

Course Last Updated 9/19/2024



Australian Cinema: Representation and Learning

Section I: Course Overview

Course Code: FLM211

Subject Area(s): Film Studies, Cultural Studies

Prerequisites: One 200-level course or two 100-level courses in Film Studies, Cultural Studies, or another relevant subject area

Language of Instruction: English

Total Contact Hours: 45

Credits: 3

Course Fees: None

Course Description

This course examines the rich history of Australian cinema and its attempt to describe a uniquely Australian identity. The course thus has two interrelated points of inquiry. First, we will attempt to appreciate the historical context of Australian cinema – from modes of production to aesthetics to distribution. Second, the course will investigate the notion of an Australian identity as it is expressed in some of the most significant films in the Australian tradition. Students will look at Australian genre cinema, the 70s Renaissance and recent transformations in the Australian film industry. The course will focus specifically on the theme of national identity and the growing debates around what constitutes a national cinema. Indeed, a question to be explored is the extent to which Australian films have reflected or determined Australian values. Comparisons with appropriate U.S. values and films are encouraged.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students are able to:

- Interpret Australian contemporary cinema within its cultural context.

- Explain how film conveys important issues of personal and collective, or national identity,
- Classify films according to their expression of social, political and aesthetic values,
- Analyse films' relation to the generic context in which they were produced

Section II: Instructor & Course Details

Instructor Details

Name: TBC

Contact Information: TBC

Term: TBC

Course Day and Time: TBC

Office Hours: TBC

Grading & Assessment

The instructor assesses students' mastery of course learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted toward the final grade. The Assessment Overview section provides further details for each.

Engagement – 20%

Prepare an Australian Film Class – 10%

Deliver an Australian Film Class – 30%

Midterm Exam – 15%

Final Exam – 25%

Assessment Overview

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Forms of assessment may be slightly modified in the term syllabus.

Engagement (20%): Students are expected to be engaged in class, to have read the CEA CAPA Engagement Policy, and to understand the [Class Engagement Rubric](#) that outlines how engagement is graded.

Prepare an Australian Film Class (10%): This will be PowerPoint or equivalent visual accompaniment to the live presentation. Alternatively, students may present their work as a 'video essay' compressed to 10 minutes maximum, which you may screen in class. Presentations may also include appropriate handouts, including projected homework assignments. Materials must be uploaded to Canvas. Students must upload their notes, and/or PowerPoints, and/or video essays within three days after the completion of this presentation.

Deliver an Australian Film Class (30%): Students will do a live presentation using the PowerPoint or video essay. They must present a critical analysis of either the film designated to be watched that week by all the students prior to attending class or an associated film. For those presenting on the later, lists of suggestions are provided in the Weekly Schedule which coincide in some way with the main film of that particular week. While presenting, students should keep their summary of the film's story brief. This assignment should primarily be a critical analysis. It should have a coherent and developed argument regarding the film and its negotiation of Australian national identity (or lack thereof).

Midterm Exam (15%): The mid-term exam consists of multiple-choice quiz (and possibly short questions with open answers) on topics covered until that point in class.

Final Exam (25%): The final exam consists of a series of questions to be answered in short essay style responses on themes and topics covered throughout the course. Exam questions can be downloaded on the day from Modules Seminar 12.

Active Learning

Experiential learning is an essential component of education abroad, and participation in field studies is a required part of coursework. In this course, students explore the city in which they are studying using a variety of methods. This provides the opportunity to gain nuance and perspective on the host context and course content, as well as to collect information and resources for assigned papers, projects, and presentations. This course offers:

- Cinema visit and viewing

Readings and Resources

The below readings and resources are representative of what will be assigned as required in this course, but may vary slightly in the term syllabus.

All students are given access to the online library of the University of New Haven (UNH), accessible [here](#), and are expected to comply with [UNH Policies](#) regarding library usage.

Wherever possible, required readings are made accessible through the online library or Canvas. Students are responsible for obtaining all required readings.

Each course utilizes Canvas as its LMS. Students are expected to check Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines. Canvas is also the primary platform for contacting your instructor in case of questions or concerns about the course.

Required

*All available on Canvas/in class.

Readings:

Ambler, Hilton. "Lost and Found: Looking Back at *Wake in Fright*." *Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine*, Vol. 126, (2009): 126-128.

Debruge, Peter, "'Sequin in a Blue Room' Review": A Striking, Highly Stylized Plunge Into 21st-Century Gay Hookup Culture", *Variety* (May 2021).

Haltorf, Marek. "Chapter 1: Peter Weir and the Australian New Wave Cinema." *Peter Weir: When Cultures Collide*. Twayne, 1996.

Haltorf, Marek. "Gallipoli, Mateship, and the Construction of Australian National Identity." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. Vol 21, No. 1 (1993): 27-36.

Huggan, Graeme. "Cultural Memory in Postcolonial Fiction: The Uses and Abuses of Ned Kelly." *Australian Literary Studies*. Vol. 20, No. 3, (2002): 132-145.

Martin, Adrian, "Film Review: Bloodshot Heart is Giallo all the Way, *Screenhub* (July, 2020).

Moran, Albert and O'Regan, Tom. *The Australian Screen*. Penguin, 1990.

Rattigan, Neil. *Images of Australian Cinema*. Southern Methodist University Press, 1991.

Rayner, Jonathan. "Chapter 2: Picnic at Hanging Rock." *The Films of Peter Weir*. Continuum, 2003.

Rustin, Emily. "Romance and Sensation in the 'Glitter' Cycle." *Australian Cinema in the 1990s*. Edited by Ian Craven. Routledge, 2000, pp. 133-148.

Turner, Graeme. "Whatever Happened to National Identity?: Film and the nation in the 1990s." *Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine*, Vol. 100 (1994): 32-35.

The Drover's Wife. Directed by Leah Purcell. Roadshow Films, 2021.

Films:

Bad Boy Bubby. Directed by Rolf de Heer. Umbrella Entertainment, 1993.

Bloodshot Heart. Directed by Parish Malfitano, 2020.

Breaker Morant. Directed by Bruce Beresford, The Australian Film Commission, 1980.

Gallipoli. Directed by Peter Weir. The Australian Film Commission, 1981.

Lantana. Directed by Ray Lawrence, Intersonic, 2001.

My Brilliant Career. Directed by Gillian Armstrong. GUO Film Distributors, 1979.

Mystery Road. Directed Ivan Sen. Mystery Road Films, 2013.

Ned Kelly. Directed by Gregor Jordan. Universal Pictures, 2003.

Picnic at Hanging Rock. Directed by Peter Weir. Atlantic Entertainment Group, 1975.

Priscilla, Queen of the Desert. Directed by Stephan Elliot. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1994.

Proof. Directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse. The Australian Film Commission, 1991.

Rabbit-Proof Fence. Directed by Phillip Noyce, Miramax, 2002.

Sequin in a Blue Dress. Directed by Samuel Van Grinsven, 2019.

Strictly Ballroom. Directed by Baz Luhrmann. Miramax, 1992.

Ten Canoes. Directed by Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr. Fandango Australia, 2006.

The Piano. Directed by Jane Campion. Miramax, 1993.

The Sapphires. Directed by Wayne Blair. Entertainment One and Hopscotch Films, 2012.

Wake in Fright. Directed by Ted Kotcheff. United Artists, 1971.

Walkabout. Directed by Nicholas Roeg. Twentieth Century Studios, 1971.

Course Calendar

Session 1	
Topics	Cinema and National Identity; Visions of Australia, Historical and Contemporary Archetypes and Themes

	What accounts for a National Cinema? How might one nation's cinema differ from that of others? For example, consider the differences between Hollywood and the Australian film industry. What key phases define the overall shape of Australian film history? What are the historical and contemporary archetypes and themes of Australian film stories?
Activity	View Week 1 films: <i>Rabbit Proof Fence</i> (Phil Noyce, 2002) <i>Lantana</i> (Ray Lawrence, 2001) Class: Introduction to course themes and expectations, including designating time and topics for student assessments. Lecture and group discussion on key topics with viewing of selected film clips from early pioneers.
Readings & Assignments	Required Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moran, Albert and O'Regan, Tom. "Introduction." <i>The Australian Screen</i>. Penguin, London. 1990. (viii-xvi.)

Session 2	
Topics	Australia Seen from The Outside; Imprisonment: Metaphors of Identity How is Australia seen in films initiated from outside the country such as <i>Wake in Fright</i> , <i>On the Beach</i> , <i>Walkabout</i> , and <i>They're a Weird Mob</i> ? <i>Wake in Fright</i> offers a broad critique of a number of official and unofficial cultural traditions of Australia. Consider, for instance, <i>Wake in Fright's</i> framing of mateship. At the same time, the film can be seen as a quintessential example of the type of narrative pattern described by Graeme Turner in <i>National Fictions</i> , where the metaphor of imprisonment plays a central defining role.
Activity	View Week 2 films: <i>Wake in Fright</i> (Ted Kotcheff, 1971) <i>Walkabout</i> (Nicholas Roeg, 1971) Class Students to present on films of the week.
Readings & Assignments	Required Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambler, Hilton. "Lost and Found: Looking Back at <i>Wake in Fright</i>." <i>Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine</i>, Vol. 126, (2009): 126-128. Class: Students to present films of the week.

Session 3	
Topics	New Waves and New Identities: The Australian Renaissance

	<p>Peter Weir's <i>Picnic at Hanging Rock</i> is often considered the seminal Australian New Wave film. Offer a brief explanation of cinematic new waves. As cinema, <i>Picnic at Hanging Rock</i> is radically "new", challenging the expectations of its audience. But its newness stems also from its depiction of a contemporary Australian identity. Weir uses the period setting to reconfigure the Australian landscape. Hanging Rock is thus a place of mystery and desire, and is Weir's metaphor of Australia itself. If <i>Picnic at Hanging Rock</i> is a mystery, what is Weir's resolution to the story?</p>
Activity	<p>View Week 3 films: <i>Picnic at Hanging Rock</i> (Peter Weir, 1975) <i>My Brilliant Career</i> (Gillian Armstrong, 1979)</p> <p>Class: Students to present on films of the week.</p>
Readings & Assignments	<p>Required Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rayner, Jonathan, <i>The Films of Peter Weir</i>. New York: Continuum, 2003: Chapter 2: "Picnic at Hanging Rock". • Haltof, Marek, <i>Peter Weir: When Cultures Collide</i>. New York: Twayne, 1996: Chapter 1: "Peter Weir and the Australian New Wave Cinema".

Session 4	
Topics	<p>White Australia: Australian Archetypes: The Bushranger, Fighting Back Against The System</p> <p>Australian Filmmakers have presented three responses to colonialism in Australian cinema: the first recognises colonial injustice, the second goes beyond recognition of injustice to depict revenge by the colonized against the colonizers, and the third depict reconciliation. Where do the films we have watched to date fit in this continuum?</p>
Activity	<p>View Week 4 films: <i>Ned Kelly</i> (Gregor Jordan, 2003) <i>Bad Boy Bobby</i> (Rolf de Heer, 1993)</p> <p>Class: Students to present on films of the week.</p>
Readings & Assignments	<p>Required Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huggan, Graeme. "Cultural Memory in Postcolonial Fiction: The Uses and Abuses of Ned Kelly." <i>Australian Literary Studies</i>. Vol. 20, No. 3, (2002): 132-145.

Session 5	
Topics	White Male-Dominated History Films; Heroism, War and Gallipoli

	Can film claim to adequately 'represent' history? Are film images compatible with the requirements of recording history? In what way does Weir's film construct a myth of Australian heroism in times of war? Is this myth Australian or part of a broader cultural context? Gallipoli is often considered one of the most poignant representations of Australian identity. In what way does the film capture the importance of myth and ritual in building a national identity?
Activity	View Week 5 films: <i>Gallipoli</i> (Peter Weir, 1981) <i>Breaker Morant</i> (Bruce Beresford, 1980) Class: Students to present on films of the week.
Readings & Assignments	Required Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haltof, Marek. "Gallipoli, Mateship, and the Construction of Australian National Identity." <i>Journal of Popular Film and Television</i>. Vol 21, No. 1 (1993): 27-36.

Session 6	
Topics	The Glitter Cycle: High Camp, Humour and Irony; Multicultural Australia Rustin describes Australian cinema of the 1990s as the "Glitter" cycle. Briefly describe Rustin's reading of this mode of film, that is at once "new" and native to a 1990s Australian sensibility, and yet reflects on traditional notions of the individual and society. Discuss the notion that <i>Strictly Ballroom</i> is essentially stylised rather than realistic. If <i>Picnic at Hanging Rock</i> and <i>Gallipoli</i> were attempts to express a New Australian cinematic sensibility in the 1970s, in what way does <i>Strictly Ballroom</i> express a different (or similar) sensibility? Weir's vision is naturalistic, evoking a period in Australia's history. <i>Strictly Ballroom</i> and <i>Priscilla: Queen of the Desert</i> are fiercely contemporary films, updating the Australian identity for a postmodern, deeply ironic generation – discuss.
Activity	View Week 6 film: <i>Strictly Ballroom</i> (Baz Luhrmann, 1992) <i>Priscilla, Queen of the Desert</i> (Stephan Elliot, 1994) Class: Midterm Exam
Readings & Assignments	Required Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rustin, Emily, "Romance and Sensation in the 'Glitter' Cycle". In Craven, Ian (ed.), <i>Australian Cinema in the 1990s</i>. London: Frank Cass: 2001: 133-148.

Session 7	
Topics	The Rise of Women Filmmakers; 'Telling Her Stories'

	With the advent of feminism in the 1970s and 1980s, women become more and more prominent in the Australian and New Zealand film industry. What points of view to these female voices bring to ideas of National Identity? How does the idea of 'telling our stories' expand from a woman's perspective? Can you find evidence of different modes as well as subjects of storytelling?
Activity	View Week 7 films: <i>The Piano</i> (Jane Campion, 1993) <i>Proof</i> (Jocelyn Moorhouse, 1991) Class: Students to present on films of the week.
Readings & Assignments	None

Session 8	
Topics	Cinema visit

Session 9	
Topics	Contemporary Low-Budget Filmmaking: Arthouse and Indie Voices Recent graduates of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School make acclaimed low-budget art house feature film debuts. What is an Australian arthouse film – or are all Australian films (by comparison with Hollywood), a kind of arthouse? What do these explorations of toxic masculinity and queerness of these two works add to the tropes of Australian film? How do their aesthetic and stylistic references broaden a portrait of Australian National Identity and its cultural frame of reference?
Activity	View Week 8 films: <i>Bloodshot Heart</i> (Parish Malfitano, 2020) <i>Sequin in a Blue Dress</i> (Samuel Van Grinsven, 2019) Class: Students to present on films of the week.
Readings & Assignments	Required Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin, Adrian, "Film Review: Bloodshot Heart is Giallo all the Way, <i>Screenhub</i> (July, 2020). • Debruge, Peter, "'Sequin in a Blue Room' Review": A Striking, Highly Stylized Plunge Into 21st-Century Gay Hookup Culture", <i>Variety</i> (May 2021)

Session 10	
Topics	Indigenous Storytelling: Before Settlement - The Dreamtime

	Ten Canoes is the first Australian film made entirely in an indigenous language. What are the effects of this and why do you think De Heer chose to make the film this way? Are its modes of storytelling similar to or different from other Australian films you've seen to date? What is it saying about the notion of Australian national identity?
Activity	View Week 9 films: <i>Ten Canoes</i> (Rolf de Heer, 2006) Class: Students will present on films of the week.
Readings & Assignments	Required Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Introduction" <i>Images of Australian Cinema</i>. Neil Rattigan. SMU Press. Dallas, 1991.

Session 11	
Topics	Indigenous Storytelling: National and Global Cinemas – Embracing Genre and Reaching to A Wider Audience How does <i>Mystery Road</i> draw on international genre tropes to draw its audience into a truly Australian story? What distinguishes <i>The Sapphires</i> as an Australian film? In what way does it continue the tradition developed in Australian film over several decades? It is at once distinctive in its 'Australianness', yet is obviously indebted to stylistic trends of global cinema. As such, the film offers an articulation of what it means to be Australian in the new millennium. Discuss.
Activity	View Week 11 films: <i>Mystery Road</i> (2013) <i>The Sapphires</i> (2012) Class: Students to present on films of the week.
Readings & Assignments	Required Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turner, Graeme. "Whatever Happened to National Identity?: Film and the nation in the 1990s." <i>Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine</i>, Vol. 100 (1994): 32–35.

Session 12	
Topics	White Woman Filmmaker lift the veils of Colonial History; Black Woman Filmmaker reimagines Colonial History How does <i>The Drover's Wife</i> reimagine a classic Australian settler story through an Indigenous lens and a female gaze?

Activity	View Week 11 films: <i>The Drover's Wife</i> (2021) Class: Students to present on films of the week.
Readings & Assignments	None

Session 13
Field Study – Cinema Visit (Film and time TBC)

Session 14
Final Exam Review

Session 15
Final Exam

Section III: Academic Policies and Standards

Academic Policies

Students are expected to review and understand all CEA CAPA student policies, including our [Academic Policies](#) and [Engagement Policy](#). CEA CAPA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time. Additional requirements that may be associated with a specific course or program are addressed in the term syllabus.

Student Learning & Development Objectives

CEA CAPA has identified [Student Learning and Development Objectives \(SLDOs\)](#) for all programs in all locations: content in context, navigating differences, power and equity, critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, career and professional development, and sustainability and migration. These are meta-level learning objectives that transcend coursework and are infused across all elements of program delivery, beyond specifics of course offerings, addressing student learning holistically and framing it a larger learning context.