

Lingnan University
Department of Visual Studies

Course Title	: Film Genre
Course Code	: VIS3351
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd and 4 th 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

The concept of genre is central to the conception, production, distribution, cognition and reception of film. Drawing on cinematic examples from a wide range of national contexts, this course will look closely at the defining features of some of the most popular genres. It will be a matter throughout of exploring questions having to do with the nature of genre conventions, the reasons for the emergence, persistence, and decline of specific genres, the pleasures associated with genre films, and the relation between generic formulae and creativity or innovation.

Aims

To acquaint students with the theoretical literature on genre

To encourage students to think critically about the phenomenon of genre film production

To familiarise students with specific formulae associated with particular genres

To encourage students to reflect on the various purposes that formulaic filmmaking serves

To foster understanding of the pleasures associated with genre films

To encourage reflection on the dynamics of sameness and difference that are constitutive of genre films

To encourage an understanding of the relation between convention and innovation

To invite reflection on the reasons for the emergence, persistence, or decline of specific genres

To foster understanding of genre as a local, national, transnational, and global phenomenon

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students:

- will be able clearly to identify specific genre formulae in particular examples of genre film production
- will be able to present and assess various arguments associated with psychological puzzles associated with the viewing of genre films

- will be familiar with the range of arguments concerning the social roles and functions played by genre films in people’s lives
- will be able to situate the phenomenon of genre film production in relation to specific local, national, and transnational contexts
- will be able to intervene effectively in debates about genres and conventions and their relation to innovation and creativity

Indicative Content

1. Rival theoretical conceptions of genre and convention.
2. Horror film, Western, melodrama, action film, comedy, science fiction, thriller, film noir, biopic, detective film, martial arts film, epic, romance, etc.
3. Emotion and genre.
4. The paradox of fiction.
5. The paradox of negative emotion; the paradox of horror.
6. Creativity, innovation, and constraint.
7. Genre and style
8. Genre and pleasure

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 analyse films competently in terms of basic genre formulae.

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 basic conceptual distinctions and knowledge of factual information relevant to the understanding of genre films. The second section tests students’ ability to articulate cogent and informed views on the readings and screenings, as well as their ability to articulate and defend a cogent position on some of the key questions that have fueled, and continue to fuel, debates about genre and film.

The final term paper (40%) provides students with an opportunity to pursue some aspect of the phenomenon of genre film production 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 theoretical readings and films, on their ability accurately to identify genre formulae, and on their capacity to situate the phenomenon of genre film production within larger cultural and historical contexts, as well as in relation to questions of creativity, pleasure, and cultural continuity and change.

Continuous assessment: 100%, with the following break-down

Tutorial work: 25%

In-class mid-term test: 35%

Final paper: 40%

Required Readings

Selections from:

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: BFI, 1999.

Browne, Nick., ed. *Refiguring American Film Genres*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Cawelti, John. *Adventure, Mystery and Romance*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Gledhill, Christine., and Linda Williams, eds. *Reinventing Film Studies*. London: Arnold, 2000.

Grant, Barry Keith., ed. *Film Genre Reader*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973.

Neale, Stephen. *Genre*. London: BFI, 1980.

---. *Genre and Hollywood*. London: BFI, 2000.

Supplementary Readings

Carroll, Noël. *The Philosophy of Horror*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Carol Glover, *Men, Women and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Grodal, Torben Kragh. *Moving Pictures: A New Theory of Film Genres*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Lacey, Nick. *Narrative and Genre*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000.

Lopez, Daniel. *Films by Genre*. London: McFarland & Co., 1993.

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.