Course Description

In this course, we will be considering the narrative dimensions of screen-based media from celluloid to cellphones. Our purpose is to examine narrative theories—both new and old—and consider how the storytelling medium figures into our understanding of what a story is and how it gets told. Moreover, if narrative is a means through which we understand ourselves and our world, how do screen media affect our sense of who we are as bodies in space and time or as social agents? We will begin with narrative theory as it emerged in literary criticism and anthropology, and follow its development in film studies. Finally, we will delve into new media theory that is less directly about narrative, but interested in dimensions of new media that have not been examined much in terms of their narrative role.

My goal is to provide you with a foundation in narrative theory, as it is understood in literary and film studies, and then help you interrogate and extend these theories as you apply them to newer media.

Course Texts


Additional readings, films, and other media will be assigned.
Course Projects

50%  Final course paper & presentation (includes proposal, annotated bibliography (Week 10) and rough draft (Week 12)) – 15 pages

20%  Narrative Film analysis – 7-8 pages (Week 8)

20%  Theory response papers – 2-3 pages (3) (as assigned)

10%  Class participation (Ongoing: Coming prepared to talk about the assigned readings is essential to fulfilling this part of the requirements.)

Assignment for Next Week (September 9)

Week 2 / Narrative Theory Origins: Form and Discourse

All of the readings for this week are in the grad reading drawer on the 3rd floor (around the corner from Randy Freisinger's office). Please make a copy for yourself and return to the file immediately. Don't take them out of the building.


Halliwell, Stephen. Excerpt from The Poetics of Aristotle.


The film for this week is North by Northwest (Hitchcock, 1959). There are two copies in the Wollen folder and it is available at most any video store. Use the class list to let us know if you took one of the copies home with you to watch.

Week 3 / Narrative and Film

We will concentrate on Bordwell's Narration in the Fiction Film for those who want to get a jump. I'm still tweaking the rest of the schedule, but major due dates are listed with the class projects to help you plan.

First short theory paper due
Week 4 / Narrative and Psychoanalysis

Reading:

Complete Bordwell
In McQuillan: Psychoanalysis section (pp. 175-197)
In Braudy: Metz (pp. 820-836), Modleski (849-861), Diawara (pp. 892-900)

Films: Vagabond (Agnes Varda, 1985), Rear Window (Hitchcock, 1954)

Week 5 / Further Considering Sound

Reading:

Chion, Part 1
In McQuillan: McClary (pp. 166-170)
In Braudy: Doane (pp. 373-385)

More reading if this area really grabs you:

In Ryan: Music Section (pp. 267-328)

Film: Requiem for a Dream (Aronofsky, 2000)

Week 6 / Narrative, Realism and Ideology

Reading:

In Braudy: Bazin (pp.165-182), Benjamin (pp. 791-811), Prince (pp. 270-281)
In McQuillan: History and Race Sections

Film: Ararat (Egoyan, 2002) – maybe. I know many of you worked with this film last year.

Second theory paper due