore & Tom Wallis, Ch. 13 ‘Genre’ in *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 381-7.

**Recommended Reading:**


**Session 5  Shine – The Biopic, Film Sound and Film Stardom**

**Monday September 29**
Film: *Shine* (Scott Hicks, Australia, 1996, 105 min)

**Guest Lecture: Dr. Anne Barnes (University of New South Wales)**

**Required Reading:**
- Pramaggiore, Maria and Tom Wallis, Ch. 8 ‘Sound,’ *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 227-268.
- Maria Pramaggiore & Tom Wallis, Ch. 12 ‘Film Stardom as a Cultural Phenomenon,’ *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 365-380.

**Recommended Reading:**

**FALL BREAK: October 6-10**

**Session 6  The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert – Genre and the Australian Road Movie**

**Monday October 13**

Film: *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, Australia, 1994, 104 min)

**Required Reading:**
- Pramaggiore, Maria and Tom Wallis, Ch. 7 ‘Editing,’ *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 191-221.
- Maria Pramaggiore & Tom Wallis, Ch. 13 ‘Genre’ in *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 401-6.

**Recommended Reading:**
- Ledger Grindon, ‘Cycles and Clusters: The Shape of Film Genre History,’ *Film Genre Reader IV*. Barry Keith Grant, ed., University of Texas Press, 2012, pp. 42-59 (also available online via NYU Libraries).

**Session 7  Beneath Clouds – Historical Memory, Identity and the Australian Road Movie**

**Monday October 20**

Film: *Beneath Clouds* (Ivan Sen, Australia, 2002, 90 min)

**Required Reading:**

Recommended Reading:

**Assignment: Sequence Analysis due, 4-6 pages (20%)**

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**Session 8  Rabbit Proof Fence – The Stolen Generations and Film Adaptation**

**Monday October 27**

Film: *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Phillip Noyce, Australia, 2002, 94 min)

**Required Reading:**
• Larissa Behrendt, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 6, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, Currency Press, 2012.

**Recommended Reading:**

**Assignment: Midterm Participation Grades awarded (5%)**

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**Session 9  The Tracker – Australian Cinema after Mabo, Traumatic Memory and the Road**

**Monday November 3**

Film: *The Tracker* (Rolf de Heer, Australia, 2002, 90 min)

**Required Reading:**
• Fiona Probyn-Rapsey, ‘The Ethics of Following: Trackers, Followers and Fanatics,’ *Australian Humanities Review* No. 37 (December 2005)
Session 10  Ten Canoes – Collaborative Histories and the Archive, Pre- and Post-Colonial Australia

Monday November 10

Film: Ten Canoes (Rolf de Heer & Peter Djigirr, Australia, 2006, 90 min)

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Assignment: Critical Paper due, 4-6 pages (20%)

Session 11  The Tall Man – Documentary Reconstruction and Contested Pasts

Monday November 17

Film: The Tall Man (Tony Krawitz, Australia, 2011, 79 min)

Required Reading:

Session 12  Rats in the Ranks – Observational Documentary, Narration and the Political Process

Monday November 24

Film: Rats in the Ranks (Robin Anderson, Bob Connolly, Australia, 1996, 94 min)

Required Reading:
• Pramaggiore, Maria and Tom Wallis, Ch. 9 ‘Alternatives to Narrative Fiction Film: Documentary and Avant-garde Films,’ *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 275-291.

Interview:
• Ray Argall interviews Bob Connolly for Australian Screen (Transcript also available online): http://aso.gov.au/people/Bob_Connolly/interview/

Watch - Uncontrolled verite; The hardest form of documentary; Choosing a subject; Creating out of nothing; Learning to edit; Bringing in an editor; Exploring human character; [...] Why Rats in the Ranks?; Ground rules for conflict; The perfect score; Shooting the right material; Shooting film focuses the mind.

**Assignment: Proposal for Final Paper due, 2-3 pages (10%)**

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**Session 13  State Theatre – Heritage, Restoration and the ‘Palace of Dreams’**

**Monday December 1**

**Required Reading**
• Maria Pramaggiore & Tom Wallis, Ch. 15 ‘Cinema as Industry: Economics and Technology’ in *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 429-436.

**Required field trip/excursion:** Tour of The State Theatre Sydney (opened 1929, restored 1980)

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**Session 14  Wake in Fright – Then and Now: Restoring a Cinema Classic**

**Monday December 8**

**Film:** *Wake in Fright* (Ted Kotcheff, Australia/USA, 1971, 114 min)

**Required Reading:**

**Final Paper: 10-12 pages (40%) Due by 5pm Monday 15 Dec (Exam Week).**
Your Instructor

Dr. Megan Carrigy (Ph.D., University of New South Wales) is the Assistant Director for Academic Programs at NYU Sydney. Before joining NYU she was the Education Projects Manager at the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS). She has taught film and media studies at UNSW and at the University of Technology, Sydney. For four years, she programmed Sydney’s annual queerDOC and Mardi Gras Film Festivals, building partnerships with local and international distributors, filmmakers, festivals and community organisations. Megan was awarded the Best Doctoral Thesis Prize in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at UNSW in 2011 for her PhD thesis titled ‘Performing History, Troubling Reference: Tracking the Screen Re-enactment’. She has also been awarded the Mari Kuttna Memorial Prize for Film Studies and the English Association Prize for Best Long Essay in English Literature by the University of Sydney. Her research interests include contemporary film theory, re-enactment, film stars, early American cinema and the cinema of Ritwik Ghatak.