

Module Title: Film and Ethics

Module Code: FLM6207

Credit Value: 15

Level: 6

Pre-requisite modules:

Content Description

Engaging with the so-called 'ethical turn' of film studies in recent decades, this module explores the moral agency of cinema's protagonists, creators and viewers. One of the module's strands examines the specific ethical conundrums faced by documentary and essay filmmakers, especially when dealing with violent or traumatic subject-matter. A second strand traces the moral trajectories of fictional characters and reflects on the significance of films that avoid judging them. The third strand considers the commitment of film crews and casts, often expressed through physical stamina, to telling truthful stories, and a fourth discusses the ethical positioning of spectators. The module explores these issues through analysis of a selection of contemporary films from several continents and genres. We discuss the films in relation to ethical debates in film theory which refer to philosophical accounts of virtue, responsibility to the other person and fidelity to the real.

Module Aims

Students will deepen their understanding of ethical dimensions of filmmaking and viewing that reach beyond classical realist cinema's tendency to moralise. They will learn how to develop a detailed and nuanced interpretation of a particular film that contributes to an aspect of the current conversation about cinematic ethics.