Realism in Film and Television: History and Theory
FRSEM-UA 590 – 001, Spring 2016
Tuesdays: 9:30 am – 12:15 pm; 25 W4, Room C-3

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 3:00 - 5:00 pm (and by appointment)

Course Description

Realism is one of the most contested concepts in the history of cinema. From its ties to nineteenth-century literary and art movements to twentieth-century socio-political resistance against oppressive states and dominant cultures, the realist aesthetic has been celebrated as "pure cinema" and revolutionary for its undisguised engagement with the present. Cinematic realism has equally been dismissed as "reality effect" and "bourgeois illusionism," further challenged by the preponderance of reality TV and digital images. This course is a broad-ranging exploration of realisms represented in fictional works, including selections from early cinema and traditions in the US to significant film movements in Japan (Pure Film), Soviet Union (socialist realism), France (poetic realism), Italy (neorealism), Britain, India, Latin America (third cinema), Senegal, Denmark, and Iran that deployed realism in the struggle for aesthetic, social, and political freedom. As such, local and transnational realist tendencies and histories are identified and compared in the mapping of the changing and migratory notion of realism from the nineteenth century to the present, as defined by André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer, Stanley Cavell, among others.

Method of Evaluation

- Class Participation: 15%
- Weekly Reflection Papers: 30%
- Paper 1 (5-6 pages, due Mar. 22): 25%
- Paper 2 (7-8 pages, due May 3): 30%

Class Participation: Active participation is required and will be reflected in your grade. Your participation grade includes reading and preparation for the class. You should always come to the class ready to discuss the assigned films and readings. See "Course Policies" below for more information on attendance.

Weekly Reflection Papers: Short weekly reflection papers (approximately 250 words) are due in NYU Classes under "Assignments" every Monday by 5 pm. Take notes on every film you watch for this course. As the film runs, jot down observations or ideas that occur to you. After the film is over, take 5-10 minutes to jot down any questions or thoughts you may have about the film(s) and any theme(s) they bring up. You may find it helpful when doing this to consider questions brought up by the readings and/or topic specified for that week. These papers will be used to initiate discussion in class led by one or two students.
Paper 1: The film analysis paper should be 5- to 6-pages in length, and critically (formally) examine a film screened for class by incorporating the lecture, class discussion, and your own response to the film as representative of the realist aesthetic. This assignment does not require additional research, and your weekly screening journal may be used to jumpstart the assignment.

Paper 2: The theory analysis paper should be 7- to 8-pages in length, and perform a close reading of one (or more) of the theoretical texts from class that demonstrates your ability to push analysis beyond what's explicitly on the page. The assignment does not require additional research, and you will be expected to refer to assigned films for evidence to support your analysis.

Separate handouts will provide further instructions for these papers, but they must be: 1. Submitted in hardcopy (i.e., no e-mail attachments); 2. Submitted as an electronic copy (in PDF or Word document) into Turnitin, an originality detecting service, via NYU Classes; 3. Typed, double-spaced, in 12 point New York, Arial, or Helvetica font; 4. Use a 1-inch margin all around, with numbered pages; and 5. Use Chicago Manual Style citation ([http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)).

Evaluation Rubric

A= Excellent (A = 94-100; A– = 90-93)
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.
B= Good (B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B– = 80-83)
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.
C= Average (C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C– = 70-73)
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.
D= Unsatisfactory (D+ = 67-69; D = 64-66)
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstanding of course material and overlooks significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.
F= Failed (F = 63 and below)
This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments.

Plus (+) or minus (–) grades indicate your range within the aforementioned grades.

Course Policies

General Decorum: You need to be on time to class every week and stay the entire period. Attendance is mandatory. We will take attendance in each class, and more than one (1) unexcused absence will result in a lowering of your grade by a "plus" or "minus." For example, if you earn a "B" in the course and you have two unexcused absences, your final grade will be "B-".
Excessive absences and chronic tardiness will be penalized and may result in failure of the class, so make punctual attendance a top priority. If you arrive after attendance has been taken, it is your responsibility to see me and make sure that you have been marked as "late" rather than "absent." If you must leave early due to illness or for any other cause, it is your responsibility to inform me as to the reason.

Absence does not excuse you from the work missed. Students are responsible for making up any work, and for finding out any assignments and materials in any class missed.

All work must be handed in on time except in the case of serious illness, medical emergency, or some other compelling mitigating circumstance. Failure to hand in work on time will result in the lowering of your grade.

Notes on Written Work: All written work must observe the following: 1. Film titles need to be underlined or italicized; 2. After the first mention of the title, you include in parenthesis the film's director and year of release: For example Inception (Christopher Nolan, 2010); 3. When you introduce a significant character's name, include the actor's name in parenthesis: For example J. Edgar Hoover (Leonardo DiCaprio); 4. You do not need to footnote when quoting dialogue, just introduce the reader to the context of the scene you are about to quote.

Writing help is available through the Writing Center, 411 Lafayette, 3rd Floor. The telephone number is: (212) 998-8866. I encourage you to use this resource.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: Please be sure that you have read and understand NYU and College of Arts & Science's (see http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity) standards of Academic Integrity. Plagiarism is using someone else's intellectual work (including words, concepts, phrases, data, images, and so forth) and passing it off as one's own without properly crediting the source. If you have any questions concerning plagiarism in general, be certain that you ask them. Please note that plagiarism is grounds for automatic failure of this course, and further disciplinary actions.

Students with Disabilities: Students with diagnosed disabilities should contact the Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 726 Broadway, 2nd Fl. The telephone number is: (212) 998-4980. Please give the instructor a copy of the letter you receive from the Moses Center detailing class accommodations you may need. If you require accommodation for test-taking please make sure the instructor has the referral letter no less than two weeks before the exam or assignment due date.

Required Text

Readings and screenings are to be completed BEFORE class, even if you have seen the film already. Come to class prepared to discuss both, and bring the reading(s) to class.

1. All required readings are listed below and available on NYU Classes.
2. Screenings: You are responsible for viewing all required films on your own. Only excerpts (short clips), including titles from the first week, will be shown in class.

While the films should be available in the library on Reserve at Avery Fisher Center (2nd Fl.), it will behoove you to make your own viewing arrangements (as scheduling conflicts are likely). An online DVD delivery service such as Netflix, Amazon, or Hulu is a good
strategy. Another possibility is to arrange your own group screenings with other members of the class. Regardless of your arrangement, all films are to be watched before the class period for which they are assigned on the syllabus. All excerpts will be shown in class.

**Recommended Internet Resources**

- Yale Film Analysis Guide: [http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/](http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/)
- Westminster College Film History and Aesthetics Wiki: [https://film110.pbworks.com/w/page/12610220/FrontPage](https://film110.pbworks.com/w/page/12610220/FrontPage)

**Course Schedule**

*NB: This schedule is subject to change based on class progress, and it is your responsibility to keep track of those changes throughout the semester.*

**WEEK 1 (Jan. 26)** – Course introduction / The Invention of Cinema

- **Film**
  - Selected works by Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey; Louis and Auguste Lumière (France, 1890s); Thomas A. Edison (US, 1890s); and Georges Méliès (France, 1902)
- **Reading**

**WEEK 2 (Feb. 2)** – Cinema as Institution / The Invention of Narrative Tradition

- **Film**
- **Reading**

**WEEK 3 (Feb. 9)** – Japanese Pure Cinema / Presentation vs. Representation
Film
- *Osaka Elegy* (Mizoguchi Kenji, Japan, 1936, 71 min.); *A Page of Madness* (Kinugasa Teinosuke, Japan, 1926, 60m)

Reading
- Keiko McDonald, "Form and Function in Osaka Elegy," *Film Criticism* 6, no. 2 (Winter 1982): 35-44.

**WEEK 4 (Feb. 16) – Poetic Realism**

Film
- *La Bête humaine* (Jean Renoir, France, 1938, 96m); *La Règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*, Renoir, France, 1939, 106m); excerpts from *Grande Illusion* (Renoir, France, 1937); *Le Jour se lève* (*Daybreak*, Marcel Carné, France, 1939); and *Pépé le moko* (Julien Duvivier, France, 1937)

Reading

**WEEK 5 (Feb. 23) – Socialist Realism**

Film
- *Alexander Nevsky* (Sergei Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1938, 112m); excerpts from *Mother* (Vsevolod Pudovkin, Soviet Union, 1926); *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1925), *October* (Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1928), and *Ivan the Terrible, Part I* (Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1945).

Reading

**WEEK 6 (Mar. 1) – Italian Neorealism**

Film
- *Roma, città aperta* (*Open City*, Roberto Rossellini, 1945, 103m); *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*, Vittorio De Sica, 1948, 93m); excerpts from *Paisà* (*Paisan*, Rossellini, 1946); *La Terra trema* (Luchino Visconti, 1948)

Reading

**WEEK 7** (Mar. 8) – The French New Wave / Youth in Revolt

**Film**
- *Les Quatre cents coups* (*The 400 Blows*, François Truffaut, 1959, 99m); À Bout de souffle (*Breathless*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1960, 90m)

**Reading**

**Tuesday, March 15, 2016 – No class: Spring Break**

**WEEK 8** (Mar. 22) – The British New Wave / Angry Young Men and Kitchen Sink Realism

**Film**
- *This Sporting Life* (Lindsay Anderson, 1963, 134m); excerpts from *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960); *A Taste of Honey* (Tony Richardson, 1961); *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Richardson, 1962); *Kes* (Ken Loach, 1969)

**Reading**
- "Social Realism" from BFI Screen Online

**Paper 1 Due**

**WEEK 9** (Mar. 29) – Third Cinema

**Film**
- *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (*Black God, White Devil*, Glauber Rocha, Brazil, 1964, 120m); excerpts from *La Hora de los Hornos* (*The Hour of the Furnaces*, Fernando Solanas & Octavio Getino, Argentina, 1968); *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Cuba, 1968)

WEEK 10 (Apr. 5) – Feminist Filmmaking Practices

Film  • Jeanne Dielmann, 13 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Brussels (Chantal Akerman, Belgium/France, 1975, 201m); excerpts from Cléo de 5 à 7 (Agnès Varda, France, 1962); The Gleaners and I (Varda, France, 2000); Beau Travail (Claire Denis, France, 1999)


WEEK 11 (Apr. 12) – African Cinema

Film  • Xala (Ousmane Sembène, Senegal, 1975, 123m); excerpts from La noire de... (Black Girl, Sembène, Senegal, 1966); Touki Bouki (Djibril Diop Mambety, Senegal, 1973); Le Complot d'Aristote (Aristotle's Plot, Jean-Pierre Bekolo, France/UK/Zimbabwe, 1996)


WEEK 12 (Apr. 19) – Black American Independent Cinema

Film  • Killer of Sheep (Charles Burnett, 1977, 83m); Illusions (Julie Dash, 1983, 34m); excerpts from Daughters of the Dust (Dash, 1991, 112m)
Reading
• Toni Cade Bambara, "Reading the Signs, Empowering the Eye: Daughters of the Dust and the Black Independent Cinema Movement," in Black American Cinema, 118-144.

WEEK 13 (Apr. 26) – Iranian Cinema

Film
• Close-Up (Abbas Kiarostami, 1990, 98m); excerpts from A Moment of Innocence (Mohsen Makhmalbaf, 1996); A Taste of Cherry (Kiarostami, 1997), The Wind Will Carry Us (Kiarostami, 1999); and Crimson Gold (Jafar Panahi, 2003)

Reading

WEEK 14 (May 3) – New Directions in Film & TV

Film
• The Truman Show (Peter Weir, US, 1998, 103m); Caché (Michael Haneke, France/Austria/Germany/USA/Italy, 2005, 82m); excerpt from Spin (Brian Springer, 1995); Benny's Video (Haneke, Austria/Germany, 1992)

Reading
• Anne Friedberg, "The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change," in Reinventing Film Studies, 438-452.

Paper 2 Due