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Emory University
Introduction to Film Through the Lens of Sustainability
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In the Fall semester of 2010, I co-taught a graduate seminar with Deirdra Reber (Spanish and Portuguese) on Representations of Love and Affect in the Media. Two weeks of the class were devoted to analyzing the affective politics of sustainability through a handful of narrative feature films, documentaries and television programs. What became clear to me during the unit was how effective film is at bringing to light environmental and sustainability issues in a whole host of different ways, through the more straightforward rhetorical strategies of documentary films to the use of visual language to meditate on a space or place.

Participating in the Piedmont Project in the Spring of 2011 expanded my conception of what sustainability is. Having an opportunity to physically explore – through the Project’s nature walks– places on the Emory campus with which I was previously unfamiliar made me realize how important it is for member of any community to connect with the space in which they live on all levels – physically, emotionally, and mentally. While I struggle with the fact that my discipline’s object of focus is always necessarily at a distance from its subject, i.e. always navigated through the camera lens, I remain confident that film and media studies can play an important role in illuminating many of the issues and debates at the core of the discourse in and around sustainability.

When conceiving of the syllabus for the proposed course – Introduction to Film Through the Lens of Sustainability – I have incorporated films that explore sustainability in both expected and unexpected ways, making evident how film can bring us closer to a topic when it is viewed from a number of different, often surprising, vantage points. The course design also fulfills a long-standing goal of mine, which is to teach introduction to film using a unifying theme or issue to unite the films under discussion. That way, the ongoing class conversations can be both specific to the unit and the film, and cumulative, focusing on how all of these texts contribute to our understanding of why sustainability matters.

I see this class as fulfilling the mission of both the department of film and media studies and Emory University as a whole, which is to prepare students for life as 21st century global citizens. First, it teaches students media literacy skills, which foster critical thinking about the images that bombard us on a daily basis. Second, it teaches students to apply this different kind of looking to the topic of sustainability, which is one of the most important issues of their lifetime. Ideally, students will begin to see that sustainability is about more than recycling, energy conservation, and buying local, but a perspective on observing, and relating to, the world around them.

FILM 190: FRESHMEN SEMINAR
Introduction to Film Through the Lens of Sustainability
Emory University
Fall 2011

Dr. Michele Schreiber
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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:00–4:30 PM or by appointment
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This class will help introduce you to ways of reading and analyzing film that will allow you to be a more informed and critical viewer while simultaneously bringing to light one of the most important issues facing your generation – sustainability. The films that we look at this class explore sustainability in both expected and unexpected ways, making evident how film can bring us closer to a topic when it is viewed from a number of different, often surprising, vantage points. Film has the ability to not only take you to places that you might never be able to go in person, but it also has the visual tools to illuminate concepts with which you might be unfamiliar.

The goals of the course are as follows:

1. To enhance your visual and auditory awareness and literacy.
2. To offer you a methodology for “reading” and understanding cinematic images
3. To equip you with the vocabulary to confidently order your responses to images through verbal and written communication.
4. To become well-versed in the topic of sustainability

There is one required text for the class available in the bookstore: David Bordwell & Kristin Thompson. Film Art: An Introduction. New York: McGraw Hill, 2008. 8th edition.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation:10%

Reading Pop Quizzes/Writing5%

Exercises:

Reading Questions:15%

Midterm Exam:20%

Visual Project:20%

Final Exam:30%

1. ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Class Time: Attendance at every meeting and screening is not only required but essential for your success in the course. If you have to miss a class due to illness, a court date, or other official reason, please let me know as soon as you know, and bring supporting documentation to verify the necessity for the absence. If you do have to miss class, please arrange to get notes from one of your classmates, as you will be held responsible for the content of discussions and lectures, including all clips shown, even if you are not present on the day the material was covered.

Your grade in this area will be based on more than just your presence in the classroom, but will also take into account the frequency and quality of your participation. You will be expected to make regular and thoughtful contributions to the class discussion. Texting, web surfing, sleeping, and other disruptive behavior is strictly prohibited. If you are caught doing any of the above during class meetings or screenings you will be asked to leave, and will lose attendance credit for that day.

Screenings: There is a mandatory screening every Tuesday from 4:30–7:00 PM in White Hall 101, during which we will view short and feature-length films. Due to the length of some films, you may be asked to remain in the screenings later than the scheduled 7:00 PM. We should rarely go beyond 7:15 PM, and sometimes the class will end early. Please adjust your schedule and other commitments accordingly. The course films are on 2-hour reserve in the Music and Media Library on the 4th floor of the Woodruff Library.

2. **READING PREPARATION/POP QUIZZES/WRITING EXERCISES:** You are required to complete the assigned reading from the Film Art textbook and from Reserves Direct by the beginning of class on the day it is due. You will be held responsible for the content of the reading(s) during class discussions and frequently I will “test” how well you are keeping with it through in-class writing exercises and pop quizzes.
3. **VISUAL PROJECT:** This project offers you an opportunity to try your hand at close film analysis. You will be required to trace the evolution of the horror genre throughout three different historical periods and two national cinemas in the films *Gojira/Godzilla* (Honda, 1954), *The Birds* (Hitchcock, 1963), and *Cloverfield* (Reeves, 2008). This project is labeled a “visual” project because you will incorporate frame grabs from each film into your analysis and discuss how film form informs an understanding of genre, ideology, and sustainability issues. We will discuss this assignment in more detail during class on October 18th, at which point I will demonstrate how to do frame grabs using a freeware DVD player. This assignment is required to be 1500 words, with three frame grabs (one from each film).
4. **MID-TERM AND FINAL EXAM:** The mid-term and final exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. I will give you a better sense of the content and format well in advance of the tests, and will provide a review session for each. The final exam will be cumulative.

COURSE SCHEDULE

| DATE: | TOPIC: | READING DUE: | SCREENING: |
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| PART ONE: THE BIG PICTURE | | | |
| WEEK ONE | | | |
| Thursday, August 25: | Introductions & Learning How To Watch a Film With a Critical Eye | | |
| WEEK TWO | | | |
| Tuesday, August 30: | The Technology and Business of Filmmaking | B/T, Chapter 1, 2 & 12 | Avatar (Cameron, 2009) |

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| Thursday, September 1: | Film Form | | |
| PART TWO: THE INGREDIENTS | | | |
| WEEK THREE | | | |
| Tuesday, September 6: | Narrative and Narration | B/T, Chapter 3 | The Perfect Storm (Peterson, 2000) |
| Thursday, September 8: | | | |

| WEEK FOUR | | | |
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| Tuesday, September 13: | Mise-en-Scene | B/T, Chapter 4 | Days of Heaven (Malick, 1978) |
| Thursday, September 15: | | | |
| WEEK FIVE | | | |
| Tuesday, September 20: | Cinematography | B/T, Chapter 5 | SAFE (Haynes, 1995) |
| Thursday, September 22: | | | |
| WEEK SIX | | | |
| Tuesday, September 27 | Editing | B/T, Chapter 6 | La Jetée (Marker, 1962) Koyannasquatsi (Reggio, 1982) |
| Thursday, September 29 | | | |
| WEEK SEVEN | | | |
| Tuesday, October 4: | Sound | B/T, Chapter 7, 8 | Into the Wild (Penn, 2007) |
| Thursday, October 6: | MIDTERM REVIEW | | |
| WEEK EIGHT | | | |
| Tuesday, October 11: | No Class - Fall Break | | |
| Thursday, October 13: | MIDTERM EXAM | | |
| PART THREE: TYPES AND CATEGORIES | | | |
| WEEK NINE | | | |
| Tuesday, October 18: | Film Genres and Ideology: The Evolution of the Horror Film | B/T, Chapter 9 | Gojira/Godzilla (Honda, 1954) |
| Thursday, October 20: | | | |
| WEEK TEN | | | |
| Tuesday, October 25: | Film Genres and Ideology: The Evolution of the Horror Film | B/T, Chapter 11 | The Birds (Hitchcock, 1963) |
| Thursday, October 27: | | | |
| WEEK ELEVEN | | | |
| Tuesday, November 1: | Film Genres and Ideology: The Evolution of the Horror Film | | Cloverfield (Reeves, 2008) |
| Thursday, November 3: | | | |

| WEEK TWELVE | | | |
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| Tuesday, November 8: | Documentary Cinema | B/T, Chapter 10 | The River (Lorentz, 1938) An Inconvenient Truth (Guggenheim, 2006) |
| Thursday, November 10: | | | |
| WEEK THIRTEEN | | | |
| Tuesday, November 15: | Animated Cinema | | Princess Mononoke (Miyazaki, 2006) |
| Thursday, November 17: | | | |
| WEEK FOURTEEN | | | |
| Tuesday, November 22: | Art Cinema | | Japón (Reygadas, 2002) |
| Thursday, November 24: | No Class - Happy Thanksgiving | | |
| WEEK FIFTEEN | | | |
| Tuesday, November 29: | Experimental Cinema | | Hapax Legomena V/ Ordinary Matter (Frampton, 1972) Window Water Baby Moving (Brakhage, 1962) Ecstactic Vessels (Kitchen, 1997) |
| Thursday, December 1: | | | |
| Tuesday, December 6: | FINAL EXAM REVIEW | | |
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| Monday, December 13 - 4:30-7:00 FINAL EXAM | | | |