FLM6207 FILM AND ETHICS

Semester: B
Level: 6
Credit Value: 15
Module Organiser: Libby Saxton; e.a.saxton@qmul.ac.uk; office hours: Thursday 11.15–1.15; Arts One 1.05, currently working remotely
Pre-requisite: None
Assessment: one 500-word essay plan (15%); one 3500-word essay (85%)
Timetable:
Lecture: Wednesday 12–1, on Collaborate
Seminars: Group A: Thursday 10–11; Group B: Thursday 9–10, both on Collaborate

All students must ensure that they consult the SLLF handbook for undergraduate or MA students (on QM+) and follow the School’s guidelines and regulations in all matters regarding this module.

DESCRIPTION
This module explores the wide-ranging moral concerns that shape the form and content of contemporary cinema from several continents with reference to the so-called ‘ethical turn’ of film studies since the 1990s. We consider how documentaries have prioritised the interests of their protagonists and remembered atrocities and how fiction films have questioned traditional understandings of virtue and embraced realism as an ethical stance. Both kinds of cinema have also investigated the moral agency of the viewer. Forging connections between filmmaking and spectating and philosophical accounts of goodness, vulnerability and commitment to the real, the module suggests that cinema offers unique insights into pressing ethical problems.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
This module aims to provide an overview of the ethical themes and dilemmas addressed in a selection of recent films from Europe, North and South America and Africa. Students will also develop an understanding of the philosophical frameworks imported by film studies to explore the ethics of documentary, spectatorship and fictional cinematic characters.
VIEWING AND READING

Please prepare for classes by watching the films and reading the texts marked as ‘essential’ below. Access to all these materials is provided through QM+. ‘Further’ reading and viewing has also been recommended for each topic to help you deepen your understanding of areas that particularly interest you and on which you might want to write your essay.

ASSESSMENT

You are strongly encouraged to discuss your ideas and preparations for the 3,500-word essay with the module organiser in her office hours and/or an essay tutorial in week 12.

Please note the criteria used to mark modules in literature/culture, linguistics and film, which are set out in the SLLF undergraduate handbook. A link to these criteria appears near the top of the Film and Ethics QM+ page.

Acknowledging the work of others: whatever sources you use, it is essential that you acknowledge them. Not to do so is dishonest since it is seeking credit for someone else’s work. Please make sure you are familiar with the guidance on documenting your essay and referencing sources in the Undergraduate or MA Handbook.

COURSEWORK DEADLINES & SUBMISSION

In order to receive full credit, you must submit the essay plan by 23.55 on Thursday 8 April 2021 and the essay by 23.55 on Monday 3 May 2021 via the QM+ dropboxes.

SYLLABUS

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<th>Screening</th>
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<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Documentary 1</td>
<td>Cameraperson (Kirsten Johnson, US, 2016, 102 mins)</td>
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<td>Character Morality</td>
<td>Breaking the Waves (Lars von Trier, Denmark/Sweden/France/Netherlands/Norway/Iceland/Spain, 1996, 159 mins)</td>
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<td>Benny’s Video (Michael Haneke, Austria/Switzerland, 1992, 105 mins)</td>
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<td>Documentary and Spectatorship 2: The Memory of Atrocity</td>
<td>Nostalgia de la luz (Nostalgia for the Light; Patricio Guzmán, Chile/Spain/France/Germany/US, 2010, 90 mins)</td>
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<td>Decolonial Perspectives</td>
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<td>Centre for Film and Ethics salon with artist filmmaker Onyeka Igwe, Tuesday 2 March, 11am–1pm (please note different timetable this week).</td>
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<td>Centre for Film and Ethics annual lecture by artist duo Neozoon, Wednesday 17 March, time tbc (please note different timetable this week).</td>
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<td>Levinas</td>
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<td><em>Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse (The Gleaners and I)</em>; Agnès Varda, France, 2000, 82 mins</td>
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<td>World Cinema and Realism</td>
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<td><em>Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner</em> (Zacharias Kunuk, Canada, 2001, 168 mins)</td>
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<td>Vulnerability and Resistance</td>
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<td><em>Timbuktu</em> (Abderrahmane Sissako, France/Mauritania, 2014, 97 mins)</td>
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**Week 2: Documentary 1**

**Essential viewing**

*Cameralperson* (Kirsten Johnson, 2016)

**Essential reading**

Kirsten Johnson, ‘Director’s Statement’ and ‘An Incomplete List of What the Cameraperson Enables’, from press kit for *Cameralperson’s* premiere in 2016


**Further reading**


**Further viewing**

*In This World* (Michael Winterbottom, 2002)

*Sisters in Law* (Kim Longinotto and Florence Ayisi, 2005)

*Dreams of a Life* (Carol Morley, 2011)

*Amy* (Asif Kapadia, 2015)

**Week 3: Character Morality**

**Essential viewing**

*Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1996). Please be warned that the film contains images of rape and other kinds of violence.

**Essential reading**


**Further reading**


**Further viewing**

- *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975)
- *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) and *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986)
- *Dekalog* (*The Decalogue*; Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1989–90)
- *Dancer in the Dark* (Lars von Trier, 2000)
- *Dogville* (Lars von Trier, 2003)
- *Morvern Callar* (Lynne Ramsay, 2002)
- *Biutiful* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2010)

**Week 4: Spectatorship 1**

**Essential viewing**

*Benny’s Video* (Michael Haneke, 1992). Please be warned that the film contains documentary images of the killing of a pig and fictional depictions of other violent acts.

**Essential reading**


**Further reading**


Asbjørn Grønstadt, “‘Be Here to See This’: Haneke’s Intrusive Images’, *Screening the Unwatchable: Spaces of Negation in Post-Millennial Art Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 150–62

**Further viewing**

*The Idiots* (Lars von Trier, 1998)

**Week 5: Documentary and Spectatorship 2: The Memory of Atrocity**

**Essential viewing**

*Nostalgia de la luz* (*Nostalgia for the Light*; Patricio Guzmán, 2010)

**Essential reading**


**Further reading**


**Further viewing**

*La Batalla de Chile* (*The Battle of Chile*; Patricio Guzmán, 1975, 1976 and 1979)

*The Missing Picture* (Rithy Panh, 2013)

*The Act of Killing* (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012)

**Week 6: Decolonial Perspectives**
Viewing tbc. No required reading.

**Week 8: Speciesism**
Viewing tbc. No required reading.

**Week 9: Levinas**

**Essential viewing**
*Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse (The Gleaners and I; Agnès Varda, 2000)*

**Essential reading**

**Further reading**

**Further viewing**
*Samt el qusur (The Silences of the Palace; Moufida Tlatli, 1994)*
*La Promesse (The Promise; Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 1996)*

**Week 10: World Cinema and Realism**

**Essential viewing**
Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner (Zacharias Kunuk, 2001)

Essential reading

Further reading
David Martin-Jones, *Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Pasts of World History* (London: Routledge, 2019)

Further viewing
*Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* (Black God, White Devil; Glauber Rocha, 1964)
*Yaaba* (Idrissa Ouédraogo, 1989)

Week 11: Vulnerability and Resistance

Essential viewing
*Timbuktu* (Abderrahmane Sissako, 2014). Please be warned that the film contains depictions of whipping, stoning and other kinds of violence.

Reading
Amadou Fofana and Bruce S. Hall, ‘*Timbuktu*: What Call to Action?’, *Black Camera*, 9: 1 (2017), 7–21

GENERAL FURTHER READING LIST


David Martin-Jones, *Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Pasts of World History* (London: Routledge, 2019)


D. N. Rodowick, ‘Ethics in Film Philosophy (Cavell, Deleuze, Levinas)’ (no date);
http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic242308.files/RodowickETHICSweb.pdf


Robert Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics: Exploring Ethical Experience through Film* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2016)

Jane Stadler, *Pulling Focus: Intersubjective Experience, Narrative Film, and Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2008)

