

FA485 Mystery in Film

Course Description

This course aims to dwell on the themes of the mystery and unknown in film which are mostly linked with the fear and curiosity it creates in the minds of the characters.

Films, by creating an illusion, pulls the spectator into a pool of desires, wishes, fears and excitements. These emotions are passed from the characters to audience via a very special and strong bond, which is identification. Spectator's identification creates an instinctual understanding for the characters they see on film. This identification makes it possible for the spectator to share the knowledge, psychological state and emotions of the characters in film.

Moving from this point, films of unknown, films of mystery and films based on the subject of 'The Other' will give us a chance to discuss character development and psychology in films.

The course will be carried out based on films and readings from the genres of Mystery, Suspense, Psychological Thrillers, The Other and Science Fiction and class discussions based on these topics.

Course Requirements:

The course will be carried out with a series of discussions every week and to participate to the discussions in class, every student must watch the film (or films) of the week. Being a participator in the class is the most important requirement of the course.

Every student must moderate a class discussion (with a collaborator) and give a presentation to class.

:::Attention:::

- The course starts on the first week, and although the first two weeks are 'add-drop' weeks, if you miss a class even in the beginning of the course, please drop the course, or don't take it in the first place.
- Cell phones are not used during the class.
- Students who have conflicts with other classes cannot take this course.
- The exams are done in 'closed book, no phone, no break' style.
- Since I do not have a room in the school, I don't have office hours, but if you want to meet with me for course related matters, email me and we can always set a meeting at the Mithat Alam Film Center.
- All the films of the course are available in the archives of Mithat Alam Film Center and Boğaziçi University Multimedia Center which is located in the Aptullah Kuran Library, the North Campus.

Grading

- Participation in class discussions: 25 percent (Not attendance, but participation)
- Class Presentation: 25 percent (A detailed outline for class presentations will be given in the class. Class presentations will be held as groups of three)
- Midterm: 25 percent
- Final: 25 percent

Outline

Film Viewing Experience, The Relationship Between Audience and Film.

Introduction to Unknown in Film, Origins of Mystery and Suspense Stories

Key elements of Mystery and Suspense

Range of Knowledge.

Discussion and screening: The Double Indemnity, Billy Wilder, 1944

Identification. Major archetypes in Film

Introduction to Alfred Hitchcock.

Analysis and Discussion: 'Vertigo', Alfred Hitchcock, 1958

Analysis and Discussion: 'Rebecca', Alfred Hitchcock, 1940

Identification and survival of the spectator. Uncanny, Gothic.

Screening: Psycho, Alfred Hitchcock, 1961

Analysis and discussion of the film.

Desires of the Spectator. Conflict of Ego.

Analysis and discussion: Psycho, Alfred Hitchcock, 1960, Continues

Analysis and discussion: 'Les Diaboliques', Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1955

Identity and the Other, Fear of the Unknown, Depth

Introduction to Roman Polanski and The Apartment Trilogy

Analysis and discussion: 'The Tenant', Roman Polanski, 1976

Identity and the Other, Fear of the Unknown, Depth

The Uncanny in Film, Abject

Analysis and discussion: 'The Repulsion', Roman Polanski, 1965

Analysis and discussion: 'Rosemary's Baby', Roman Polanski, 1968

The Effect of the location in psychological thrillers

Analysis and discussion: 'Don't Look Now', Nicholas Roeg, 1973

Psychological thrillers, Introduction to Stanley Kubrick.

Analysis and discussion: 'The Shining', Stanley Kubrick, 1980

From childhood to Adolescence

Myth and The Monster

Analysis and discussion: 'An American Werewolf in London', John Landis, 1981

Excerpts from 'Buffy The Vampire Slayer', Creator Joss Whedon, 1997-2003

Excerpts from 'Columbo', 'Sherlock', 'The Pink Panther'.

Readings:

Students will be provided a course reader which they can get from Nazar Copy in South Campus and from school's library's photocopier room. Also a digital copy will be sent to the students who do not wish to print and want to save more green.

The contents of the reading are listed below and additional readings may be included during the term.

- Wood, Robin. 1969. Hitchcock's Films. 2nd enl. ed. New York: Castle Books.
- Royle, Nicholas. 2003. The Uncanny. New York: Routledge.
- Löker, Altan. 1976. Film and Suspense. İstanbul: Altan Löker.
- Orr, John and Elżbieta Ostrowska. 2006. The Cinema of Roman Polanski: Dark Spaces of the World. London;New York;: Wallflower.
- FREUD, SIGMUND. 1976. "The "Uncanny"." New Literary History 7 (3): 619.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection. New York: Columbia University Press.

It is also recommended for students to follow and feed themselves by regularly reading from these sources, which Mithat Alam Film Center is already subscribed to:

- Sight and Sound, Published by British Film Institute
- Film Comment, Published by Film at Lincoln Center, New York.