

Course Last Updated 3/27/2024



Contemporary British Film

Section I: Course Overview

Course Code: FLM311

Subject Area(s): Film Studies

Prerequisites: None

Language of Instruction: English

Total Contact Hours: 45

Credits: 3

Course Fees: N/A

Course Description

The course looks at key British films from the 1990s to the present. Through the critical study of key films, the course examines the way that these films both emerge from and transform the earlier British cinema tradition and provide accounts of key British genres and film-making tropes. By taking examples from British cinema, the course also introduces the language and process of film criticism and think about what can be learned or gained from looking at films.

Readings focus on the critical reception of British films and the manner in which they have been absorbed into the canon and, in the case of more recent films that have not yet established a place in the critical literature, survey reviews and reception. There is also a particular focus on the political and social context of the films.

Learning Objectives

- Deconstruct the particularities of modern British film and recent developments in British cinema.
- Analyse film in terms of both filmic content and social context
- Develop an enhanced set of analytical skills for the interpretation of moving images
- Sharpen the ability to view the formal, visual and narrative aspect of a film critically and imaginatively.

Section II: Instructor & Course Details

Instructor Details

Name: TBC

Contact Information: TBC

Term: TBC

Course Day and Time: TBC

Office Hours: By appointment

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%

Oral Presentation - 20%

Mid-term paper - 30%

Final Paper - 30%

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.

Oral Presentation (20%): Students are required to make one 5-10 minute oral presentation to the class, which counts towards 20% of their grade. This should be a presentation on a contemporary British film of their choice, which is not included in the syllabus. The presentation should include visual slides with information about the film, and a short clip of a scene from the film with analysis of the scene. Students will be marked on the quality of the information they convey in their presentation, the quality of their analysis of the clip, and their skills in presenting and communicating to the class.

Short Paper (1000-1500 words; 30%): The first, short paper must take as its subject one of the films that the class has watched. Students may focus on any aspect of the film that interests them and must discuss it critically. They may focus on cinematography, character development, plot, direction, acting, even a single shot, or single frame. Students are encouraged to think openly, and papers are marked according to the quality of ideas regarding the chosen subject, clarity and detail of observation, and coherence of critical analysis. Students are given detailed written feedback on this paper with their mark. The paper is an exercise in independent film analysis, without a strictly academic requirement for references, and it is intended to allow students who may not have written critically about film an open space in which to explore ways of thinking and writing about the subject. References are not required, nor are they proscribed: in this paper students are

encouraged to think independently and write an analysis without limiting their imaginative engagement with the film.

Long Paper (2500 words, 30%): The longer paper is also an open assignment, and students are encouraged to select their own subjects. They may select any area of the general subject – modern British film – that is of interest to them. It is recommended that they use films viewed in class as a starting point. However, they are encouraged to include British films outside the syllabus in their analysis, and to show the range of their knowledge of contemporary British film. In this paper students are also encouraged to go beyond the restricted remit of the first paper and to think more generally – they may, for instance, examine the work of a director or cinematographer across several films; compare films on similar subjects or with similar themes; present a close or comparative analysis of formal or thematic features in a given film or films; and so on.

THIS PAPER REQUIRES EVIDENCE OF INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC REFERENCING. Students are strongly recommended to use the Reuben Library at the BFI Southbank.

NB: IF STUDENTS WOULD PREFER SET QUESTIONS TO OPEN ASSIGNMENTS, QUESTIONS CAN BE PROVIDED ON REQUEST.

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.

- **Visit to Cinema Museum**

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 Readings

Aitkenhead, D. (2014). Steve McQueen: My hidden shame. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/jan/04/steve-mcqueen-my-painful-childhood-shame>

Bradshaw, P. (2002). 28 days later. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/nov/01/artsfeatures7>

Bradshaw, P. (2011). Tinker, Tailor, soldier, Spy Review – Brilliant Study of the 1970s Spy Game. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/sep/15/tinker-tailor-soldier-spy-film-review>

Bradshaw, P. (2019). The Souvenir Review – sumptuous class study puts Joanna Hogg in the limelight. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/aug/29/the-souvenir-review-joanna-hogg>

Bradshaw, P. (2021). In the Earth Review – Ben Wheatley’s trippy occult horror is a fine return to form. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/jun/16/in-the-earth-review-ben-wheatley>

Catsoulis, J. (2011). A playwright’s legacy, kindled by addiction and neglect. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/27/movies/the-arbor-a-biopic-of-andrea-dunbar-review.html>

French, P. (2003). Survivors on a ridge too far. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2003/dec/14/philipfrench>

Hutchinson, P. (2016). Film of the week: I, Daniel Blake: Sight & sound. Retrieved from <https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/reviews-recommendations/film-week-i-daniel-blake>

Kermode, M. (2016). I, Daniel Blake Review – a battle cry for the dispossessed. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/oct/23/i-daniel-blake-ken-loach-review-mark-kermode>

Kermode, M. (2019). Bait review – one of the defining British films of the Decade. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/sep/01/bait-review-mark-jenkin-cornish-fishing-village>

Lane, A. (2018a). “The death of stalin” dares to make evil funny. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/19/the-death-of-stalin-dares-to-make-evil-funny>

Lane, A. (2018b). “The death of stalin” dares to make evil funny. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/19/the-death-of-stalin-dares-to-make-evil-funny>

Leigh, D. (2014). Under the skin: Why did this chilling masterpiece take a decade? Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/mar/06/under-the-skin-director-jonathan-glazer-scarlett-johansson>

Mitchell, E. (2013). Steve McQueen. Retrieved from <http://www.interviewmagazine.com/film/steve-mcqueen-1/#page2>

Murphy, M. (2014). A road movie, but with no rest stops . Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/27/movies/locke-with-tom-hardy-is-a-minimalist-vehicle.html>

Romney, J. (2014). Locke Review – “bold and evocative.” Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/apr/20/locke-tom-hardy-review>

Shambu, G. (2018). I, Daniel Blake: An authentic cinema. Retrieved from <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/5277-i-daniel-blake-an-authentic-cinema>

Williams, L. (2023). Escape artist: Lynne Ramsay’s Morvern Callar. Retrieved from <https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound/features/escape-artist-lynne-ramsays-morvern-callar>

Course Calendar

Session 1	
Topics	‘I, DANIEL BLAKE’ (2016)

Activity	<p>Introduction to the syllabus, including dates and expectations for assignments.</p> <p>Discussion of key terminology and approaches for film analysis</p> <p>Overview of British film history and introduction to British realism</p> <p>Introduction to 'I, Daniel Blake' (1996) and the work of Ken Loach.</p> <p>Class to watch 'I, Daniel Blake'.</p> <p>Discussion of key scenes, cinematography, and context of the film.</p>
Readings and Assignments	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Mark Kermode, The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/oct/23/i-daniel-blake-ken-loach-review-mark-kermode</p> <p>Girish Shambu, 'I, Daniel Blake: An Authentic Cinema', https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/5277-i-daniel-blake-an-authentic-cinema</p> <p>Pamela Hutchinson, 'Film of the Week: I, Daniel Blake', https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/reviews-recommendations/film-week-i-daniel-blake</p> <p>Assignments:</p> <p>Students are expected to attend class having digested the readings and researched information about the film and the director in advance.</p> <p>Each student is required to make a presentation to the class during the course, on a contemporary British film of their choice. These presentations should be 5 minutes, including showing a short clip from the film alongside original research and analysis of the film's cinematic techniques and key themes.</p> <p>Start to think about your presentation – select your film and choose a lesson you would like to make your presentation and communicate them to me via my email.</p>

Session 2	
Topics	'TOUCHING THE VOID' (KEVIN MACDONALD, 2003)
Activity	<p>*First student presentation to the class</p> <p>Introduction to British documentary and context of the production of Touching the Void.</p> <p>Class to watch 'Touching the Void' (2003)</p> <p>Class discussion of key themes, visual tropes, and cinematography of the film</p>
Readings and Assignments	Readings:

	<p>French, Philip, review, The Observer, available at http://www.theguardian.com/film/2003/dec/14/philipfrench</p> <p>Assignments: Students are expected to attend class having digested the readings and researched information about the film and the director in advance.</p> <p>Students to continue preparing for their presentations and begin thinking about their first assignment (due March 1st)</p>
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Session 3	
Topics	LOCKE (STEVEN KNIGHT, 2013)
Activity	<p>Student presentation to the class. Introduction to 'Locke' and the work of Steven Knight. Overview of the interrelationship between British television and contemporary film production. Class to watch 'Locke' (2013) Discussion of key themes in Locke, characterization, use of cinematography and narrative devises.</p>
Readings and Assignments	<p>Readings: Mekado Murphy, 'A road movie, but with no rest stops' http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/27/movies/locke-with-tom-hardy-is-a-minimalist-vehicle.html</p> <p>Jonathan Romney, review, The Guardian http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/apr/20/locke-tom-hardy-review</p> <p>Assignments: Students are expected to attend class having digested the readings and researched information about the film and the director in advance.</p> <p>Students should be preparing their presentations as well as beginning to work on their first short paper assignment, due March 1st</p>

Session 4	
Topics	TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE (STEVE MCQUEEN, 2013)
Activity	<p>Student presentation to the class.</p> <p>Introduction to 'Twelve Years a Slave', it's context and critical reception. Overview of the Steve McQueen's career, and the connection between British film and the development of Channel 4 and the 'YBAs' (young British artists)</p> <p>Class to watch 'Twelve Years a Slave' (2013)</p> <p>Discussion of key themes in the film, cinematography and locations, as well as the context of the films production and it's 'place' as a British film.</p>
Readings and Assignments	Readings:

	<p>There is a huge amount of review and interview literature online about this film. Students are advised to browse widely but critically. Reading Solomon Northup's original text of the same title is also suggested for those wishing to write about this movie.</p> <p>Interview with Steve McQueen Interview magazine: http://www.interviewmagazine.com/film/steve-mcqueen-1/#page2</p> <p>Interview with Steve McQueen, The Guardian, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/jan/04/steve-mcqueen-my-painful-childhood-shame</p> <p>Assignments: Students should be preparing their presentations as well as beginning to work on their first assignment.</p>
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Session 5	
Topics	UNDER THE SKIN (JONATHAN GLAZER, 2013)
Activity	<p>Student presentation to the class.</p> <p>Introduction to 'Under the Skin', it's production and reception, as well as the work of Jonathan Glazer.</p> <p>Class to watch 'Under the Skin' (2013).</p> <p>Discussion of key themes in the film, the concept of the femme fatale / the automaton, the original source material of Michael Frayn's novel and Glazer's decisions in restaging the film in Scotland.</p>
Readings and Assignments	<p>Readings: Guardian interview with Jonathan Glazer http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/mar/06/under-the-skin-director-jonathan-glazer-scarlett-johansson</p> <p>Assignments: *Deadline for midterm essay due March 1st*</p>

Session 6	
Topics	MORVERN CALLAR (2002)
Activity	<p>Student presentations to the class.</p> <p>Introduction to the work of Lynn Ramsey</p> <p>Class to watch 'Morvern Callar' (2002)</p> <p>Discussion of key themes and cinematography, and the central female protagonist.</p>
Readings and Assignments	<p>Readings: Linda Ruth Williams, 'Escape Artist: Lynn Ramsey's Morvern Callar', https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound/features/escape-artist-lynne-ramsays-morvern-callar</p> <p>Assignments:</p>

	Remember, the deadline to submit your midterm essay through Canvas is Friday, March 1st.
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Session 7	
Topics	Midterm Break

Session 8	
Topics	TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY (TOMAS ALFREDSON, 2011)
Activity	<p>Student presentations to the class.</p> <p>Introduction to the film, the context of the 'spy' movie in British film history and John Le Carre.</p> <p>Class to watch 'Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy' (2011)</p> <p>Discussion of the narrative structure of the film, themes of secrecy and drama, and visual tropes of the spy genre.</p>
Readings and Assignments	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Bradshaw, Peter, review, The Guardian, available at http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/sep/15/tinker-tailor-soldier-spy-film-review</p> <p>Assignments:</p> <p>Students should start thinking about their final essay, due April 26th</p>

Session 9	
Topics	28 DAYS LATER (DANNY BOYLE, 2002)
Activity	<p>Student presentations to the class.</p> <p>Overview of '28 Days Later', and the filmography of Danny Boyle.</p> <p>Class to watch '28 Days Later' (2002)</p> <p>Discussion of the theme of post-apocalypse and the metaphor of contagious disease, readings of the film as a metaphor for late-stage Capitalism, and the significance of the black female heroine.</p>
Readings and Assignments	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Review, Peter Bradshaw (Guardian, 2002)</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/nov/01/artsfeatures7</p>

Session 10	
Topics	THE DEATH OF STALIN (ARMANDO IANNUCCI, 2017)
Activity	<p>Student presentations to the class.</p> <p>Overview of the production of 'The Death of Stalin' and the film and television productions of Armando Iannucci.</p> <p>Class to watch 'The Death of Stalin' (2017)</p> <p>Discussion of political satire and comedy, use of set design, narrative structure, and music.</p>
Readings and Assignments	<p>Readings:</p> <p>Lane, Anthony, 'The Death of Stalin' Dares to Make Evil Funny', The New Yorker, available at: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/19/the-death-of-stalin-dares-to-make-evil-funny</p>

	<p>Assignments: Students should be writing their final essay, due on April 26th. This essay should be 2500w including academic referencing. Please contact me if you have any issues accessing research sources or have questions about the assignment.</p>
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Session 11	
Topics	BAIT (MARK JENKIN, 2019)
Activity	<p>Students to make individual presentations to the class.</p> <p>Introduction to the films of Mark Jenkin and the history of 16mm film production.</p> <p>Class to watch 'Bait' (2019)</p> <p>Discussion of key themes in the film around gentrification, class and tourism. Discussion of the aesthetics of the film, its narrative construction, and use of sound.</p>
Readings and Assignments	<p>Readings: Mark Kermode, Review, The Guardian, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/sep/01/bait-review-mark-jenkin-cornish-fishing-village</p> <p>Assignments: If possible, students should go to the cinema to see Mark Jenkin's latest film 'Enys Men' (2023).</p> <p>Students should be writing their final essay, due April 26th. This essay should be 2500w including academic referencing. Please contact me if you have any issues accessing research sources or have questions about the assignment.</p>

Session 12	
Topics	IN THE EARTH (BEN WHEATLEY, 2021)
Activity	<p>Students make their presentations to the class.</p> <p>Introduction to 'In the Earth' and the films of Ben Wheatley.</p> <p>Class to watch 'In the Earth' (2021)</p> <p>Discussion of the British horror genre, black comedy and the metaphor of the woods.</p>
Readings and Assignments	<p>Readings: Bradshaw, Peter, Review, The Guardian, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/jun/16/in-the-earth-review-ben-wheatley</p> <p>Assignments: Students should be writing their final essay, due April 26th. See description above. Contact me if you have any questions, or would like to request a specific area of enquiry for the essay, rather than an open assignment.</p>

Session 13	
Topics	THE SOUVENIR (JOANNA HOGG, 2019)
Activity	Final student presentation to the class. Summary of significant themes in contemporary British film, which were explored through the course. Introduction to 'The Souvenir' and the work of Joanna Hogg. Class to watch 'The Souvenir' (2019) Discussion of key themes of class, gender, memory and re-enactment.
Readings and Assignments	Readings: Bradshaw, Peter, Review, The Guardian, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/aug/29/the-souvenir-review-joanna-hogg Assignments: Deadline for your final essay is Friday, April 26th.

Session 14	
Topics	FIELD VISIT – Cinema Museum
Activity	Class visit to Cinema Museum
Readings and Assignments	Readings: None Assignments: Field Visit Reflection for class engagement

Session 15	
Topics	THE ARBOR (CLIO BARNARD, 2010)
Activity	Final student presentation to the class. Summary of significant themes in contemporary British film, which were explored through the course. Introduction to 'The Arbor' and the work of Clio Barnard Class to watch 'The Arbor' (2010) Discussion of key themes of documentary, verbatim theatre, class representation, race and region.
Readings and Assignments	Readings: Jeannette Catsoulis, New York Times, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/27/movies/the-arbor-a-biopic-of-andrea-dunbar-review.html Assignments: TURN IN YOUR LAST ASSIGNMENT through Turnitin on April 26th. A 2500word essay, including academic references. See description above.

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.