Lingnan University
Department of Visual Studies

Course Title   : History of the Cinema
Course Code   : VIS3253
Recommended Study Year   : 3rd and 4th years
No. of Credits/Term   : 3
Mode of Tuition   : Lecture and tutorial
Class Contact Hours   : 2 hours lecture per week
                                          1 hour tutorial per week
Category in Major Programme : Programme Elective
Prerequisite(s)   : N/A
Co-requisite(s)   : N/A
Exclusion(s)   : N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)   : N/A

Brief Course Description
A survey of the history of moving pictures, with an emphasis on the emergence of distinctive styles of film art linked to certain production centres or film studios, at specific moments in history and in various places around the globe.

Aims
To enhance understanding of cinema in a broad historical and cross-cultural context.

To encourage active engagement with different concepts of style.

To prompt reflection on the properly historical dimensions of film style.

To introduce students to distinctive examples of film style.

To instill awareness of the cultural dimensions of film style through comparative analysis.

To encourage reflection on the ways in which specific film styles support or challenge human perception.

To instill an awareness of the links between film style and basic cognitive processes.

To raise questions about the relevance and significance of specific film styles for actual audiences located in different parts of the world.

To encourage understanding of the reasons why stylistic innovations are widely adopted in some instances.

To understand the ways in which concepts and practices of style inform cinematic authorship, whether individual or collective.

To encourage awareness of film production as a collective process involving stylistic contributions by such distinct groups as actors, editors, sound designers, and art designers, as well as directors.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students:

–   will be familiar with different approaches to the concept of style
–   will be able to defend their own preferred conception of style
–   will be able to produce a competent stylistic analysis of different types of films
–   will be able to identify stylistic contributions in terms of distinct action roles, such as director, editor, actor
–   will be in a position to provide a range of historical examples of different cinematic styles
–   will be capable of providing an informed account of the reasons for the emergence of specific stylistic innovations at key moments in time
–   will be able to articulate a cogent account of the perceptual and cognitive bases for some forms of stylistic success and dominance
–   will be conversant with the sheer diversity of cinematic styles, with examples drawn from different historical periods and different parts of the world
–   will understand the conceptual and practical links between style, innovation, creativity, and convention

Indicative Content

An exploration of some important films, film-makers, styles, and movements in the history of world cinema, such as: Lumière, Méliès, and early silent film; German expressionism; surrealist and avant-garde film; D. W. Griffiths; silent cinema in China and Japan; Soviet montage; silent comedies by Keaton, Chaplin, and others; Italian neo-realism; French poetic realism; *la nouvelle vague*; cinéma vérité; Italian art cinema by Visconti, Fellini, Antonioni, et al.; Scandinavian cinema; Japanese film; the 'classical Hollywood cinema' and film genres; new German cinema; political film-making; independent film-making; contemporary documentary film; underground cinema; Dogma '95; multi-national blockbusters; new cinemas in East Asia; Hong Kong new wave cinema and the work of Wong Kar-wai; 'the fifth generation' and 'sixth generation' of Chinese cinema; Indian cinema, classic and recent; the history of motion picture animation.

Teaching Method

Lectures, discussions, screenings

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

The tutorial work (25%) comprises a series of written tasks, various forms of group work, and group discussions and aims to ensure that students are able to produce competent stylistic analyses of key works.

The in-class mid-term test (35%) comprises two sections, one with short questions and answers, the second with three essay questions, with students being required to write a response to one of these questions. The first section ensures students' grasp of factual information, whereas the second tests students' ability to articulate cogent and informed views on the readings and screenings.

The final term paper (40%) provides students with an opportunity to pursue some aspect of the history of cinematic style through guided research. Students present a short outline of their paper to the class as a whole. This short presentation encourages students to begin researching their papers at an appropriate stage in the semester. It encourages them to put considerable effort into the work of outlining their thoughts and arguments. Exchanges with fellow students and with the instructor help students to develop a clear sense of their target audience, and allow for feedback at a time when comments are likely to be particularly helpful.

Assessment
Assessment of the students will focus on their critical engagement with the readings and issues, on their ability to put key concepts to productive analytic use, and on their growing awareness of the historical and cultural specificities of cinematic style, as well as of continuities linked to perceptual and cognitive constants.
Continuous assessment: 100%, with the following break-down
Tutorial work: 25%
In-class mid-term test: 35%
Final paper: 40%

Required Readings
Selections from:

Bordwell, David. *On the History of Film Style*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Thompson, Kristin, and David Bordwell. *Film History: An Introduction*. New York: MacGraw Hill, 2003.

Supplementary Readings
Allen, Robert C., and Douglas Gomery. *Film History: Theory and Practice*. New York: Random House, 1985.

Cook, David A. *A History of Narrative Film*. New York: Norton, 2004.

Elsaesser, Thomas, ed. *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. London: BFI, 1990.

Hu, Jubin. *Projecting a Nation: Chinese National Cinema before 1949*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003.

Kolker, Robert Phillip. *The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Mast, Gerald, and Bruce F. Kawin. *A Short History of the Movies.* London: Longman, 2002.

Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

O'Brien, Mary. *Film Acting: The Techniques and History of Acting for the Camera*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1984.

Parkinson, David. *History of Film*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995.

Pudovkin, V. *Film Acting*. New York: Lear, 1949.

Sklar, Robert. *Film: An International History of the Medium*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1993.

Tashiro, C.S. *Pretty Pictures: Production Design and the History of Film*. Austin: University of

Texas Press, 1998.

And various monographs, articles, and book chapters dealing with the specific films, directors, periods, movements, and techniques to be covered in the course.

Important Notes:

(1)   Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3* hours of class contact and 6* hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.

(2)   Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is "the presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student's own work". Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.

(3)   Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.

(4)   To enhance students' understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course "Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness" is available on https://pla.ln.edu.hk/.

*   Numbers of hours are subject to adjustment for individual courses.