

Film and Media Studies

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Film and Media Studies (FMS) is an interdisciplinary program that enriches understanding of the complexity of media culture by providing a solid grounding in the theory, history, production, interpretation, and criticism of a wide variety of media texts, thus preparing its students to better understand, analyze, and participate in contemporary society.

Distribution: Courses completed in FMS apply to the humanities distribution area with the following exceptions:

cultural pluralism or humanities: 340 and 345
fine arts: 260 and 360

Learning Goals: Students completing a major in FMS will demonstrate an understanding of the histories, technologies, and social and cultural contexts of a range of media. Specifically, FMS pursues a broader, liberal arts approach to film and media studies so that students will:

- Be exposed to a broad range of media across historical eras and international borders so they will be familiar with major trends in media within specific historical and national contexts.
- Learn research skills and methods, disciplinary vocabulary, and an array of theoretical perspectives and be able to apply them so as to convincingly write and speak about media from a range of academic approaches.
- Understand the relationship between varying media and its creators, audiences, representations, and industrial and cultural contexts and be able to write essays or participate in discussions connecting media texts to these concepts.
- Acquire the skills necessary to take part in creative, effective, technically competent, and insightful media production.
- Have the knowledge to write intellectually grounded essays or engage in informed discussions about the role of media in contemporary global culture.

The Film and Media Studies major: A minimum of 34 credits including FMS 160, 170, and 387. The remaining elective credits may be completed from the list of courses below, as well as other elective courses offered by the FMS program. Students may substitute up to eight of the elective credits with program-approved film and media studies transfer credits. Department policy does not allow a P-D-F grade option for courses within the major.

Senior assessment: The senior assessment, administered during the student's senior year, is an in-depth oral exam that focuses on coursework in the major completed at Whitman.

The Film and Media Studies minor: A minimum of 20 credits in Film and Media Studies, including 160 or 170. The remaining elective credits may be completed from the list of courses below, as well as other elective courses offered by the FMS program. Students may substitute up to four of the elective credits with program-approved film and media studies transfer credits. Department policy does not allow a P-D-F grade option for courses within the minor.

The following courses are available for the major or minor:

Anthropology 312 *Ethnographic Film Studies*
 Anthropology 325 *The Anthropology of New/Digital Media*
 Art 103 *Foundations: Art and Public Engagement*
 Art 104 *Foundations: Digital Processes and Production*
 Art 109 *Foundations: Optical Imaging*
 Art 114 *Foundations: Maker Spaces and Culture*
 Art 123 *Beginning Photography*
 Art 125 *Beginning Digital Printing*
 Art 180 *Beginning New Genre Art Practices*
 Art 223 *Intermediate Photography*
 Art 225 *Intermediate Digital Printing*
 Art 280 *Intermediate New Genre*
 Art 323 *Advanced Photography*
 Art 325 *Advanced Digital Printing*
 Art 380 *Advanced New Genre*
 Art History and Visual Culture Studies 230 *The Social Life of Photography*
 Art History and Visual Culture Studies 235 *Race and American Visual Culture*
 Art History and Visual Culture Studies 237/Theatre 357 *Theory and Performance*
 Art History and Visual Culture Studies 253 *Transnational Interplanetary Film & Video Consciousness*
 Art History and Visual Culture Studies 351 *Los Angeles: Art, Architecture, Cultural Geography*
 Art History and Visual Culture Studies 354 *Race, Ethnicity, and the Urban Imaginary*
 French 409/World Literature 309 *French National Cinemas*
 Music 129 *Deconstructing Popular Music*
 Music 140 *Meet the Beatles*
 Music 271 *Introduction to Music Technology*
 Music 342 *Classical Music in Film*
 Music 371 *Intermediate Music Technology*
 Philosophy 177 *ST: Philosophy in Science Fiction*
 Religion 307 *Mediating Religions*
 Rhetoric Studies 260/ *Rhetoric and Sensation in Civic Life*
 Rhetoric 303 *The Sunken Place: Racism, Black Aesthetics, and Violence in American Film*
 Rhetoric Studies 341/Sociology 341 *The Rhetoric of Hip Hop*
 Sociology 290 *Sociology and History of Rock n' Roll*
 Theatre 125 *Beginning Acting I*
 Theatre 126 *Beginning Acting II*
 Theatre 211 *Stage Electrics*
 Theatre 222 *Digital Rendering 3-D Environments*
 Theatre 225 *Acting:Styles*
 Theatre 320 *Directing for the Theatre*
 Theatre 357 *Theatre and Performance*
 Theatre 466 *Director in the Theatre II*
 World Literature 301 *Chinese Literature and Film Adaptation*
 World Literature 325 *Imagining Community through Contemporary Japanese Fiction and Film*
 World Literature 330 *Introduction to Chinese Cinema*
 World Literature 338 *Undoing the Japanese National Narrative through Literature and Film*
 World Literature 349 *China through the Cinematic Eye*
 World Literature 407 *Visual Narrations: The Art and Architecture of the Graphic Novel*

150-155 Special Topics in Film and Media Studies

1-4 credits

Topics in Film and Media Studies not generally considered in other courses offered by the department. Materials will vary from semester to semester and may cover subjects, developments, and concepts from early times to the present. Lectures, discussions, tests, papers, and/or weekly screenings. May be repeated for credit. Any current offerings follow.

160 Introduction to Film Studies

Fall

Sickels

4 credits

This course introduces the historical and theoretical fundamentals of film studies. Representative films will be drawn from a variety of different eras, genres, and countries. Lectures, discussions, tests, and required weekly film screenings. Open to first-years, sophomores, and Film and Media Studies majors; others by consent of instructor.

170 Introduction to Television Studies**Spring****Elseewi****4 credits**

This course explores world culture through an analysis of what is arguably its central medium: television. Tracing the medium from its origins in radio to its digital future, we will investigate television as a site of identity formation, controversy, political power, and artistic experimentation. The course will also consider television in terms of industrial production and audience reception, including the rapidly changing practices associated with television viewing in the 21st century. Lectures, discussions, tests, and required weekly screenings.

220 Identity, Gender, & Media**Not offered 2018-19****4 credits**

This introductory-level class explores the relationship between media and multiple forms of “identity.” By critically exploring and deconstructing normative concepts of gender, we shall open critical space to investigate other kinds of identity produced in and through media such as national, religious, ethnic, and class identities. We will focus on contemporary and historically specific examples such as radio and the construction of national identity in the 1920s; television and the production of the domestic housewife in the 1950s; and contemporary marketing techniques and the construction of impossible female bodies. We will bring feminist thought, critical theory, and cultural studies together with specific examples in order to analyze “identity-talk” in film, radio, television, and the Internet. The ultimate goal of this class is to produce an awareness of the different kinds of techniques that bring power and media together to create politically useful identities. Required weekly screenings. Open to first-years, sophomores, and Film and Media Studies majors; others by consent of instructor.

230 Science Fiction & Society**Spring****Elseewi****4 credits**

Although long-derided as genre fiction, pulp, or simple entertainment, analyzing science fiction film and television can yield important clues about shared social anxieties and hopes. In this class, we will critically evaluate utopian and dystopian visual science fiction and fantasy through various lenses including: aesthetics, industrial concerns, politics, gender, and genre. We will screen various examples of science fiction and fantasy film and television (such as *Metropolis*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Star Wars*, *Avatar*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Lord of the Rings*) and also discuss the use of science fiction and fantasy in video games. Required weekly screenings.

250-255 Special Topics in Film and Media Studies**Fall****1-4 credits**

Topics in Film and Media Studies not generally considered in other courses offered by the department. Materials will vary from semester to semester and may cover subjects, developments, and concepts from early times to the present. Lectures, discussions, tests, papers, and/or weekly screenings. May be repeated for credit. Any current offerings follow.

255 ST: Introduction to Comics Studies: Women in Comics**Fall****Nijdam****4 credits**

This course will introduce students to the principles of comics studies through the examination of women as creators of and subjects in contemporary comics and graphic novels. After learning the vocabulary and skills of visual analysis required for reading comics, the course will move through units on gender, race, politics, and disability, supplementing texts with comics theory and secondary literature to critically examine the representation and thematization of women. Texts will likely include Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home*, Kelly Sue DeConnick and Valentine De Landro’s *Bitch Planet*, *Lumberjanes*, G. Willow Wilson’s *Ms. Marvel*, Marjorie M. Liu and Sana Takeda’s *Monstress* and Emil Ferris’s *My Favorite Thing Is Monsters*. Coursework will include weekly readings, online responses, class lectures and discussion, a research paper, an oral presentation and a comic book project. No artistic skills are required, but creativity will be encouraged. May be taken for credit toward the Gender Studies major or the Art History and Visual Cultural Studies major. Distribution area: humanities.

260 Introduction to Filmmaking**Fall****Sickels****4 credits**

This course introduces the fundamentals of the visual language and narrative structures of film. Students will collaboratively make their own short films. Extensive lab time required. Open to Film and Media Studies majors; open to other students with consent of instructor. *Prerequisite:* Film and Media Studies 160 or consent of instructor.

307 Mediating Religions**Not offered 2018-19****4 credits**

This course will engage with philosophy, religious studies, phenomenological theory, post-colonial and cultural studies scholarship in order to critically analyze mediated religion and other parts of social life on a global scale. We will consider the many meanings of mediation, from the larger social level of mass communication to the individual level of the body, in which larger beliefs are individually mediated through ritual and performance. Themes that may receive attention include: the use of electronic fatwas in modern Muslim societies; the rise of American televangelism; the global and local markets for religious cultural products; the representation of religious identities—particularly the rise of Islamophobia—in media; and the prominence of fundamentalist and nationalist religious politics across the globe. Lectures, discussions, and tests. May be elected as Religion 307. When Film and Media Studies 307 is not offered, Religion 307 may be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major. May be taken for credit toward the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major.

320 The Magnificent Andersons: The Cinema of Wes and P.T. Anderson**Spring****Sickels****4 credits**

Writer/directors Wes and P.T. Anderson both released their first feature films in 1996. Since that time, they've continued to make deeply personal, highly influential films. They are both meticulous craftspeople, instantly stylistically recognizable, not particularly prolific, and in many ways working increasingly on the margins of mainstream cinema. How, or is, their work reflective of its time? What does it have to tell us about the contemporary moments in which it has been made? How has it evolved over time to reflect broader cultural changes? Or has it? Why does one Anderson's work appeal to an international audience while comparatively the other's does not? Why has their work, which itself has been heavily influenced by earlier filmmakers, been so influential on their contemporaries (Greta Gerwig, Sofia Coppola, Noah Baumbach, etc.)? In this class we will grapple with these questions and others through various lenses including: aesthetics, industrial concerns, auteurism, politics, gender, class, representation, and genre. The class combines lectures, discussion, presentations, and writing assignments. Required weekly screenings.

330 Media, Politics, & Power**Not offered 2018-19****4 credits**

This class will explore the complex, interdependent relationships between media and politics in the articulation of power. Not taking any of our terms for granted, we will question what is meant by politics, how different forms of power are articulated openly or discreetly in public life, and how different forms of media enter the process in different ways. While the bulk of our focus will be on media, power, and politics in the United States, we will also question the tensions between media and power globally by studying patterns of media distribution and military, economic, and political power. Along the way, we shall come into critical acquaintance with the public sphere theories, which have their origin in the work of Jurgen Habermas, cultural identity and representation as expressed by Stuart Hall, and discipline, governmentality, and subjectivity as expressed by Michel Foucault, and the political economic theories of Karl Marx. Required weekly screenings. May be taken for credit toward the Politics major or minor or Rhetoric Studies major or minor.

340 Globalization, Culture, & Media**Fall****Elsewi****4 credits**

This class will examine transnational media (including television, film, electronic networks, and mobile telephony) from aesthetic, economic, political, and critical theoretical perspectives. We will look at the role that media narratives play in enculturating viewers within and across physical, cultural, and linguistic borders. With an eye

towards avoiding simplistic binaries such as East/West, Global/Local, or Good/Bad, we will explore the complex and contradictory impulses of global culture and globalization from multiple theoretical perspectives and academic disciplines drawing on cinema studies, postcolonial theory, literary theory, anthropology, political theory, cultural geography, and cultural studies. Required weekly screenings.

345 The Middle East in Cinema & Media

Fall

Elseewi

4 credits

This course examines visual texts (primarily film and television) in which the Middle East is represented and represents itself. This class is concerned with how the “Middle East” is represented in the West and also with how the region represents itself in film and media. We will look at issues of representation; religion; nationalism; gender; and ethnic identities. In addition to critically, aesthetically, and culturally analyzing films from the Arab, Persian, Turkish, and Hebraic Middle East, we will also look at the role of media in articulating politics and identity. We will focus on Middle Eastern auteurs and the political economies of the culture industries that frame their work. Along the way, we will be guided by cultural studies and post-colonial theorists. Required weekly screening. May be taken for credit toward the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major or Race and Ethnic Studies major.

360 Advanced Film Making

Spring

Sickels

4 credits

In this intensive workshop course, students will produce documentary films.. Extensive lab time required. May be repeated for credit as space allows. *Prerequisites:* Film and Media Studies 160 and 260, or consent of instructor. Priority given to Film and Media Studies majors.

365-370 Special Topics: Studies in Film & Media Studies

1-4 credits

Topics in Film and Media Studies not generally considered in other courses offered by the department. Materials will vary from semester to semester and may cover subjects, developments, and concepts ranging from early times to the present. Lectures, discussions, tests, papers and/or weekly screenings. May be repeated for credit. Any current offerings follow.

365 ST: The Sunken Place: Racism, Black Aesthetics, and Violence in American Film **Not offered 2018-19**

4 credits

In interviews after the release of Jordan Peele’s 2017 Oscar nominated film *Get Out*, he posited that the horrifying “sunken place” in the film may stand in for “an entire system that silences women, minorities, and others; it is a perpetual place of slumber regarding systemic injustice and oppression with regard to race, gender, and difference.” This course will examine the notion of the sunken place to further confront racism and examine black aesthetics in American cinema. From one of the first major Hollywood films, *Birth of a Nation* (1915) to the more recent commercial and awards successes of films like *Moonlight* (2016) and *Get Out*, we will engage critically with the ways in which film has contributed to the discourse around black identities in the US. We will study how dominant representations of blackness and racism have been created and circulated on film and how they intersect with questions of gender and class. We will explore how phenomena such as slavery, colonialism, immigration, housing, and incarceration have affected racism in America and discuss how a variety of representations in film are connected to various forms of injustice and marginalization. Alongside the films, we will pursue readings from W.E.B. DuBois, Octavia Butler, Kai Ashante Wilson, and other fiction writers, theorists, and film and rhetoric scholars. Projects will include fifteen film screenings, five short papers, one cinema response essay, and other discussion based presentation assignments. May be elected as Rhetoric Studies 303. May be taken for credit toward the Race and Ethnic Studies major. Distribution area: humanities.

367 ST: Panelled Pasts: The Representation of History in Comics

Spring

Nijdam

4 credits

This course examines the representation of various historical periods through their presentation in comic books and graphic novels. Looking at comics journalism, graphic autobiography, graphic historiography and fictional comics

on historical subjects, students will consider the impact, function, and critical interventions of comics engaging history. Texts will be supplemented by secondary literature to facilitate class discussion. The historical periods covered will likely include the Holocaust, the Cold War, conflicts in the Middle East, and the American civil rights movement. Coursework will include weekly readings accompanied by an online response, class lectures and discussion, a research paper, an oral presentation and a comic book project. No artistic skills are required, but creativity will be encouraged. May be elected as German Studies 300. Distribution area: humanities.

372 “Mean Streets and Raging Bulls”: The Silver Age of Cinema

Not offered 2018-19

4 credits

In tracing film history from the demise of the studio, students in this course will study the all too brief era known as the American cinema’s “silver age,” during which maverick film school directors made deeply personal and remarkably influential films. Texts will likely include works by Coppola, DePalma, Friedkin, Altman, Allen, Polanski, Bogdanovich, Kubrick, Malick, and Scorsese. Lectures, discussions, a big research paper, an oral presentation, and weekly film screenings.

373 “The Genius of the System”: The Golden Age of Cinema

Not offered 2018-19

4 credits

In tracing film history from its late nineteenth century beginnings to the 1950s, students in this course will study the era known as the American cinema’s “golden age,” during which the Hollywood Studio System dictated virtually all aspects of filmmaking. Texts will likely include works by Ford, Hitchcock, Curtiz, Hawks, Capra, Sturges, and others. Lectures, discussions, papers, and weekly film screenings.

387 Film & Media Studies Theory

Fall

Elsewi

4 credits

Using a variety of critical theories, this course focuses on the analysis of film and various other media forms. Students give presentations and write papers utilizing these various perspectives. The goal is for students to become more conversant in the many ways they can assess the significant influence media has in our lives. Open to Film and Media Studies majors; open to other students with consent of instructor.

401, 402 Independent Study

Fall, Spring

Elsewi, Sickels

1-4 credits

Studies of film and media issues including directed readings and/or approved projects. The student is expected to submit a written proposal to the instructor prior to registration for the course. *Prerequisite:* consent of instructor.

498 Honors Thesis

Spring

Elsewi

4 credits

Research and writing of a senior honors thesis. Open only to and required of senior honors candidates in Film and Media Studies. *Prerequisite:* admission to honors candidacy.