

MIAS 220. COURSE ACTION.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE MEDIA. (4)
(October 13, 2003)

OFFICIAL CATALOG DESCRIPTION.

Seminar, four hours. History of moving image technologies. The course examines the relationship between technological evolution and forms of moving image expression. Letter grading.

PURPOSE. This course traces the evolution of moving image technologies from the earliest of pre-cinema devices to the latest generation of digital innovations. Providing a comprehensive survey of the most significant changes in the fields of moving image production and exhibition, this seminar examines the invention and implications of a range of technologies from the magic lantern, to the “talking pictures”, from wide screen processes to high definition television.

CONTENT AND METHOD OF INSTRUCTION. By combining lectures with extensive presentations of a full range of analog, video and digital image types this course aims to train students to develop the discerning “eye” required for professionals working in the 21st century moving image archive. In addition to the study of specific technical developments- such as new gauges, formats, color processes, aspect ratios, films stocks and projection systems- the course explores the larger economic and industrial forces behind them. Throughout the course the aesthetic consequences of specific production and exhibition innovations is also studied by examining the different types of images, genres and narratives that accompany and influence the passage of “new” technologies. What are the intrinsic aesthetic properties of the moving image? How do they change across the various different media? What are the most significant cultural and historical forces that define and shape different moving image types? This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the aesthetic study of the moving image that provides students with important training in the appreciation and understanding of specific media forms.

REQUIREMENTS. Students are expected to read assigned books and articles, participate in seminar discussion, and write a two analytical essays that examine the formal properties of image/sound track in relation to specific technologies.

REQUIRED READING.

Allen, Robert C., and Douglas Gomery. Film History: Theory and Practice. San Francisco: McGraw-Hill, 1985. See Chapter 5: “Technological Film History”

Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Includes “Film Style and Technology to 1930” and “Film Style and Technology 1930-1960.”

Brown, Harold, for the FIAF Preservation Commission. Physical Characteristics of Early Films as Aids to Identification. Brussels: FIAF, 1990. 81 pp. Documents camera and printer apertures, edge marks, shape and size of perforations, trademarks, etc., in relation to a number of early film producing film companies.

Salt, Barry. Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis. Second edition. London: Starword, 1992. First edition published in 1983. ISBN 0 9509066 2 x. 351 pp. Traces interrelated historical development of film style and technology. Maintains international focus and integrates formal analysis with theoretical approach. Discussion of the silent era is broken down into six periods: 1895-1900, 1900-1906, 1907-1913, 1914-1919, 1920-1926, and 1926-1929. Also includes a chapter discussing each subsequent decade from the 1930s through 1980s. “Bibliography,” and “Technical Glossary and Index.”

Additional journal articles as assigned.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER COURSES. MIAS 220 is one of six core seminars in the Moving Image Archive Studies Program. The course emphasizes detailed scrutiny of multiple media types.

MAJOR TOPICS.

1. Origins of the apparatus
2. Early Pre-Cinema
3. Early Cinema
4. From Tinting and Toning to Technicolor
5. The Coming of Sound
6. Overview of film stocks
7. The demise of nitrate film stock
8. Wide Screens: from cinerama to IMAX
9. Television: from early analog to HDTV
10. Special effects/digital tools

SYLLABUS.

Archaeology of the Medium
287)

Graduate Seminar

(MIAS 220, IS

GSEIS Rm 111
– 9:30

Wednesday 6:00

Michael Friend, Instructor

Overview

This course will provide a comprehensive history of moving image technologies ranging from the earliest pre-cinema devices to the present. Motion pictures and subsequent moving image media will be examined through their technical manifestations, that is, through the key inventions, devices, standards and methodologies that have shaped all aspects of production, distribution and display of moving images from the end of the 19th century until now. The proto-history of the cinema was a maelstrom of ideas and inventions that carry forward through the entire history of the motion picture, and the creative chaos of late 19th century image culture bears more than a passing resemblance to the technological change that confronts us today. This course engages that other history of the cinema, with its alternating periods of stability and transformation of the technical means of image making.

This is not a 'training seminar' in how to preserve films, nor does it require advanced technical training as a prerequisite. It is not about what is latest or best in media technology. It is an overview of media technology from the perspective of archival work, an exposition of the technical systems that form the material basis of archival holdings. As such, this might be considered a course in the 'reverse engineering' of the cinema for preservation purposes.

We will discuss the significant points of interaction between technology and aesthetics in the cinema; and the philosophical issues raised by the idea of preservation, with emphasis on the media developed since 1839. This course may be of particular value to those interested in the relationship of technology to aesthetics and motion picture history, to those who want to understand the historical development of the issues of preservation and restoration as they emerge from the contexts of production, technical innovation, archival practice and historical inquiry, and to those who wish to understand perform or supervise technical work in a moving image archive.

Lectures

The course lectures will follow a roughly chronological sequence of the history of cinema. In addition to these classes, there will be two presentations by Robert Gitt (head of preservation at the UCLA Film and Television Archive) at which your attendance is required. These lectures will include extensive examples of many different formats. The dates for these presentations are still to be arranged.

Assignments:

Two essays (the first roughly five pages, the second roughly twenty pages in length). Each essay will investigate the formal properties of image/sound track in relation to the technology in question. Proposals for alternative projects such as

technical bibliographies, preservation projects or multi-media presentations will be considered.

Office Hours: By Appointment

Archaeology of the Medium
287)

Graduate Seminar (MIAS 220, IS

GSEIS Rm 111
– 9:30

Wednesday 6:00

Schedule of Classes:

WED 4 April	INTRODUCTION
WED 11 April	HISTORY OF FILM TECHNOLOGY: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IMAGE and SOUND
WED 18 April	FILM IN THE GOLDEN ERA OF CINEMA (1) THE FIRST CATAclySM: 1926-1935
WED 25 April	FILM IN THE GOLDEN ERA OF CINEMA (2) THE SECOND CATAclySM: 1945-58
WED 2 MAY	PERIODIZING PRODUCTION; THE HISTORY AND PROVENANCE of FILM LIBRARIES and ARCHIVES
WED 9 May	THE GREAT SATAN: TELEVISION, VIDEO AND NEW MEDIA
WED 16 May	AGAINST THE INSTITUTIONAL IMAGE: ISSUES OF THE AVANT- GARDE
WED 23 May	HYBRIDOLOGY: THE TRANSITION FROM SPECIAL EFFECTS TO VISUAL EFFECTS; CINEMA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
WED 30 May	HISTOIRE(S) DU CINEMA (1): TECHNICAL HISTORY AND THE DEATH OF FILM
WED 1 JUNE	HISTOIRE(S) DU CINEMA (2): THE SURVIVAL OF THE CINEMA AND STATE OF THE ART OF FILM RESTORATION IN ARCHIVES.
WED	EXAMINATION WEEK

Paul Read, Mark-Paul Meyer. *Restoration of Motion Picture Film* (Butterworth-Heinemann; August 28, 2000)

Kodak Book of Film Care. This Kodak publication is the most useful and up-to-date overview of the technology of the motion picture. It contains both historical and current information. It should be used in conjunction with the Kodak website, which contains a vast array of technical information as well as papers, interviews, charts and graphics which bear on the medium and its preservation. This publication is revised every few years, and 2002 is the latest edition. However, any recent edition will contain information on most of the class topics.