Boston University British Programmes
British Film and TV Since 1960
COM FT 316 (Core Course)
Spring 2011

Instructor Information

A. Name Dr Christine Fanthome and Dr Nick Haefner
B. Day and Time Wednesdays and Thursdays, 1.15-5.15pm
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H. Office hours By appointment

Course Description

This course aims to provide students with an overview of media in Britain within a social context. Special emphasis is placed on the relationship between media, citizenship and democracy in the context of post-War British society. Consideration will also be given to the relationship between British and US media culture.

Methodology

Each teaching session will involve a lecture, illustrative material and a class discussion based on the set reading. Students should absorb as much film and television as they can out of class in order to participate fully in seminar discussions.

**Please note: no laptops to be used in class.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will able to:
• Understand the cultural context of British film and TV since the 1960s.
• Show awareness of the international economic underpinnings of these industries
• Consider the role of politics in media production, distribution and consumption
• Show awareness of historical controversies surrounding British film and TV’s relationship to the US
• Conduct their own research in the field

Textbooks/Supplies

You can read selected chapters online at http://www.bu-london.co.uk/academic/ft316 (you must be logged in to view materials).
Assessment

Essay 50% graded (by Dr Christine Fanthome)
Exam 50% graded (by Dr Nick Haeffner)

Report: This should consist of a 2,000-word essay on a topic covered in class (details to follow from Dr Fanthome). There should be a minimum of 5 academic sources (text books, journal articles etc) not including websites. Websites may be used in addition to more traditional sources but not instead of them and only academic or industry websites should be used. All quotations and citations should be referenced and include appropriate page numbers. The deadline for essay submission is 8.50 am on Monday 14 February 2011. 50%

Exam: This will be a take home paper issued to you on Monday 14 February by Dr Haeffner and will consist of a range of questions which will require test you on your knowledge of the course and will require some evidence of background reading. 50%

Grading

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria, attendance requirements and policies on plagiarism:

Teaching Methods

There will be lectures/seminars and screenings. Students should absorb as much British media as they can, including films, broadcast and print media.

The normal pattern for a class will include a student led discussion of the reading for each session, and a lecturer led session including film/TV clips and small group discussions.

Students must check their email and the weekly Student Newsletter for field trip updates and reminders.
Course Schedule

Session 1: Thursday 13 January (Dr Christine Fanthome)
COMEDY AND ENGLISHNESS
Over the years classic comedy films and TV programmes have helped to define our British national identity and the British sense of humour to the outside world. It has been an evolutionary process and we shall attempt to analyse and critique it in this session. We shall look at the different forms of comedy, discuss humour theory and outline the conventions of the sit-com before looking at a range of examples from film and television.

Reading:

Clips: (will include a selection of the following): The Ladykillers; Carry on Up the Khyber; Four Weddings and a Funeral; The Full Monty; Bridget Jones; Only Fools and Horses; Blackadder; Absolutely Fabulous; The Royle Family; The Office; Monty Python; Little Britain

Session 2: Wednesday 19 January (Dr Christine Fanthome)
CRIME
We shall look at developments in the crime genre since 1960, and the key changes in social attitudes and perceptions that they reflect. Starting with an assessment of the early depiction of the ‘bobby on the beat’ and its links with the English national identity, we shall then track the subsequent quest for greater realism, the emergence of the ‘rogue cop’ theme in the 1970s, the blurring of boundaries between law enforcement and lawlessness in what has been called ‘the alternative tradition’, and the effects of gender politics, genre hybridisation and nostalgia on mediated crime.

Reading:

Clips: The Blue Lamp; Get Carter; The Long Good Friday; Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels; The Sweeney; The Bill; Prime Suspect; Life on Mars

Guest Speaker (subject to availability): Alison Chard, former Casting Director, The Bill
Session 3: Thursday 20 January (Dr Nick Haeffner)
REALISM: DOCUMENTARY REALISM AND SOCIAL REALISM
A concern for realism is at the heart of much British film and TV. It’s important to remember that there are many different types of realism including documentary realism, social realism, surrealism, docudrama and ordinary cinematic realism. The British Film Institute website has this to say about social realism: ‘Better than any other genre, social realism has shown us to ourselves, pushing the boundaries in the effort to put the experiences of real Britons on the screen, and shaping our ideas of what British cinema can be. While our cinema has experienced all the fluctuations in fortune of Hollywood's first export territory, realism has been Britain's richest gift to world cinema.’ (http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1037898/index.html) Nevertheless, as we will see, ‘realism’ is always a problematic term because everything we see and hear via the media has been framed, edited, pre-interpreted and post-produced.

Clips: The British Documentary movement: Coal Face (1935), Trade Tattoo (1937), ‘kitchen sink’ realism, Mike Leigh, Hollywood UK, Coronation Street (1960 -)


Session 4: Wednesday 26 January (Dr Nick Haeffner)
ART FILM AND TV
For much of its history, British film and TV has differed from its US counterpart in the emphasis that has been placed on artistic success. Many notable British actors, writers and directors have considered financial success less important than peer recognition for their artistic achievements. Although art film and TV tends to appeal to a small niche audience it is nevertheless influential and frequently attracts international interest. From time to time it also enters mainstream consciousness, for instance with the success of the TV series The Prisoner.


Session 5: Thursday 27 January (Dr Christine Fanthome)
FANTASY
Why has the best British fantasy tended to find its outlet through television rather than film? How does it differ from US originated material? In this session we shall attempt to define fantasy, account for the focus of British fantasy on the cerebral, and investigate why audiences find this genre so pleasurable.


Clips: Quatermass; Quatermass and the Pit; The Prisoner; Thunderbirds; Dr Who; Harry Potter
Session 6: Wednesday 2 February (Dr Nick Haeffner)
NEW DOCUMENTARY, CITIZEN JOURNALISM AND REALITY TV
Along with its stress on realism, Britain places much emphasis on news and current affairs programming. The BBC World Service is the most trusted news service in the world. However, some of the most entertaining and thoughtful British TV of the past decade has involved a comic or ironic deconstruction of the conventions which structure journalistic reporting. This 'postmodern' turn in the media is also bound up with the rise of 'populism' (more of an ideology shared by media executives than a reflection of what people actually want to see on TV), ironic humour about the media and the 'decline of deference'. These factors, along with the rise of so-called 'citizen journalism' have had a profound effect on so-called serious news reporting.


Session 7: Thursday 3 February (Dr Christine Fanthome)
HERITAGE DRAMA
What is heritage drama? How does it attempt to re-present the national past? In this session we shall look at the heritage debate and the wider questions of commodification of heritage and nostalgia. We shall study the characteristics of the heritage films of the 1980s and 1990s and assess the importance of heritage to the UK economy.

Reading:

Clips: Brideshead Revisited; Chariots of Fire; Howard's End; Elizabeth; Gosford Park; Bleak House

* Contingency Class Date: Friday 4 February. Students are obligated to keep this date free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled.

** Please note: students will have their first Internship Tutorial meeting on the day of their eighth or ninth (last) Core lecture, 9 or 10 February.

In addition, all students must attend a Mandatory Internship Briefing that will not conflict with your exam on Monday 14 February at the Cine Lumiere, 17 Queensberry Place, London, SW7 2DT. You will be emailed with the time closer to the date.

Session 8: Wednesday 9 February (Dr Nick Haeffner)
MUSIC AND YOUTH CULTURE ON FILM
British film and TV has long been fascinated by youth culture counters the dominant stereotypes of British people as reserved, undemonstrative and dispassionate. Britain’s contribution to pop, rock and dance music has been rich and varied. The UK has produced many of the best known music acts it the world. Yet to understand why this is it’s necessary to look closely at the relationship between the mainstream values held by middle aged British people and the history of those that have developed through youth subculture, which have gone on to transform the mainstream. We will also examine the North-South divide in England and its importance to the music scene.


**Session 9: Thursday 10 February (Dr Andy Charlton)**
FIELD TRIP: Southwark and Bankside Film and TV walk.
2.30 start, meet on the Tate Modern side of the Millennium Bridge, led by Andy Charlton (mobile number 07768 655 597)

Exam:
Monday 14 February (Dr Nick Haeffner)
*Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.*

Further Reading

**Realism:**


Lovell, Terry: (1996), ‘Landscape and Stories in 1960s British Realism’ in Higson (ibid)


**Television:**


Comedy:


Walters, B: (2005) The Office London: BFI

Heritage:

Higson, Andrew: (1998) ‘Nationality’ in Briggs and Cobley


Church Gibson, Pamela: (2000) ‘Fewer Weddings and More Funerals: changes in the Heritage Film’ in Murphy (ed), British Cinema in the 90s London: BFI


Music and Youth Culture:


Osgerby, William (1997) *Youth in Britain Since 1945* Oxford: Blackwell


**Fantasy:**


**Crime:**


**British Cinema:**


**Film and Television:**

Aukin, David: (1996) ‘Channel Four’s policy towards film’ in Hill and McLoone (eds) ibid

**General Media:**


Books on Class:

