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Fall Term 2011
THEORIES OF NATIONAL CINEMAS
Film 9373A / CL 9618A

Dept. of Film Studies & Graduate Program in Comparative Literature
Arts and Humanities, UWO

Screenings: Monday, 10.30 to 1.30

Seminars: Wednesday, 11.30 to 1.30

Office Hours: Monday, 1.30 to 2.30 and Wednesday, 1.30 to 2.30

Course Aim

To consider a wide range of strategies and contexts through which cultures construct and read national cinemas.

Course Objectives

The course will provide students with a critical interrogation of the concept of "national cinema". Informed by theories of nation developed by Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Homi Bhabha and others, the course troubles notions of nation as an organic, homogeneous, unitary entity before focusing on different case studies in which cinematic representations of nation will be read in relation to questions of ideology and the political economies that underpin the production of national cinemas. Readings of the 'national' will be accompanied by understandings of class, gender, race and sexuality. Films from various national and postcolonial cinemas will be examined in the context of debates about what constitutes a national cinema and in the light of key essays written on those matters by leading scholars such as Stephen Crofts, Andrew Higson, Susan Hayward, Robert Stam, Zuzana Pick, among others.

Bibliography

Theories of National Cinemas – Film Studies 9373 Course Pack (CP)

Additional required readings are available online through the course Web CT site.

(Power point presentations will also be posted to this site).

Assessment

- Participation 10%
- Two seminar presentations 30% (theory response: 10%; seminar presentation: 20%)
(Submission of abstract, working bibliography and research notes for what appears below as “seminar presentation”)
- Literature review exercise (1500 words) Date Due: October 12th. 20%
- One research essay of 5000 words. Date Due: December 7th. 40%

You have the option of working your seminar presentation into the final research paper and/or use your literature review exercise as preliminary work for the essay or you can select a new topic for it.

Grading scale for MA assignments

A+ (90+) Work of publishable standard, albeit with some revisions possible. Equivalent to advanced PhD level work.

A (88-89) Excellent: displaying extensive originality.

A- (85-87) Strong performance at MA level, fully equal to that of an average PhD student. Must be well-written and show some originality.

B+ (80-84) Good MA-level work, indicating the student’s potential (with some reservations) to work successfully at the PhD level.

B (78-79) Competent MA work, but does not suggest potential to proceed to PhD level.

B- Any mark below 78 indicates performance below the level required of a graduate student.

Absences and late assignments

If you are absent from seminar or screening or an assignment is late due to illness or other legitimate reasons, please contact me as soon as possible and forward supporting documentation to your Faculty. If you are in doubt as to the “legitimacy” of your situation regarding lateness or absence please contact me as soon as possible. For more information please go to Student Services:

<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

Participation

- Participation marks will be awarded for **active** engagement in seminar discussions, critical responses to required readings and constructive and insightful comments made on the peer assessment proformas.

Theory response

- One of the two presentations that each student has to do is the theory response to one article or chapter from the required reading list. As a theory discussant, the student will concentrate on the parsing of the required theory text. Throughout the presentation, s/he should convey the substantive elements of the assigned writer’s argument and offer a few illustrations of said argument with reference to the film(s) viewed in a given week, and, if pertinent, examples from previous weeks. This **15 to 20 (max.) minute presentation** should provoke further discussion.

Seminar presentation

A **500-word** abstract of your presentation and a working bibliography are due one week before the seminar you select or earlier.

Please make an appointment to discuss the abstract and bibliography with the instructor a week before the seminar.

A copy of your research notes is to be submitted to the instructor on the day of your seminar.

Please make copies of the abstract available for your colleagues at least 24 hours *before* your presentation. If you use power point for your presentation please send the file by email to the instructor (after the presentation) so that it can be uploaded for your colleagues to consult on Web CT.

Oral presentations are to be **30** minutes in length and not one minute more.

Students should select an aspect of a given text that intrigues them, and will sustain further investigation. **It is expected that students will integrate some of the theoretical readings of the week and/or previous weeks into their presentations.** As the MA in Film Studies is a research-based degree, it is expected that you will pursue sources beyond what is offered on the syllabus.

You might wish to raise questions at the end of your presentation to further class discussion.

Speak clearly, and slowly; the pace of an oral delivery, and the amount of eye contact a speaker has with an audience often determine the effectiveness of the presentation.

Following their seminar, students should make an appointment with the instructor to discuss peer evaluations of their presentation.

Please notify me by email me as soon as possible about your choice for a seminar slot. Seminars will be assigned as I hear from students.

Peer assessment of seminar presentations

All students will participate in the assessment of seminar presentations by making constructive comments on the peer assessment proformas (see attached form). Completed proformas are to be returned to the instructor **on the day following the seminar**. I will remove the names of assessors from the proformas, and share class comments with the seminarist.

Literature Review Exercise

The exercise should present, in 1500 words, a comprehensive review of the main arguments and the lines of debate rose by the existing academic literature about one of the films studied in this course.

Final Essay

Essays should refer to one, two or three (maximum) films and draw judiciously from the required weekly readings, as well as original research. Students can work on the same film they have investigated for the Literature Review Exercise.

Scholastic offences and plagiarism

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Screenings

Attendance is compulsory. Screening time will also be used for discussion when appropriate. For individual study, videos may be viewed in UC 1.

Please note the schedule below is provisional. If discussion is productive we may carry over a topic from one week to another.

Guest speakers

The Department of Film Studies is co-organizing with the Program of Hispanic Studies a series of four presentations on questions of national cinemas. The series will run from the 28th of October until the 18th of November and will take place on Fridays, at 3 pm (room still to be designated). It will include four successive presentations, one by the instructor of this course and the other three by different guest speakers. The schedule is the following:

Oct. 28: Constanza Burucua (UWO), "Cleansing the Dirty War: discourses on history and nation in post-dictatorship Argentine cinema"

Nov. 4: Jon Beasley Murray (University of British Columbia), "The Latin American Multitude"

Nov. 11: José Arroyo (University of Warwick, UK), "Almodovar noir: what the author obscures, the work illuminates"

Nov. 18: Zuzana Pick (Carleton University), "The Mexican Revolution in the Movies: a lesson in history, a nationalist celebration or a conversation across cultures?"

These presentations are relevant to the course, especially those by Prof. Arroyo and Prof. Pick for, as you can see below, part of this syllabus has been structured around them (weeks 8, 9 and 10). You are encouraged to attend the whole series, and those taking place on the 11th and 18th of November in particular.

SENATE REGULATIONS

1. **Plagiarism:** Students must write their essays in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage, from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the UWO Calendar). All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

2. **Prerequisites:** Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

3. **Complaints:** If students have a complaint concerning a course in which they are enrolled, they must discuss the matter with the instructor of the course. If students are still not satisfied, they should then take the complaint to the Film Studies Office, University College, Room 80. These regulations are in place because a failure to follow these procedures creates the potential for injustices of various kinds affecting either the instructor or the students themselves, or both parties. Concerns should not be allowed to fester but should be raised with the instructor in a timely manner, so that they can be addressed in time to make a difference to the course.

COURSE AND PROGRAMME AIM (in accordance with OCAV requirements)

1. Understanding, capacity for argument, judgement and analysis will be fostered by essays, presentations and assignments with formative comment, and by in-class small-group and whole-class discussion.
2. Communication skills will be imparted through in-class discussion and credit given for frequency and quality of contributions, and by essays and other assignments marked in accordance with a grading scale given to the students and including benchmarks for the expectations associated with each grade, from A+ to F.
3. Awareness of the limits of knowledge will be enhanced by exploring the legitimate differences of opinion and methodology within the field, and by requiring students to negotiate the formulation of their own opinions in-class with the terms and knowledge brought to that discussion by other students and the instructor.
4. The ability to argue and decide on complex issues will be fostered by essays and in-class discussion; that to manage time, by the need to prepare properly for class and to deliver assignments in a timely manner; and that for academic responsibility, by the need to source assignments accurately.