

SCAND 590
Contemporary Scandinavian Cinema

Spring 2007

<http://faculty.washington.edu/akn/scand590.htm>

Course Information

5 Credits

Room: MGH 284

Meetings: F. 1:30-4:20

Office Hours: W. 9:50- 11:20, or by appt.

Instructor

Prof. Andrew Nestingen

Raitt 305P

(o.) 543-0643 (cell) 331-6132

akn@u.washington.edu

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

SCAND 590 investigates the transformation of cinema in the Nordic countries since the 1980s. This is the latest transformation in the ebbs and flows of Nordic cinema. During cinema's silent era (1895-1927), Danish cinema rose to prominence between 1907 and 1912. Erotic melodramas produced in Denmark by Nordisk Film and others attracted huge audiences in Germany, fuelling Danish cinema's growth. Following WWI, Swedish cinema achieved international renown through directors like Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller's innovative adaptations of Swedish literature (especially Selma Lagerlöf) and epic depictions of nature. After a decline across the region in the 1920s, the 1930s to the 1950s saw cinema production become prolific. The commercial interests of the Scandinavian studios making films for domestic audiences drove production, but rising costs of production and the advent of television led to a decline of the studios during the 1950s. Going forward from the 1960s, however, the art film blossomed and a cinema of auteurs such as Ingmar Bergman, Risto Jarva, Mikko Niskanen, Klaus Rifbjerg, Oddvar Bull Tuhus, Bo Widerberg, and others came to define Scandinavian cinema. They redefined the cinema as serious, edifying, and an art. But in the 1980s, the art film's appeal to audiences diminished, causing another ebb in Nordic cinema. Another ebb has followed since the 1980s, but its identity is plural and complicated to ascertain—if an identity can be said to exist at all. We find all of the elements of Nordic film history in coexistence. Lars von Trier's erotic melodramas *Breaking the Waves* (1994) and *Idioterne* (*The Idiots*, 1998) brought him international prominence. The epic depiction of nature is evident in films as diverse as Nils Gaup's *Ofelas* (1987, *Pathfinder*) and Maria Blom's *Masjävlar* (2004, *Dalecarlians*). The legacy of the art film has been revised and revitalized in the work of directors such as Aki Kaurismäki and the Dogma 95 directors. How then, might we approach the diversity and vitality of Scandinavian cinema since the 1980s? Does an identity bind together cinema in the Nordic countries today? Are there distinct but similar national identities evident in the cinemas? Do similar and overlapping cultural, institutional, and commercial structures tie the region together? What kind of films are being made? The films and reading assigned in this research seminar seek to outline significant cultural and institutional formations in Nordic cinema; spell out some of the salient debates; and inquire about the cultural status of cinema since the 1980s in the Nordic region.

2. OBJECTIVES

By the completion of the course, students will be able to do the following things:

- a. Use a vocabulary including films, directors, and theoretical issues (auteurism, national cinema, genre, etc.) to discuss and write about Scandinavian cinema since the 1980s
- b. Distinguish between the strengths and weaknesses of various scholarly approaches (formalist, psychoanalytical, historicist, gender-studies) to recent Scandinavian cinema
- c. Develop a theoretically grounded, scholarly research project on Scandinavian cinema

3. REQUIRED TEXTS

Hjort, Mette. *Small Nation, Global Cinema: The New Danish Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005. (SNGC)

Nestingén, Andrew and Trevor Elkington ed. *Transnational Cinema in a Global North: Nordic Cinema in Transition*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005. (TCGN)

Thomsen, Claire C., ed. *Northern Constellations: New Readings in Nordic Cinema*. Norwich: Norvik Press, 2006. (NC)

Course Reader (CR) is available at the Ave. Copy Center, 4141 University Way NE.

4. GRADES AND ASSIGNMENTS

The scheme I'll use for calculating your final grade will be the following:

- Participation and contribution to seminar discussion **25%**
- 20-minute seminar presentation **25%**
 - Your presentation should elaborate a critique of one of the articles included in the reading for the day. If you choose excerpts from a book, your presentation should include all the assigned material from the book. You must send a Word file of your "presentation handout" to me by the Thursday night before class. I will post your presentation on the course Web site so other students can print it out before class.
 - Your presentation should do the following things:
 - Identify the thesis of the article/excerpt and explain its significance
 - Identify the key assumptions on which the thesis rests
 - Explain the relevance of the article to an understanding of Scandinavian contemporary cinema, drawing on other reading and films viewed as necessary. This discussion should include at least one concrete analysis of an example from the film under discussion for the Friday on which you present
 - Raise at least one question about something omitted from the article, left unexplained, or otherwise problematic.
- Final paper (15-page article draft of 12-page literature review) **50 %**

5. FILM VIEWING

You are expected to view all films before coming to class. They are available on Media Reserve in Odegaard. Many of the films are Region 2 (PAL), and so require a DVD player that is capable of playing foreign discs. Such players are available by request in the library, and also in the Scand. Dept. conference room.

Course Schedule

Week 1: What is Scandinavian Cinema?

F.	3/30	Course Introduction What is Scandinavian Cinema? View and Discuss Selected Clips
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Week 2: Legacy of The Auteur Film

F.	4/6	<p><i>Fanny och Alexander</i> (1982, S) 188 min. Ingmar Bergman. Svensk filmindustri</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pym, “At the House of the Ekdahls” (CR) • Cowie, "Bergman at home" (CR) • Widerberg, <i>Visionen i svensk film</i> (CR) • Rugg, “Globalization and the Auteur” <i>TCGN</i>, 221-242. • Nestingen and Elkington, “Introduction,” <i>TCGN</i>, 1-30 <p>Theoretical topic: The Auteur Film</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarris, “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962” (CR) • Soila, from <i>Att synliggöra det dolda</i> (CR) • Staiger, “Authorship Approaches” (CR) • Bordwell, “The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice” (CR)
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Week 3: National Cinema

F.	4/13	<p><i>Salmer fra kjøkkenet</i> (Kitchen Stories, 2003, N) 95 min. Bent Hamer. BOB Film Sweden AB; Bulbul Films; Svenska Filminstitutet (SFI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alver, “Norsk kjøkkenbenkrealisme: <i>Salmer fra kjøkkenet</i>” (CR) • Sørenssen, “I Have a Plan!” (CR) • Iversen, “Learning from Genre” <i>TCGN</i>, 261-278 • Iversen, “The Old Wave” <i>NC</i> <p>Theoretical topic: National Cinema</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (CR) • Crofts, “Reconceptualising National Cinemas” (CR) • Willemen, “The National Revisited” (CR)
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Week 4: The Heritage Film

F.	4/20	<p><i>Rukajärven tie</i> (<i>Ambush</i>, 1999, SF) 123 min. Olli Saarela. MRP Matila Röhr Productions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hietala, “Romantiikkaa ja Rukajärven häyjä” (CR) • Pantti “Art or Industry” in <i>TCGN</i>, 165-190 • Nestingen, “Nostalgias and Their Publics” (CR) • Hjort, “Tak for musikken, spillemand” (CR) <p>Theoretical Topic: Bodies For Constructing Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boym, fom <i>The Future of Nostalgia</i> (CR) • Lahti “Sylvester Stallone’s Body” (CR)
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Week 5: Intermezzo

F.	4/27	<p><i>No Class – Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies Conference, Quad Cities, IL</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elsaesser “European Cinema: Conditions of Impossibility” (CR)
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Week 6: Lars von Trier

F.	5/4	<p><i>Dancer in the Dark</i> (2000, DK) 140 min. Lars von Trier. Zentropa Entertainments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hjort, “New Danish Cinema,” <i>SNGC</i>, 1-33. • Schepelern, “Kunstens element” (CR) • Thomsen, “On the Transmigration of Images,” <i>NC</i>, <p>Theoretical Topic: Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altman, from <i>Film/Genre</i> (CR) • Williams, “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess” (CR)
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Week 7: Dogma 95

F.	5/11	<p><i>The Celebration (Festen, DK, 1998, Thomas Vinterberg) 105 min.</i> Thomas Vinterberg. Nimbus Films.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogma 95 “Manifesto” and “Vow of Chastity” • Schepelern, “Film According to Dogma” <i>TCGN</i>, 73-110 • Hjort, “Dogma 95: The Globalization of Denmark’s Response to Hollywood” <i>SN,GC</i> 34-65 • Rees, “In My Father’s House” (CR) <p>Theoretical Topic: Realism and Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bazin “The Ontology of the Photographic Image” & “The Myth of Total Cinema” (CR) • Bachelard, “The House From Cellar to Garrett” (CR) • DeCerteau, “Chapter IX: Spatial Stories” (CR)
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Week 8: Ethnicity

F.	5/18	<p><i>Uno (N, 2003) Aksel Hennie. Maipo Film & TV.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hjort, “Toward A Multiethnic Society,” <i>SNGC</i> 234-272. • Nedef, “De fremmede og Det Onde” (CR) • Wright, “‘Immigrant’ Film in Sweden at the Millennium” <i>TCGN</i>, 55-72 • Doxtater, “The Conveyance of Ethnicity in Recent Swedish Films” <i>NC</i> <p>Theoretical Topic: Ethnicity and Identification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walle, “Menn og maskuliniteter I en minoritetskontekst” (CR) • Diawara, “Black Spectatorship” (CR)
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Week 9: Cultural Politics and Aki Kaurismäki

F.	5/25	<p><i>Mies vailla menneisyyttä</i>, (Man Without a Past, SF, 2002) 97 min. Aki Kaurismäki. Sputnik Oy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toiviainen, “The Kaurismäki Phenomenon” • Koivunen, “Do You Remember Monrepos?” <i>NC</i> • Bacon, “Aki Kaurismäen sijoiltaan olon poetiikka” (CR) • Nestinge, “Aki Kaurismäki and the Melodrama of Demand” (To be distributed on the website as a PDF file) • Selected criticism on Kaurismäki’s <i>Man Without a Past</i> (CR) <p>Theoretical Topic: Melodrama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gledhill, “The Melodramatic Field,” (CR) • Nowell-Smith, “Minnelli and Melodrama” (CR) • Williams, “Something Else Besides a Mother” (CR)
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Week 10: New and Old Popular Cinema

F.	6/1	<p><i>Masjävlar</i> (S, 2004, <i>Dalecarlians</i>) 98 min. Maria Blom. Film i väst; Memfis Film.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomson, “Introduction: Starry Constellations and Icy Fractals” <i>NC</i> • Carp, “Sommaren är också biosäsong” (CR) • Nielsen, “Blockbuster-syndromet hærger” (CR) • Bredow, “Dansk films success fra et lanceringsmæssigt perspektiv” (CR) • Eriksson “Träffsäkert om hemvänderångest” (CR) • Mikeal Timm, “En andra guldålder?” (CR) • Lukas Moodysson “Intervju” (CR) • Ingmar Bergman, “Jag ser allt” (CR)
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Final Papers Due at 6 PM on Wed. June 6th. We’ll have an end of the quarter party at my house on Wed. 6th, where you may turn in your paper .

Hyvää kesää! Glad sommar!