Expressive Culture: Film

Class Details
Wednesdays 1-5pm (4 hours per week including film screening)
Room 3.04

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.
Assessment Components

- **Class Participation**: (10%) Assessed throughout the semester.
- **In-Class Presentation**: 15 min (10%) Students select a week to lead discussion.
- **Sequence Analysis**: 2-3 pages (10%) Due in class Session 5.
- **Critical Paper**: 4-5 pages (20%) Due in class Session 11.
- **Proposal Final Paper**: 2-3 pages (10%) Due in class Session 12.
- **Final Paper**: 10-12 pages (40%) Due by 5pm Tuesday 20 May (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.

**In-Class Presentation**: Each student will select a week to lead discussion 15 minutes. Students will select a short 2-3 min clip from the film for that week. The goal of the presentation is to lead a discussion about how the clip selected demonstrates one or more of the week’s critical issues in the context of the week’s reading assignments. Presenters should come to class armed with questions to ask the class about the clip as well as some of their own proposals about why the clip is important and what it helps to illustrate.

**Sequence Analysis (Session 5)**  Students will identify a sequence from a film presented in the first four weeks of the course and critically analyse how the sequence reflects key themes, issues, concepts and/or aesthetic strategies introduced in Sessions 1 - 4. 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 of the readings from Sessions 1 - 10 and write a short critical essay in which they identify and analyse the key arguments, ideas, concepts and issues presented by the authors. Students will compare and contrast the approaches taken by the different authors as well as offer their own assessment of the authors’ claims and conclusions. The critical paper should be written in an appropriate academic style with consistent scholarly referencing and bibliography. Make sure you discuss your choice of readings with the instructor in advance of the due date.

**Proposal 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 8. Students are required to apply their analysis to specific, carefully selected case studies and 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. Recommended research materials will be provided for each topic.

NYU Sydney has a strict policy about course attendance and late submission of work. Make sure you familiarise yourself with the policies on attendance and late submission of work in the NYU Sydney Student Handbook.
Assessment Expectations

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.

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 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. Instructions will be provided to you in class.

**Required Texts**


**Supplemental Texts**


Journals/Websites/Library Resources:

NYU Libraries Cinema Studies Guide:  

*Camera Obscura*  
*Cinema Journal*  
*Indigenous History*  
*Journal of Film and Video*  
*Lumina: Australian Journal of Screen Arts and Business*  
*Memory Studies*  
*Screen*  
*Sight and Sound*  
*Screening the Past*: http://www.screeningthepast.com/  
*Senses of Cinema*: http://sensesofcinema.com/  
*Studies in Australasian Cinema*  

---

**Session 1**

*Gallipoli – Historical Film and National Myth*

**Wed 5 Feb**

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

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:
Session 2

*Not Quite Hollywood – Australian National Cinema: Ozploitation, Taste and Nostalgia*

**Wed 12 Feb**

Film: *Not Quite Hollywood* (Mark Hartley, 2008, 103 min)

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Session 3

*Wake in Fright - Then and Now: Restoring a Cinema Classic*

**Wed 18 Feb**

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

Required Reading:
- Pramaggiore, Maria and Tom Wallis, Ch. 5 ‘*Mise en Scene,*’ *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 91-128.

Recommended Reading:

Assignment: This week is available to lead discussion (10%)

Session 4

*The Story of the Kelly Gang - Reconstructing Cinema History and the Ned Kelly Story*

**Wed 25 Feb**

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. 7 ‘Editing,’ *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 191-226.
Recommended Reading:

Assignment: This week is available to lead discussion (10%)

**Session 5**

*Shine* - The Biopic, Film Sound and Film Stardom

Wed 5 Mar

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

Required Reading:
- Pramaggiore, Maria and Tom Wallis, Ch. 8 ‘Sound,’ *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 227-274.

Recommended Reading:
- Maria Pramaggiore & Tom Wallis, Ch. 12 ‘Film Stardom as a Cultural Phenomenon, *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 365-380

Assignments:
- Sequence Analysis due, 2-3 pages (10%)
- This week is available to lead discussion (10%)

**Session 6**

*Tracks* - Cinematography, the Australian Landscape and Adaptation

Wed 12 Mar

Film: *Tracks* (John Curran, Australia, 2013, 110 min)

NB. This film has just been released in cinemas and we will watch it at the Dendy Opera Quays.

Required Reading:
- Pramaggiore, Maria and Tom Wallis, Ch. 6 ‘Cinematography,’ *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 129-190.

*N.B. Spring Break 17-21 March: No classes.*
Session 7  
**Priscilla, Queen of the Desert - Mise-en-scene and the Australian Road Movie**  

*Wed 26 Mar*  

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

**Required Reading:**  
- Maria Pramaggiore & Tom Wallis, Ch. 13 ‘Genre’ in *Film: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 381-406.  

**Recommended Reading:**  

**Assignment:** This week is available to lead discussion (10%)  

---  

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

*Wed 2 Apr*  

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

**Required Reading:**  

**Recommended Reading:**  

**Assignment:** This week is available to lead discussion (10%)  

---  

Session 9  
**The Tracker – Historical Allegory, Traumatic Memory and the Road**  

*Wed 9 Apr*  

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

**Required Reading:**  
Recommended Reading:

Assignment: This week is available to lead discussion (10%)

**Session 10**

*Beneath Clouds* - Historical Memory and the Road Movie

**Wed 16 Apr**

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

Required Reading:

Assignments:
- Critical Paper due, 4-5 pages (20%)
- This week is available to lead discussion (10%)

**Session 11**

*Ten Canoes* – Collaborative Histories and the Archive

**Wed 23 Apr**

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

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Assignments: This week is available to lead discussion (10%)
**Session 12**

*Balibo – Historical Reconstruction and Researched detail*

**Wed 30 Apr**

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

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Assignments:**
- Proposal for Final Paper due, 2-3 pages (10%)
- This week is available to lead discussion (10%)

---

**Session 13**

*The Tall Man – Documentary Reconstruction and Contested Pasts*

**Wed 7 May**

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

**Required Reading:**

**Assignment:** This week is available to lead discussion (10%)

---

**Session 14**

*Australia - The Stolen Generations, the Blockbuster and the Historical Epic*

**Wed 14 May**

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

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Assignment:** This week is available to lead discussion (10%)
The classroom is a space for free and open inquiry and for the critical evaluation of ideas, and it should be free of personal prejudice. Students and instructors alike have an obligation to all members of the class to create an educational atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in which differences of opinion can be subjected to deliberate and reasonable examination without animus.

As a matter of courtesy to their fellow students and instructors, students should arrive at class promptly, prepared and ready to participate. Students are reminded particularly to shut off all cellular telephones and pagers and, except in cases of emergency, to remain in the classroom for the duration of the lecture or section meeting. If it is necessary to leave or enter a room once class has begun, students should do so quietly and with as little disruption as possible. Under University policy, disruptive classroom behavior may be subject to faculty review and disciplinary sanction.

**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.