

# **21L 011 The Film Experience – Fall 2012**

## **Prof. David Thorburn**

### **Lecture Outlines**

This file assembles Professor Thorburn's outlines of each lecture given during the Fall 2012 class.

**NOTE:** These outlines reflect the continued refinement of course structure and content. There will be occasional differences between these 2012 outlines and the OCW site's lecture videos and student notes, which are from 2007 and 2006.

## Lecture 1 -- Introduction

1. What is Film?
  - Chemistry
  - Novelty
  - Manufactured object
  - Social formation
  
2. Think Away I-Pods
  - The novelty of movement
  - Early films and early audiences
  
3. The Fred Ott Principle
  
4. Three Phases of Media Evolution
  - Imitation
  - Technical Advance
  - Maturity
  
5. “And There Was Charlie”  
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Reference: James Agee, *A Death in the Family* (1957)

## Lecture 2 -- Keaton

1. The Fred Ott Principle, continued
  - The myth of technological determinism
  - A Paradox: Capitalism and the Movies
2. *The Great Train Robbery* (1903)
3. *The Lonedale Operator* (1911)
  - Reference: Tom Gunning, "Systematizing the Electronic Message: Narrative Form, Gender and Modernity in 'The Lonedale Operator'." In *American Cinema's Transitional Era*, ed. Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp. Univ. of California Press, 1994, pp. 15-50.
4. Buster Keaton (1895-1966)
  - Acrobat/Actor
  - Technician/Director
  - Metaphysician/Artist
5. The multiplicity principle:
  - Entertainment vs. Art
6. *The General* (1927)
  - "A culminating text"
  - Structure
  - The Keaton hero: steadfast, muddling
  - The Keaton universe: contingency

## **Lecture 3 – Chaplin, part 1**

1. Movies Before Chaplin
2. Enter Chaplin
3. Chaplin's Career
  - The Multiplicity Principle, continued
4. The Tramp as Myth
5. Chaplin's World
  - Elemental themes

## Lecture 4 – Chaplin, part 2

1. Keaton vs. Chaplin
2. Three Passages
  - *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*
  - *The Gold Rush*
  - *City Lights*
3. *Modern Times* (1936)
  - Context
  - A Culminating Film
  - The Gamin
  - Sound
  - Structure
  - Chaplin's complexity

## **Lecture 5 – Film as a global and cultural form; montage & mise en scene**

1. Film as a Cultural Form
  - Global vs. National Cinema
  - American vs. European Cinema
  - High culture vs. Hollywood
2. Montage vs. Mise en Scene
3. Eisenstein and *Potemkin* (1925)
  - Film as instruction, propaganda, moral fable

## Lecture 6 – German film, Murnau

1. German Film and Expressionism
  - Lotte Eisner, *The Haunted Screen* (1969)
  - *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Weine, 1919)
  - *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1926)
  
2. F.W. Murnau (1889-1931)
  - *Nosferatu* (1922)
  - *Sunrise* (1927)
  - *Tabu* (w/ Robert Flaherty, 1931)
  
3. *The Last Laugh* (1924)
  - The unchained camera
  - Themes: working class tragedy
  - Character: work and personal identity
  - The ending: true or false

## **Lecture 7 – Hollywood in the 1930s**

1. An Industry Emerges
  - The Studio Era
  - “The golden age of Hollywood”
  - Stars and genres
  
2. The Cultural Work of Movies
  - Entertainment
  - Genre and License
  - Consensus Narrative
  
3. Strains of Comedy
  - Anarchic
  - Worldly
  - Screwball



## Lecture 8 – Capra and Hawks

1. Consensus Narrative:
  - Traditional, dominant and emergent voices
2. Screwball heroine
  - Barbara Stanwyck in *Ball of Fire* (1942)
3. Frank Capra (1897-1991) and Howard Hawks (1896-1977)
4. *It Happened One Night* (1934)
  - Context: the Depression
  - The American Male
  - Romance across social class
  - “A marriage of true minds”
5. *His Girl Friday* (1940)
  - Theater into film
  - Counter-plot: against genre
  - Hawks’ central scene: badgering companionship
  - Hawks’ complexity: laughter and cynicism

## **Lecture 9 – Hitchcock**

Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980)

1. An anecdote
2. Hitchcock's career
3. Hitchcock the technician
4. Themes
5. The Double Man

## Lecture 10 – *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Rear Window*

1. Hitchcock and “the genius of the system”
2. *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943)
  - Context: WWII, H. in exile
  - Against Capra
  - The opening: behind any door or window . . .
  - An American town, an American family
  - Two Charlies: rhyming shots
  - Subplot: murder as diversion
  - The ending: ambiguity
3. *Rear Window* (1954)
  - The opening scene: confinement, voyeurism
  - An essay on seeing
  - An elegant structure: the subplots
  - Class and gender
  - The ending: more ambiguity

## Lecture 11 – The Musical, part 1

### The American Musical Film

#### 1. Numbers

- 1927-47: 919 films (48 films each year)
- 1949-58: 23 films per year
- 1959-80: 7 films per year

#### 2. Themes

- Show business: community: the show goes on
- High culture, popular culture
- Class or position vs. talent, merit
- Convention, restraint vs. spontaneity, energy, “the natural”

#### 3. History

- Revue, Operetta: *Love Me Tonight* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1932)
- Busby Berkeley & Warner Brothers: *42nd Street* (1933)
- Astaire, Rogers and RKO: *Top Hat* (1935)
- MGM and “the integrated musical”: *Singin’ in the Rain* (Donen and Kelly, 1952)
- Arthur Freed (1894-1973): The Freed Unit

## Lecture 12 – The Musical, part 2

### 1. Astaire vs. Kelly

### 2. *Singin' in the Rain*

- Self-consciousness: an encyclopedia of musical history
- Key themes
- The place of song and dance

### 3. *Cabaret* (Bob Fosse, 1972)

- Beyond genre: the end of Hollywood
- Fosse's career: the inheritor
- Weimar Germany and America in the late 1960s
- Style: mise en scene and montage
- Texture: multiplicity
- Musical numbers: true integration
- Key themes: innocence, history, the limits of satire

## **Lecture 13 – The Western**

1. Movies as Consensus Narrative
  - The Western genre as a space of discourse
  
2. Historical/Cultural Background
  - The “real” west: 1860-1890
  - Popular culture before film
  - Intellectual culture: The Turner Thesis
  
3. The Western as Cultural Myth
  - Founding story
  - Dichotomies
  - The divided hero: savior and savage

## Lecture 14 – John Ford's *The Searchers*

1. The Western Film
  - A quick history
2. John Ford (1895-1973)
3. The Searchers (1956)
  - Damaged hero
  - Setting: Monument Valley
  - Plot: founding story, captive's tale;
  - Structure: seven 'threshold shots'
  - A turning point
  - The title: ambiguity

## Lecture 15 – American Film in the 1970s

1. Transformations and subversion
  - Directors
  - Actors
  - Style/Endings
  - Dissenting Genres
  
2. Social History
  - Viet Nam war
  - Assassinations
  - JFK, LBJ, Nixon
  - Watergate
  
3. Film and Television: A New Consensus Medium
  - Two versions of *MASH*



## Lecture 16 – Robert Altman and *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*

### 1. Robert Altman (1925-2006)

- Career
- Defining qualities:
  - Moral skepticism
  - Sympathy for the marginal
  - Plot vs. character
  - Fiction vs. “reality”

### 2. *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971)

- “Ruin the Sacred Truths”
- Sound and image: a new realism?
- Hero/savior-clown or fool
- Love story: gal from the East
- Founding myth: Presbyterian Church
- The ending: slapstick murder as the town is born

## Lecture 17 – Renoir and Poetic Realism

1. French film
  - A parallel history
  - Film theory
2. Jean Renoir (1894-1979)
  - 1926 *Nana* (Zola novel)
  - 1928 *The Little Match Girl*
  - 1931 *La Chienne*
  - 1932 *Boudu Saved from Drowning*
  - 1934 *Madame Bovary* (Flaubert novel)
  - 1935 *Toni*
  - 1937 *Grand Illusion*
  - 1939 *Rules of the Game*
  - 1950 *The River*
3. Poetic Realism
  - Forerunner: Jean Vigo (1905-34)
  - Key features
  - Andre Bazin (1918-58) on Renoir
4. Two examples
  - The ending of *Boudu*
  - Dinner in prison: *Grand Illusion*
5. Visual style as moral vision

## Lecture 18 – Renoir's *Grand Illusion*

### 1. Camera

- Invisible witness: respectful, attentive, restless

### 2. Actors

- Von Stroheim: The man you love to hate
- Gabin: Mad proletarian

### 3. Themes

- Prison camp as microcosm
- Barriers, boundaries
- Historical transition

### 4. Renoir's Maturity

- Character
- Plot: a war story without battles
- The title: how many grand illusions?

## Lecture 19 – Italian Neorealism

1. The Opening of *Bicycle Thieves*
  - The multiplicity principle
2. Historical Context
  - WW II
  - Italian film under Fascism
  - Hollywood film
3. Origins
  - Italian, German, French
4. Key Features
  - Non-professional actors, outdoor camera, mise en scène style, documentary flavor, character vs. plot
5. Central Figures
  - Cesare Zavattini (1902-77)
  - Luchino Visconti (1906-76)
    - *Obsession* (1942) *The Earth Trembles* (1948)
  - Roberto Rossellini (1906-77)
    - *Open City* (1945)
  - Vittorio De Sica (1902-74)
6. The Neorealist Counter-plot
  - The beginning of *Open City*

## Lecture 20 – *Bicycle Thieves*

### 1. Vittorio De Sica (1902-74)

1942 *The Children Are Watching Us*

1946 *Shoeshine*

1948 *Bicycle Thieves*

1950 *Miracle in Milan*

1952 *Umberto D*

1960 *Two Women*

1971 *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*

### 2. *Bicycle Thieves*

- Structure: organic form
- Social themes
- Character: father and son
- The title

## Lecture 21 – Truffaut and the *Nouvelle Vague*

1. Two clips
  - Umberto-D (1952)
  - The 400 Blows
  
2. Origins of the *Nouvelle Vague*
  - Renoir and Neorealism
  - American studio directors
  - Alexandre Astruc (1923- )
  - Bazin (1918-58) and *Cahiers du cinema*
  - Auteur theory
  
3. Key films of 1959
  - *Hiroshima, mon amour* (Alain Resnais)
  - *Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard)
  - *The 400 Blows* (Francois Truffaut)
  
4. *Nouvelle Vague*: style and tone
  - mise en scene
  - location sight and sound
  - improvisation: plot and dialogue
  - jump cuts and elliptical editing
  - self-reflexiveness: films about film

## Lecture 22 – Truffaut’s *The 400 Blows*

1. The ending of *Breathless*
2. Francois Truffaut (1932-1984)
  - 1959 *The 400 Blows*\*
  - 1960 *Shoot the Piano Player*
  - 1962 *Jules and Jim*
  - 1962 *Antoine and Colette*\*
  - 1966 *Fahrenheit 451*
  - 1968 *Stolen Kisses*\*
  - 1970 *The Wild Child*
  - 1970 *Bed and Board*\*
  - 1973 *Day for Night (La Nuit americaine)*
  - 1977 *The Man Who Loved Women*
  - 1979 *Love on the Run*\*
  - 1980 *The Last Metro*
3. *The 400 Blows*
  - The title
  - Setting: a Parisian odyssey
  - The family romance
  - Structure: a “natural” unfolding
  - The ending: ambiguity: no catastrophe, no apocalypse

## Lecture 23 – Kurosawa and *Rashomon*

Akira Kurosawa (1910-1998) and *Rashomon*

1. The “moment” of *Rashomon*
  - Film as an international medium
  - Modernist cinema
  - Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007)
  - Satyajit Ray (1921-92)
  - Federico Fellini (1921-93)
2. Japanese Cinema: a note
  - Theatrical traditions
  - Kenji Mizoguchi (1898-1956)
  - Yasujiro Ozu (1903-63)
3. Kurosawa’s career
  - The Kurosawa-gumi
    - 1950 *Rashomon*
    - 1952 *Ikiru*
    - 1954 *Seven Samurai*
    - 1957 *Throne of Blood*
    - 1961 *Yojimbo*
    - 1980 *Kagamusha*
4. *Rashomon*
  - The title and the historical setting
  - The “medium:” a miko
  - Visual style: dynamic, eclectic: “a real surrealism”
  - The drama of the telling
  - The ending: should we delete it?



## Lecture 24– Film as Art and Artifact

1. Film as a cultural form
  - Stories and culture
  - Culture as a process, always unfinished
  - “Golden Lads:” consensus narrative
    - conservative, collaborative, accessible
2. Film as art
  - Art as a form of intelligence and competence
  - Texture, multiplicity
  - An example: *Seven Samurai* --To the village
3. Thanks to all of you

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