

Instructor: Kimberlee Gillis-Bridges

Class: M, 2:30-5:20 p.m.; TTH, 2:30-4:20 p.m.

Location: Mary Gates 251 (M) and 271 (TTH)

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Office Hours: TTH, 4:30-5:30 p.m., and by appointment

Course Web Site: <http://faculty.washington.edu/kgb/women>

DESCRIPTION

In its January/February 2010 issue, *Film Comment* declared male directors “so last year.” Indeed, recent work by female directors like Kathryn Bigelow, Jane Campion, Claire Denis, Nora Ephron and Lucrecia Martel has appeared on critics’ best-of-year lists and garnered award nominations. Moreover, Bigelow became the first woman to win a Directors Guild of America award and an Academy Award for directing. Despite the surge in female-directed films, contemporary women filmmakers represent a minority in their industry. Amy Taubin—while joking about passé male directors—asks, “Has some critical mass been reached where female directors . . . will no longer hit a wall after making one film, or is this year merely a statistical anomaly?”

To address Taubin’s question, we will examine the work of female directors from around the globe, beginning with silent-era director Alice Guy Blachè and concluding with films from the 2010 Seattle International Film Festival. A study of women directors’ work not only allows us to analyze cinematic narrative and style, but also provides a unique perspective on film history. Furthermore, course films raise questions about the relationship between an individual filmmaker’s work and concurrent cinematic traditions, critical discussions and cultural contexts. Throughout the term, we will address the following questions:

- What, if anything, distinguishes the work of women directors?
- How does an investigation of women directors change our conception of film history, genre, national cinemas or film movements?
- How does feminist film criticism help us to interpret films made by women? What challenges do particular directors pose to critics?
- How do historical, cultural, and industrial factors shape the work of women directors?
- How do films made by women engage local ideologies of gender, race, class, and sexuality?

The first part of the course investigates how women directors rework “the woman’s film.” The second focuses on cinematic portrayals of politics, history, and war, and the third examines films that explore identity in the postmodern era.

COURSE GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

Students in the course work toward several goals: learning how to read film formally, contextually and ideologically and developing as critical thinkers and writers. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Identify films’ narrative, visual, and sound techniques, using vocabulary specific to cinema studies.
2. Analyze how women filmmakers use artistic strategies to achieve a range of effects.
3. Evaluate how films made by women respond to and shape existing cultural contexts and cinematic conventions.
4. Develop complex written arguments and support those arguments with sufficient and appropriate evidence.
5. Engage the work of film scholars, critically responding to their ideas in discussion and writing.

Course activities promote active learning, with most class sessions including a mix of mini-lectures, discussion, and group work. My role is to provide the tools and resources you need to advance your own thinking and writing. I will pose questions, design activities to help you think through these questions, and respond to your ideas. Your role is to do the hard work—the critical reading, discussion, and writing. You will analyze films, generate ideas in electronic and face-to-face discussions, analyze film clips, and construct written arguments.

REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation

Class discussion constitutes one key method of developing your analytical skills. Thus, I expect prompt, regular attendance and active participation in discussions of films and readings. You should come prepared for each class session with assigned reading completed. You should also plan to ask questions, make comments, summarize scholars' arguments, analyze clips, paraphrase your electronic postings, or contribute to small-group discussions. Like all skills, speaking in class becomes easier with practice. I do not expect fully polished analyses in class discussion; rather, your contributions represent ideas for further development.

Electronic Discussion

Students will use the class discussion board to share responses to films and readings. Each week, I will pose questions on course texts. In a 250- to 300-word response, you may address one of my questions or introduce another point. Feel free to engage your classmates' ideas as you write. The electronic postings allow us to extend class conversations, raise issues for in-class discussions, and develop ideas for presentations, the clip annotation and essays. Your postings receive points on a credit/no credit basis, with full points granted to on-time postings that meet the length requirement and demonstrate serious engagement with the questions provided.

To access the electronic discussion board, go to the course web site, click on "Discuss," and follow the instructions. I have divided the class into two groups to keep the discussion manageable:

- Group One: Students with last names A through H
- Group Two: Students with last names I through Z

Clip Annotation

Early in the quarter, you will create an online text and/or video analysis of how elements of narrative form, cinematography, and mise-en-scene function in a clip from *The Blot*, *Christopher Strong*, *The Piano* or *Danzón*.

Presentation

Students will work together in groups of two or three to create a 15- to 20-minute collaborative analysis of a selected course film clip. The presentation should focus on the formal, thematic, or ideological significance of the clip. Presenters will use visual aids (PowerPoint, film clip, screen shots, transparencies, handouts) to structure their remarks and underscore key points.

Essays

You will compose two five- to six-page essays on assigned topics. I will be available to discuss ideas-in-progress and drafts. You can also seek feedback from consultants at the CLUE Writing Center in the Mary Gates Commons or the Odegaard Writing and Research Center in Odegaard Undergraduate Library.

Please title, paginate, and double-space your essays, and set margins at one inch. In the upper left hand corner of the first page, include your name, the course number, the assignment, and the due date; this information should be single-spaced. Please use a 10- or 12-point Arial, Bookman, Century Schoolbook, or Times New Roman font for your papers. When citing sources, use MLA format. You will submit the essays via the course Collect It tool. I will include a link to the Collect It space on the course web site.

POLICIES

Lateness Policy

I will not accept late electronic postings or presentations. Late clip annotations and essays will receive a 10-point deduction per day late, including weekends and holidays. I will make exceptions to the lateness policy only in cases of documented illness or family emergency.

Technology glitches do not constitute valid excuses for lateness. To avoid computer problems, you should save frequently while working, and you should back up work saved to a hard drive on USB drive or Dante account. When submitting essays via Collect It, make sure that you upload the correct file. If the posting board or Collect It breaks down, email your work directly to me.

Plagiarism Policy

In your electronic postings, clip annotation, presentation, and essays, you may draw upon the ideas and words of other writers. However, you must make clear to your audience that you are incorporating another's work by placing quotation marks around exact words and citing the author's name whenever you quote, summarize or paraphrase. Failure to credit sources may result in a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, or expulsion from the university. The course links page contains information on when and how to cite sources.

EMAIL AND ACCESS TO COURSE WEB SITE

You must have a UW Net ID, a working email account and a way to access the course web site. Rather than distributing print materials in class, I will upload all assignments, grading criteria, handouts and schedule changes to the web site. The site also contains links to our Catalyst tools, additional film resources and sample student work.

TEXTS

Films

All course films are on reserve at the Odegaard Media Library. While you may not check out reserve films, you may view them at the Media Library.

- *Autumn Moon* (Clara Law, Hong Kong/Japan, 1992, 108 min.)
- *Beau Travail* (Claire Denis, France, 1999, 90 min.)
- *The Blot* (Lois Weber, USA, 1921, 80 min.)
- *Boys Don't Cry* (Kimberly Peirce, USA, 1999, 118 min.)
- *Christopher Strong* (Dorothy Arzner, USA, 1933, 77 min.)
- *Danzón* (María Novaro, Mexico/Spain, 1991, 122 min.)
- *Diary for My Children* (Márta Mészáros, Hungary, 1984, 106 min.)
- *A House Divided* (Alice Guy Blachè, USA, 1913, 13 min.)
- *The Hurt Locker* (Kathryn Bigelow, USA, 2008, 131 min.)
- *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, USA/Japan, 2003, 102 min.)
- *Matrimony's Speed Limit* (Alice Guy Blachè, USA, 1913, 14 min.)
- *Marianne and Juliane* (Margarethe von Trotta, Germany, 1981, 106 min.)
- *The Piano* (Jane Campion, Australia/New Zealand/France, 1993, 121 min.)
- *Sink or Swim* (Su Friedrich, USA, 1990, 48 min.)
- *Vagabond* (Agnes Varda, France/UK, 1985, 105 min.)
- *The Watermelon Woman* (Cheryl Dunye, USA, 1996, 90 min.)

Textbooks

- Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 9th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010.
- *Reading Packet for English 345*. Available at Professional Copy 'N Print, 4200 University Ave.

GRADING

Grades in English 345 will be computed by points, with 400 points equaling a 4.0, 300 points a 3.0, and so on. If your total falls between grades, I will round up if you score one to five points below the higher grade and round down if you score one to four points above the lower grade. For example, 274

points equals a 2.7 and 275 points a 2.8. Students who score less than 65 points total will receive a 0 for the course, as the UW grading system does not scale grades lower than .7.

Apart from postings, which are graded on a credit/no credit basis, points for each assignment will be awarded based on quality of work submitted. I will distribute grading criteria with all assignments. Each component of the course is worth the following number of points:

- Class Participation: 60 points
- Clip Annotation: 60 points
- Electronic Postings: 80 points
- Essays: 160 points
- Presentation: 40 points

SCHEDULE

This schedule may be altered at any point in the term at the instructor's discretion. Students must complete listed readings by the time class meets on the dates indicated. "CP" indicates a reading from the course packet.

Date	Activity	Reading	Due
3/29	Course introduction Screen <i>The Blot</i> (Lois Weber, USA, 1921, 80 min.), <i>A House Divided</i> and <i>Matrimony's Speed Limit</i> (Alice Guy Blaché, USA, 1913, 13 min. and 14 min.)		
3/30	Discuss film form in Guy Blaché shorts and <i>The Blot</i> Presentation assignment available online	Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter 2: "The Significance of Film Form" (55-75) and "Early Cinema" (455-458); Harrison, "Studio Saunterings" (CP 1-5); Guy Blaché, "Woman's Place in Photoplay Production" (CP 6-8)	Complete online student survey by noon
4/1	Discuss <i>The Blot</i> , melodrama as genre, and approaches to group presentation	Cook, "Melodrama and the Women's Picture" (CP 9-14); Kaplan, "The Resisting Text" (CP 15-19); Parchesky, "Lois Weber's <i>The Blot</i> " (CP 20-50)	Response to <i>The Blot</i> due by noon via GoPost
4/5	Screen <i>Christopher Strong</i> (Dorothy Arzner, USA, 1933, 77 min.) Clip annotation assignment available online		
4/6	Discuss narrative in <i>Christopher Strong</i>	Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter 3: "Narrative as a Formal System" (79-104) and "The Development of the Classical Hollywood Cinema" (458-461)	Response to <i>Christopher Strong</i> due by noon via GoPost
4/8	Discuss <i>Christopher Strong</i> and feminist film theory Introduction to clip annotation	Johnston, "Dorothy Arzner: Critical Strategies" (CP 51-55); Suter, "Feminine Discourse in <i>Christopher Strong</i> " (CP 56-63); Kaplan, "The 'Resisting' Maternal Woman's Film" (CP 63-71)	Student presentations

Date	Activity	Reading	Due
4/12	Screen <i>Danzón</i> (María Novaro, Mexico/Spain, 1991, 122 min.)		
4/13	Discuss mise-en-scene in <i>Danzón</i>	Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter 4: "The Shot: Mise-en-Scene" (118-159)	Response to <i>Danzón</i> due by noon via GoPost Student presentations
4/15	Discuss <i>Danzón</i> and the cinematic gaze	Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (CP 72-78); Rashkin, "María Novaro" (CP 79-91)	
4/19	Screen <i>The Piano</i> (Jane Campion, Australia/New Zealand/France, 1993, 121 min.)	Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter 1, "Film as Art" (16-47)	
4/20	Discuss cinematography in <i>The Piano</i>	Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter 5, "The Shot: Cinematography" (167-218)	Response to <i>The Piano</i> due by noon via GoPost Student presentations
4/23	Discuss <i>The Piano</i> and Campion as auteur	McHugh, "Film Feature Narration" and " <i>The Piano</i> " (CP 92-102); Bruzzi, "Tempestuous Petticoats" (CP 103-108); Dyson, "The Return of the Repressed?" (CP 108-113)	
4/23			Clip annotation due by 10:00 p.m. via Viddler
4/26	Screen <i>Marianne and Juliane</i> (Margarethe von Trotta, Germany, 1981, 106 min.) Essay 1 assignment available online		
4/27	Discuss editing in <i>Marianne and Juliane</i>	Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter 6: "The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing" (223-265)	Response to <i>Marianne and Juliane</i> due by noon via GoPost Student presentations
4/29	Discuss history and politics in <i>Marianne and Juliane</i>	Linville, "Retrieving History" (CP 114-126)	
5/3	Screen <i>Diary for My Children</i> (Márta Mészáros, Hungary, 1984, 106 min.)		
5/4	Discuss history and politics in <i>Diary for My Children</i>	Portuges, "Re-reading History: The Diary Trilogy" (CP 127-141)	Response to <i>Diary for My Children</i> due by noon via GoPost Student presentations

Date	Activity	Reading	Due
5/6	Screen <i>Beau Travail</i> (Claire Denis, France, 1999, 90 min.) Discuss approaches to Essay 1	Bordwell and Thompson, "Writing a Critical Analysis of Film" (443-451)	
5/7-5/9	Screen <i>The Hurt Locker</i> (Kathryn Bigelow, USA, 2008, 131 min.) on own		
5/10	Discuss sound in <i>Beau Travail</i>	Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter 7, "Sound in the Cinema" (269-298); Mayne, "Rhythms of the Night" (CP 142-148)	Student presentations
5/11	Discuss <i>The Hurt Locker</i>	Barscay, "Kathryn Bigelow's Gen(d)re" (CP 149-155); Sklar, " <i>The Hurt Locker</i> [Review]" (CP 156-157); Hunter, "The First Decent Iraq-War Movie" (CP 158-160)	Response to <i>The Hurt Locker</i> due by noon via GoPost Student presentations
5/13	Screen and discuss <i>Sink or Swim</i> (Su Friedrich, USA, 1990, 48 min.)	Bordwell and Thompson, "Experimental Film" (366-376); Wees, "No More Giants" (CP 161-164)	
5/14			Essay 1 due by 10 p.m. via Collect It
5/17	Screen and discuss <i>The Watermelon Woman</i> (Cheryl Dunye, USA, 1996, 90 min.)	McHugh, "History and Falsehood in Experimental Autobiographies" (CP 165-172); Sullivan, "Chasing Fae" (CP 173-185)	
5/18	Screen <i>Vagabond</i> (Agnes Varda, France/UK, 1985, 105 min.)		
5/20	Discuss <i>Vagabond</i>	Bordwell and Thompson, Chapter 8: "Summary: Style as a Formal System" (312-316); Flitterman-Lewis, "The 'Impossible Portrait' of Femininity: <i>Vagabond</i> " (CP 186-201)	Response to <i>Vagabond</i> due by noon via GoPost Student presentations
5/21-5/23	Screen <i>Lost in Translation</i> (Sofia Coppola, USA/Japan, 2003, 102 min.) on own		
5/24	Screen <i>Autumn Moon</i> (Clara Law, Hong Kong/Japan, 1992, 108 min.)		
5/25	Discuss <i>Autumn Moon</i> Essay 2 assignment available online	Bordwell and Thompson, "Hong Kong Cinema" (482-485); Marchetti, "The Gender of GenerAsian X" (CP 202-210)	Response to <i>Autumn Moon</i> due by noon via GoPost Student presentations

Date	Activity	Reading	Due
5/27	Discuss <i>Lost in Translation</i>	Bordwell and Thompson, "the New Hollywood and Independent Filmmaking" (477-482); Haslem, "Neon Gothic" (CP 211-218); Allsop, "More Than This" (CP 219-226); King "Lost in Translation [Review]" (CP 227-230)	Student presentations
5/28-5/30	Screen <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> (Kimberly Peirce, USA, 1999, 118 min.) on own		
5/31	Memorial Day		
6/1	Discuss <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> and approaches to Essay 2	Aaron, "Pass/Fail" (CP 231-235); Halberstam, "The Transgender Gaze" (CP 236-240); Henderson, "The Class Character of <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> " (CP 241-245); Brody, "Boyz Do Cry" (CP 246-251)	Response to <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> due by noon via GoPost Student presentations
6/3	Discuss SIFF films		Extra-credit posting on SIFF films due by noon
6/8			Essay 2 due by 10:00 p.m. via Collect It