Boston University Study Abroad London
COM FT344 European Cinema: From Festival Circuit to the Big Screen

Instructor Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ms Kate Domaille</th>
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<tr>
<td>Day and Time</td>
<td>Mondays, 1.15-5.15PM (11AM – 5PM on 11/04/2016)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Brompton Room, (Harrington on 11/04/2016) 43 Harrington Gardens, SW7 4JU</td>
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<td>Office hours</td>
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Course Objectives

This course is an examination of contemporary European cinema and asks the key question: what do national cinema products reveal about national identity, culture, and values? The course will combine a study of the economics and cultural politics of national cinemas in Europe and their existence within a global marketplace of film. Through the study of film festivals, and the study of filmmakers and their films, students will have an opportunity to examine how minor cinemas evolve to be significant for national audiences and how these cinemas convey aspects of culture, language and social life across national boundaries.

Central questions addressed by the course include:

- What are the conditions for European film production and distribution of cinema within and beyond the nation state?
- Why are national film cultures important to retain?
- What function and value do film festivals have in promoting films?
- What do representations of film cultures both in-nation and beyond nation tell audiences of cultural values across the world?

The course will draw upon literature about film festival success, and use a range of methods to explore how European film festivals function as distributors and exhibitors of a wide range of cinema. There will be integrated visits to key exhibition venues such as Cine Lumiere, or the British Film Institute and strong attempts to connect students to screening of European cinema in London.
Course Overview

This course aims to provide students with insights into the economic issues pertaining to preserving national cinemas in Europe. Through a case study approach students will examine the conditions that enable national cinemas to find a bigger stage for exhibition in the global marketplace. The course commences with a study of key concepts such as national cinema, transnational cinema, and the European/Hollywood binary. It develops to explore the role of film festivals in acting as alternative sites of distribution for European cinema and students will have an opportunity to examine how film festivals work as sites of economic, critical and cultural exchange. Films selected for study are offered as explorations of the challenge of combining local, national interest and talent with the imperative to make money in cinema. Across the course students are exploring the commercial, cultural and critical functions of the cinema industry as it works through alternative spaces in Europe, in festivals, through international distribution and in nominations for awards. Each case study explores variously the conditions which enable smaller projects to find a wider release onto a larger circuit.

The course will explore all of these issues through selected screenings and the literature available around those screenings. There is a strong emphasis in the course on independent research and enquiry to augment knowledge gained in taught sessions. The field of European Cinema Studies is ever-changing, with currently a renewed emphasis on using some empirical methods to account for the ways in which films move from national origins into international marketplaces, such as looking at data collected on box office success and audience response. Consequently student capability in reading research reports is an area of the course that will be developed and assessed.

Through the literature, students will engage with both established debates about national cinemas such as auteur theory and the exploration of national themes and preoccupations, alongside new debates about the transnational nature of cinema and the reimagining of what national cinema might mean.

Course Methodology

This course will be taught over nine, four-hour sessions. Each teaching session will involve a lecture, illustrative material, and class activities based around the required reading and further reading. To increase the prospect of students gaining a full knowledge of European cinema, built into the assessment of the course is an opportunity for students to undertake one deeper study of a film, and report on it in the specified session.

Students are, of course, at liberty to watch as much cinema as they wish in pursuit of a deeper understanding but predominantly the sessions will refer to extended extracts for illustration and linked with reference to a core film. The BU Library will retain copies of DVDs. The course tutor will explore with BU-London the space that can be made available to students working on the focus film so that films are able to be screened outside of class time, where required.
Learning Outcomes:
On completion of the course, the successful student will be able to:

- Research, prepare and present on a selected area of the course showing an understanding of wider reading about European cinema and distribution including film festival research
- Explain how European cinema moves between national and international contexts and the role and value of film festivals in this economy
- Demonstrate a close understanding of different data sets around cinema distribution and, what this data reveals about production, distribution and audience interest in European cinema in different contexts
- Conceptualize the link between cinema as a business, and culture as nationally and locally represented and promoted in cinema
- Evaluate the issues pertaining to European cinema and relate that knowledge to a wider understanding of national cultures in a globalised world.

Such learning will be demonstrated through a series of assessments that require students:

- to present around a selected film showing both close textual analysis skills and research skills in understanding the film’s creative origins, and distribution
- analyse and interpret a range of film texts as well as the context in which these films were created, circulated and exhibited
- to select and retrieve information from a variety of sources and to reference that work appropriately including trade press and survey data
- to write cogently and with some critical distance about the material being studied referencing a wide range of reading

The various modes of assessment test different skills from close reading of film, to data analysis skills, to critical reading and writing.

Course Assessment
Assignment 1: (20%) Presentation to be submitted with notes and PowerPoint slides.
On enrolment to the course, students will be divided into pairs/groups to develop a presentation around one of the core films studied in Sessions 3-8. This assignment will include a summary of critical reading around the film; a close textual analysis of two key scenes, and presentation of a short thesis of how the film represents aspects of the national, or what might link the film to concepts of transnational cinema.

Assignment 2: (20% - 1000 words) How do UK alternative cinema venues create opportunities for audiences to experience European Cinema?
Based on a group/paired research task you will seek out and investigate a cinema venue and explore the varying methods it uses to create space for alternative cinema. Present your findings in relation to other understanding of film audiences demonstrated in two research reports that discuss the audience for alternative cinema: Opening Our Eyes: How Film Contributes to the Culture of the UK, and the BFI Statistical Year Book which reports on specialist films.

Assignment 3: (20% - 1000 words) Essay on the journey of a film from festival to commercial screen.
In this assignment students will select one of the films presented as a Festival Winner and report the journey of that film from small screen to national or international screens, exploring critical responses to the film as well as box office data on the film’s transfer from festival to commercial circuit.
Final Research Paper (40% - 2000 words).
Selecting one of the films studied in the course, students will write about the film’s success or failure in two territories beyond the country in which it was produced. The essay must refer to wider arguments encountered in literature across the course about the national, transnational, and global, in relation to cinema. Deadline:
NB: 10% of the grade on this assignment is awarded for a short presentation in Session 9 on your processes of research to discover the journey of the film out of the national to the international.

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Skills Tested</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 1: Presentation to be submitted with notes and PowerPoint slides</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Analysis and interpretation</td>
<td>Organised on a rota basis at the beginning of the course</td>
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<td>Assignment 2: Research task/report</td>
<td>20% (1000 words)</td>
<td>Data gathering, data reading, summary and analysis.</td>
<td>Deadline: 21 March 2016</td>
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<td>Assignment 3: Essay on the journey of a film from festival to screen</td>
<td>20% (1500 words)</td>
<td>Critical reading, research skills, and critical writing.</td>
<td>Deadline: 4 April 2016</td>
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<td>Final Research Paper. Selecting a film studied in the course, write about its success/failure in two territories beyond the country in which it was produced.</td>
<td>40% (2000 words)</td>
<td>Independent research and writing skills.</td>
<td>Presentation of research process: 18 April 2016</td>
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Textbooks/Supplies
Students can read selected chapters on Blackboard: [http://learn.bu.edu](http://learn.bu.edu)

Academic Policies & Grading
It is every student’s responsibility to read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be ‘…expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the Dean.’ You can view the entire Academic Conduct Code here: [http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/](http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/)

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria, attendance requirements, and policies on plagiarism: [http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester](http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester)

*Final grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absences.*
Attendance Policy

Classes
All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, seminar, and field trip in order to fulfill the required course contact hours and receive course credit. Any student that has been absent from two class sessions (whether authorised or unauthorised) will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their continued participation on the programme. This may result in the student having to take a medical leave of absence from the programme or withdraw from the programme.

Authorised Absence:
Students who expect to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorized Absence Approval Form 10 working days in advance of the class date (except in the case of absence due to illness for more than one day. In this situation students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor’s note as soon as possible). Please note: Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Form does not guarantee an authorised absence

Students may apply for an authorised absence only under the following circumstances:
• Illness (first day of sickness): If a student is too ill to attend class, the student must phone the BU London Student Affairs Office (who will in turn contact the student’s lecturer).
• Illness (multiple days): If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must call into the BU London Student Affairs Office each day the student is ill. Students must also provide the Student Affairs office with a completed Authorised Absence Approval Form and sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class.
• Important placement event that clashes with a class (verified by internship supervisor)
• Special circumstances which have been approved by the Directors (see note below).

The Directors will only in the most extreme cases allow students to leave the programme early or for a significant break.

Unauthorised Absence:
Any student to miss a class due to an unauthorised absence will receive a 4% grade penalty to their final grade for the course whose class was missed. This grade penalty will be applied by the Academic Affairs office to the final grade at the end of the course. As stated above, any student that has missed two classes will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their participation on the programme as excessive absences may result in a ‘Fail’ in the class and therefore expulsion from the programme.

Lateness

Students arriving more than 15 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Any student with irregular class attendance (more than two late arrivals to class) will be required to meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have his/her final grade penalised.

Required Reading

This course makes use of a range of chapters and articles about cinema published in academic journals and publications of repute. It also makes extensive use of trade press reviews and data collected about audiences. The reading required for sessions draws on a range of material designed to develop a rich and varied understanding of each topic. This reading may be further
supplemented through reference to a reader advised for this course and a supplementary reading list at the end of the programme, put together to support independent study and research. Individual articles and chapters will be available through the Course Blackboard Learn site. The textbook, listed below, should be purchased at the Book Sale during orientation week. All other books will be available through the BU London Library.


The Film Festival Reader is particularly valuable in relation to these questions in the course:

- What is the importance of film festivals in the context of film culture at large?
- How do film festivals work?
- Are film festivals tools of power and prestige that make or break the fate of a film?
- What, if anything, is wrong with the concept of 'festival films'?

**Course Chronology**

**Session 1: Introduction to European Cinema.**
**Monday 22 February 1:15-5:15**

This opening session introduces students to the economic, cultural, creative and political reasons for debating films in terms of their national provenance and sets out for discussion some of the conditions that might enable cinema to move across national borders. Students will be introduced to key concepts taught across the course such as why European cinema has operated in the shadow of Hollywood, what might be meant by the concept of national cinema and why national cinema remains an important concept in film studies. The session will further examine the relatively new enthusiasm for a concept of cinema as *transnational*. These ideas will be illustrated through use of some preview extracts of cinema discussed more widely in later sessions and that operate through two areas Thomas Elsaesser (2005) identifies for how films transcend the national: in the use of place as a selling point; or as a “cinema du look”, cinema based on style.

Extracts: Place as selling point: *The King’s Speech* (UK, 2011); *The Wave* (Gansell, 2009); *Midnight in Paris*, (Allen, 2011), *Girlhood* (France, 2015), *In Bruges* (UK/Ireland 2008); “Cinema du Look” —; *Run Lola Run* (Germany 1998); *Delicatessen*; *Pan’s Labyrinth* (Guillermo del Toro, 2006);

**Required Reading**


Session 2:  Monday 29 February European Film Festivals: What do they do for European Cinema?

In Iordanova’s (2013) introduction to *The Film Festival Reader*, she considers whether film festivals act as ‘bottlenecks’ for narrowly defined projects in cinema, or as open spaces for creative exchange. This session explores the history of the film festival in Europe and sets out the issues around film festivals as key spaces for critical, commercial and cultural success of smaller cinemas. Looking through two case studies of winners of the prestigious Cannes Film Festival Prize, the *Palme D’Or*, this session explores the role of the Film Prize as a launch point for European cinema in the global marketplace. Additionally, a detour to explore *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, winner of The Silver Bear at Berlin in 2014, we will also explore what festivals do for America filmmakers who have access to the wider distribution circuits. If one part of the exploration here is about distribution, yet another strand to examine is the barriers and constraints of exhibition.

Additional focus on awards from Berlin 2016

*Your Assignment 2 Research Task into Cinema Venues in London will commence here and be prepared for 14 March 2016. You might use time in Week 3 after the guided walk to commence this task. Guidance will be issued this week.*

**Required Reading**


Session 3:  7 March 2016  A Field Trip about ‘place’ in Cinema: Notting Hill Film and TV Walking Tour Led by Andy Charlton – Meeting place outside Jamie Oliver's Recipease, a big glass thing next to Boots on Notting Hill Gate - take the exit from Notting Hill tube marked Portobello Road and you'll emerge by estate agent Foxton's and you'll see Recipease in front of you.

**Film and TV Walk of Notting Hill.**

Notting Hill is a part of London that has attracted film makers for decades. Huge mansions had decayed into bedsits by the 1950's; Notting Hill was one of cheapest parts of London and immigrants, especially from the Caribbean, settled here. Race riots in 1959 blighted the area but it became a haunt of artists, writers and musicians, and had a certain urban edge to it. There are other reasons why Notting Hill has been a location for so much filming; the variety of architecture, the proximity to BBC studios, the fact that the local council has a dedicated film office making it easier to obtain permissions and so on. Portobello Market is always very attractive and interesting to film and The Gate Theatre has been a breeding ground for film stars and directors including Stephen Frears, Jude Law, Rachel Weisz and others.

In preparation for next week – please read both reports, one quantitative (BFI Statistical Handbook), the other qualitative, a research report on what British audiences watch. Prepare to report. This is groundwork for Assignment 2.
Required Reading:


How Film Contributes to the Culture of the UK – A Survey Conducted by the British Film Institute http://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-opening-our-eyes-2011-07_0.pdf

**Session 4: 14 March 2016 British National Cinema and The Cannes Prize**

Award-winning British director, Ken Loach achieves very small audiences in the UK. This session will explore the specific economics of British cinema and the opportunities it provides for smaller filmmaking amidst the wider imperative to make cinema for box office award. Loach’s relationship with television and his continued interest in exhibiting in festival circuits has opened up his work to a wider audience in Europe, thus enabling a unique and specialised cinema to extend and survive. Key questions will be: How does using the festival circuit enable the survival of national cinema? And what value does screening at a festival have for furthering exchange about creativity in cinema? Students will further explore how national audiences perceive of cinema, through examination of data collected in the UK on cinema audiences and preferences.


Required Reading:


NB: This session will be extended to include an evening outing to The British Film Institute for a special screening.

**Hitchcock/Truffaut screening at BFI Southbank 6:30-8:30**

*Kent Jones’ excellent documentary about a historic encounter between the French director and British/US auteur illuminates the enduring importance of Hitchcock’s movies. Made in 2015, this documentary collects together the views of Wes Anderson, Olivier Assayas, Richard Linklater on the influence of Hitchcock on contemporary cinema.*

*Note that this extension together with a screening in the final week of the course will replace a later session in the course.*

**Session 5: Award winning French Cinema**

21 March 2016
Recent examples of successful French cinema - *Amelie, 2001; Taken, 2009 and Intouchables, 2011* - show some French cinema moving in different directions, adapting to market pressures – a clear break from the history of French cinema. Exploring the critical reception of *Intouchables*, this session focuses on the mechanisms for European cinema to achieve international box office. Distributed by Miramax *Intouchables* is a good example of a US distributor finding high value in a French language product and enabling a wide release. Nominated for a multitude of awards and boasting the highest grossing box office film from France, since *Amelie*, the question this phenomena raises is whether such box office and critical acclaim furthers the possibilities of cinema in nation states and across Europe, or whether there is a move towards greater homogenization of cinema?

Extracts: *Amelie* (2001), *Mesrine* (2008, Jean-Francois Richet); *Taken* (Luc Besson, 2009). References also back to Session 2 and *Amour* (Hanneke, 2012) and *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (Kechice, 2013)

Focus Film: *Untouchable* (Toledano, Nakache, 2011)

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**


**Session 6: An uncompromising Spaniard: The case of Pedro Almodovar 4 April  2016**

Almodovar emerged as a small feature film maker out of the end of the Franco regime in Spain in the late 1970s. His methods and approaches to storytelling lie firmly in traditions of Spanish cultural life and values, and as Wood (2007) writes he had a very clear understanding of how his films might appeal to marginal and niche audiences across the globe. Almodovar makes entirely local stories about Spanish life, sometimes with the assistance of global superstars (Penelope Cruz, Antonio Banderas) who supported his earlier work. Almodovar’s films have made up to 81% of their income outside Spain. It is the critical success for Almodovar that has assured the many barriers to cinema (language and narrative form) are overcome. This session will explore the way this national auteur has negotiated the transnational landscape. A veteran of the European Festival Circuit, Almodovar has submitted at Berlin, and has nominated for, and won at, Cannes on two occasions. *Volver* (2006) won the coveted Palme D’Or and had his turn at the Oscars!

Focus Film: *All about My Mother* (1999)

**Required Reading**

Marsha Kinder (2007) ‘*Volver*’ *Film Quarterly, Spring* 2007, 60:3 pp4-9


**Additional Reading**


Session 7 + Session 8 will take place on the same day Monday 11 April

Session 7: Internationalising the National Story: Germany.

NB: This session commences early 11-1 (Germany); PM (Scandinavia)

Examples of German cinema that have made an impact in the international arena are films that have openly explored Germany’s troubled history; this week’s focus film *Goodbye Lenin!* represents a clear attempt to articulate the anxieties and concerns of the unification of Germany. Additionally, in this session we will examine other articulations of German selves in a look at *The Wave* and *The Lives of Others*. One of the Oscar 2015 contenders is Spielberg’s *Bridge of Spies* which shows the enduring interest in cold war stories where Germany is at the centre of action. Additionally, Channel 4 has recently been screening *Deutschland 83* an 8-part cold war drama of spying between East and West Germany. Both ‘national’ and ‘transnational’ representations of the ‘wall’ continue to have currency in film.

Extracts from *The Wave* (2008); *Downfall* (Hirschbiegel, 2004) *The Lives of Others* (Von Donnersmarck, 2006);

**Focus Film:** *Goodbye Lenin!* (Becker, 2003);

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**


Session 8: 11 April 2016 The Scandinavians are coming! 1:45 -5:15

The enormous recent success in the UK both in fiction and on screen of Scandinavian stories (Denmark for television, Sweden in film, Finland, and Norway), is illustrated in this session through the ways in which these stories have influenced Hollywood and resulted in remakes. Here, minority European cinemas could be argued to be leaders in provocative storytelling and, in spite of the language differences, are demonstrating craft, technical and creative originality of storytelling and working outside the conventional star system. In turn, Hollywood’s recognition of this power is reflected in the move towards remakes. This final session focused on film will enable students to re-explore the concept of the national cinema here, not as a marginal cinema, but potentially as a world-leading, exploratory cinema, capable of influencing the mainstream. In this session, students will look at the reworking of these Scandinavian stories through the Hollywood machine and ask what national cinema means or whether it is more productive to think of cinema as a transnational product, a clear example of globalisation.

Focus Film:  *Headhunters* (Finland) – dir. Morten Tyldum (2012)

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**


Session 9: Final Session Monday 18 April

This session commences with your mini presentations of the research process used in preparation of your final paper.

Additionally, this final session will provide a tutor presentation exploring the entries to a current or near future film festival and the nominations for the prizes. Based on what students have learned across the course about festivals, about film economics, and about the successes of European films in international marketplaces, this final session will be a chance to predict the next festival winner!

**Course outing:** European Film at Cinema tba.

*Contingency Class Date: 20th April 2016.* Students are obligated to keep this date free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled. *

*Elective B exam date: 21st April 2016.* Time and location TBC.*
Further Reading

Through BU Mugar Library, students have access to *Studies in European Cinema* a journal of writings published from 2004 onwards. This is very valuable source for students to supplement their studies, particularly when it comes to the final research paper. Titles listed below in bold are good supplementary texts to develop students’ understanding. These are available in the BU-London library. Please do make use of them.


