

**SCA Critical Studies  
Course Descriptions  
Fall 2009**

**Introductions**

**190 Professor Drew Casper “Introduction to Cinema”**

Rated one of the top-six “USC classes you cannot afford to miss” (Saturday Night Magazine, 2004), this course explores the formal properties of cinema, such as literary design, performance, visual design, composition, editing, sound design, genre, style, and production process. Films that will enthrall you include: *Singin’ In the Rain*, *Mildred Pierce*, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, *Babette’s Feast*, *Days of Heaven*, *Some Like It Hot*, *L.A. Confidential*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, *The Shop Around the Corner*, and *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. This perennial favorite is certain to fill fast!

*Open to all majors. You must also register for a discussion section.*

**191 Professor Ellen Seiter “Introduction to TV/Video”**

Are we doomed to a future of wall-to-wall reality television? Will YouTube replace network TV? To discuss these questions, this course introduces students to the study of television as a unique dramatic form with a history of business and creative practices that both overlap and diverge from that of feature film. Screenings will include: *Twin Peaks*, *Heroes*, *Mad Men*, *The Burns and Allen Show*, *Mod Squad*, *The Smothers Brothers*, *The Colbert Report*, *The Mickey Mouse Club*, *Big Love*, *South Park*, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, *America’s Next Top Model*, *Tom Goes to the Mayor*, and *Death Note*.

**400 Professor Michael Renov “Non-Fiction Film and Video”**

What is documentary? How do documentaries construct “the real” and produce truth claims? What role do ethics play in documentary filmmaking? How has documentary been used for political and propaganda purposes? How do documentary practices compare around the world and over time? This course will search for answers to these and other questions. Screenings may include *Chronicle of a Summer* (Rouch and Morin, 1961), *The Gleaners and I* (Varda, 2000), *Nobody’s Business* (Berliner, 1996), and *Phantom Limb* (Rosenblatt, 2005)

**473 Professor Jon Wagner “Film Theories”**

This course introduces the "grand" tradition in film theory, both Classical (Realism, Formalism, Classical Hollywood/Genre Experiment, Auteurism/Art Film) and Contemporary (Structuralism, Psychoanalysis/Feminism, Post-structuralism, and Post-modernism). Full length screenings change each semester and range across the entire spectrum of international film history.

## History

### **200 Rene Bruckner “History of the International Cinema, 1890-1945”**

This course surveys the history of cinema’s first half-century, exploring its technological, economic, and social determinants from its beginnings through the end of World War II. Explores the formal diversity of international cinema, considers the role of moving pictures in/as history, and examines global cinema in relation to the complex and ambiguous history of Hollywood. Screenings may include *Casablanca*, *Nosferatu*, *Sunrise*, *The Jazz Singer*, *Frankenstein*, *L’Atalante*, *Shanghai Express*, *Grand Illusion*, and more.

### **403 Professor Ella Taylor “British Cinema and Television”**

This course examines British cinema and, to a lesser degree, television from the 1940s to the present in the context of industry, social history, aesthetics and audiences. The idea of a unitary national British cinema grows increasingly problematic as race, religion, ethnicity and gender take cultural precedence over traditional class and regional divisions. Screenings will include films and television programs from Ealing comedies, war and kitchen sink dramas, the British New Wave and “muslin-and-bonnets” heritage cinema, from situation comedy to reality television, all the way through to *Slumdog Millionaire*, a very English movie about India.

### **409 Professors Drew Casper and Rick Jewell “Censorship in Cinema”**

An historical survey of film censorship with an emphasis on selected topics such as pornography, violence, television, the P.C. debate, and the culture wars. A Q&A with Playboy founder Hugh Hefner is one of the perks. Be shocked by *Blackboard Jungle*, *The Killing of Sister George*, *Lust...Caution*, *Last Tango in Paris*, *Last Temptation of Christ*, *Caligula*, *Elmer Gantry* and more.

### **494 Professor Janani Subramanian “Paranoia and Identity in the American Media”**

The course will be a historical survey of American media, asking how visual media represents anxieties specific to particular periods in American history. If the paranoiac fears some “Other” lurking in the shadows of his environment, then what form(s) does this Other take in various stages of recent American history? Students will try to answer this question by examining film, television and scholarly texts from the early 20th century onwards, using paranoia as a conceptual tool to understanding how we represent and process our social, political, and cultural fears and desires. The class will also examine the concept of fear – where it comes from and what is directed towards – as well as try to understand the psychoanalytic, political, philosophical and aesthetic facets of paranoia itself.

### **502 Professor Carlos Kase “History of International Cinema After WW II”**

This course surveys international sound film from a variety of concepts: the coming of sound, national cinema, post-colonial, postmodernism, third world aesthetics and others. We will consider the ways in which the texts related to the construction of cinema histories and transnational imaginings.

### **505 Professor Steve Anderson “Survey of Interactive Media”**

This class offers a historical and theoretical overview of interactive media, from videogames and virtual reality to mobile media and online social networks. We will explore the many ways that interactive media is entangled with other movements within digital and moving image culture ranging from experimental film to ubiquitous computing. It is axiomatic to this course that the

most interesting design work emerges from an informed relationship to theory, and that theoretical models for understanding media have much to learn from their practical applications. We will further explore the association of emerging technologies with utopian ideals and cultural anxieties that formed in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Of particular interest is the relationship between narrative and interactivity and the many ways that we have reformulated our understandings of space, time and bodies.

**518 Professor David James “Avant-Garde and Art Film in Los Angeles”**

This course will explore some of the traditions of experimental filmmaking, both outside and on the margins of the commercial feature industry, mostly in Los Angeles. Topics will include the amateur experimental films made by industry workers in the 1920s, radical political films in the 1930s, the psychodramas of Maya Deren and Kenneth Anger in the 1940s, psychedelic films made by freaks inside and outside Hollywood in the 1960s, innovations by women, gays and lesbians and people of color in the 1970s and 1980s, and other experimental uses of the cinema, including recent developments in video and digital moving-image culture.

**564 Professor David James “Film and Popular Music”**

This course examines the history of the cinematic representation of American and British popular music from the 1950s to the early 1970s. Topics include the rise and decline of various subgenres and their social meanings; the associated rituals, paraphernalia, and personalities; the way popular music was recruited by cinema and television to underline or supply the meaning of the visuals; and any other form of relationship between popular music and film/ television. Student research may explore similar questions in any period since the early 1950s.

## Seminars

### **500 Professor Aniko Imre “Seminar in Film Theory”**

The course provides an overview of major directions in the history of film and media. The readings will include selections on realism and formalism, semiology, psychoanalysis, auteur theory, feminist and queer theories, postcolonial and transnational theories, cultural studies, representation, and theories of reception. The emphasis will fall on analyzing and making theoretical arguments. We will also discuss the status of theory in contemporary approaches to convergent media.

### **506 Professor Aniko Imre “Professional Seminar”**

This course offers both practical and theoretical instruction on issues of professionalization for graduate students in Critical Studies in film, television, and related media. The course deals with broad issues of academic culture; with more specific issues of film/television/media studies as professional discipline; and with issues of professional options outside the academy for graduates of Critical Studies.

### **510 Professor Rick Jewell “The Hollywood Studio System”**

This seminar will investigate the period between the late 1920s and the early 1950s in Hollywood history. Among the topics to be discussed: the historical context, business practices, censorship, technological developments, narrative and stylistic considerations, genres and the star system. Screenings will include: *Modern Times*, *A Guy Named Joe*, *Sunset Blvd.*, *King Kong*, *The Letter*, *Scarlet Street*, *Destry Rides Again*, and *The Gunfighter*.

### **673 Professor Kara Keeling “Topics in Theory: Deleuze and Culture”**

This advanced graduate seminar focuses on French philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s theories of culture. We will read some of his work on literature, music, painting and film, and our primary focus will be on primary and secondary Deleuzian scholarship on visual culture. Readings are likely to include the following books by Deleuze: *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, *The Fold*, *The Logic of Sense*, *Francis Bacon: Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Possible screenings include *Milles Gilles* (2002), and other relevant films.

## Practicum

### **402 Professor Howard Rosenberg “Practicum in Film/Television Criticism”**

This course is a hands-on practicum designed to sharpen the critical skills of students and apply those skills to the analysis of television as it relates to popular culture. In fact, television is popular culture. This course stresses doing, not theorizing. Thus the ability to write clearly is essential, as is the ability to set aside ego for the greater purpose of communication.

### **478 Professor Tara McPherson “Digital Media and Learning”**

The class will engage a number of key questions at the intersection of digital media and learning, including "Are new technologies changing the way that students learn?," "What schools are embracing digital media and how?," "Will digital media reinforce existing divides of gender, race, and class?," and "Do digital media reconfigure the relation of public to private, school to home, self to other?" The class will engage recent research in digital media and learning but will also include an active lab component through which USC students will work with students in LA public schools on a variety of digital media projects, designing curricular modules and assisting in classrooms. The class is open to undergraduate and graduate students from across USC.

## Critical Thinking

**393 Professor Drew Casper “Postwar and Reactionary/Revolutionary Hollywood, 1946-1975”**  
An analysis of films from Hollywood’s Postwar and Reactionary/Revolutionary Periods to identify the significant genres, styles, faces and voices as an index of American history and culture. Montgomery Clift in *The Heiress*, Doris and Rock in *Pillow Talk*, Natalie Wood in *West Side Story*, Paul Newman in *Hud* and *Hombre*, Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight in *Midnight Cowboy*, Kim Novak in *Picnic*, Deborah Kerr and Robert Mitchum in *Heaven Knows Mr. Allison*, Sean Connery in *The Anderson Tapes*, and Peter O’Toole in *Lord Jim* will amaze you.

**411 Professor William Whittington “Adaptations”**  
This course will critically examine the complex aesthetic, cultural and industrial exchanges that arise as novels, short stories, poetry, graphic novels and even video games are translated into film and television programs. Screenings and readings may include: *Nicolas Nickleby*, *O Brother Where Art Thou?*, *The Thing (based on “Who Goes There?”)*, *Watchmen*, and the *Harry Potter Series* among others.

**412 Professor Kara Keeling “Gender, Sexuality and Media: Race and Place”**  
On what do we base our assumptions of gender, sexuality, and race? This course will examine how media constructs normative understandings of this topic and move into an interrogation of non-normative racialized and sexualized images. Students are expected to be open to and comfortable with discussing and analyzing a range of representations of race and sexuality, including those presenting diverse expressions of gender, heterosexuality, homosexuality, and other variations. Screenings are likely to include *Queen Christina*, *Tongues Untied*, *Go Fish*, *Strawberry and Chocolate*, *Fire, Brokeback Mountain*, *The L Word*, and *Ellen*. **Class size is limited. Non-majors are encouraged to enroll.**

**464 Professor Todd Boyd “Hip Hop Culture”**  
This course addresses the history of hip hop from a local sub-culture to a global phenomena. The course studies the influence of hip hop culture across music, film, television, politics, fashion, and sports, beginning in the 1970s through the present. The Source describes Dr. Boyd's "Hip Hop Culture" as the most "in-demand hip hop course in the country". The class has also been featured on CNN and in Vibe magazine. Screenings will include: *Wild Style*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Boyz n the Hood*, *Menace II Society*, *Scarface*, *Fade to Black*, *Beef*, *ATL*, and *Notorious*, among others.

**464 Professor Rick Jewell “James Bond”**  
An examination of the longest-running, most financially successful series in motion picture history. From *Dr. No* (1962) to *Quantum of Solace* (2008), the 007 films have entertained millions of theater patrons around the world, and the series shows no signs of slackening. Among the topics that will be included: the literary works of Ian Fleming who created the character of James Bond, the development of the cinematic Bond, the geopolitical changes that helped shape the series as it evolved, the relationship of the films to the espionage genre, the mythic roots of 007, etc. Most of the Bond films will be screened, including: *Dr. No*, *Goldfinger*, *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service*, *The Spy Who Loved Me*, *The Living Daylights*, *Goldeneye* and the recent version of *Casino Royale*.

**469 Prof. Rene Bruckner “Cinema in the Wild”**

Where is the wild? What is nature and what isn't? In today's world, can we say that movies and TV shows serve as the places "where the wild things are"? This course goes "into the wild" of cinematic media to explore the concepts of nature, the wilderness, wildlife, humanity, and environmental politics. Screenings may include: *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Into the Wild*, *The 11th Hour*, *Encounters at the End of the World*, *Himalaya*, *Baraka*, *The Edge*, *Dersu Uzala*, *Fitzcarraldo*, *Charlie the Lonesome Cougar*, *Trials of Life* (BBC), *Survivor Man* (Discovery Channel), *Monster Quest* (The History Channel), and *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau*.

**469 Professor Drew Casper**

**"Steven Spielberg"**

Come soar with Spielberg, the most influential and famous filmmaker of the day, from *Duel* through *Jaws* to *Empire of the Sun*; from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* through *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* to *Schindler's List*; from *Poltergeist* through *A.I.* to *Catch Me If You Can* and *Lawrence of Arabia*. Students can look forward to a Q&A with Spielberg himself.

**510 Professor Todd Boyd**

**"9/11 America"**

The events of September 11, 2001 marked a definitive moment in America's overall sense of cultural identity, both domestically and in relation to the larger world. Yet the events of 9/11 had their roots in a much longer history of conflict between "east and west," that goes back to the 1972 Munich Olympics, if not before. The Iranian hostage crisis, which began in 1979, brought this conflict home to America. Some conservative writers have even referred to such conflicts as being indicative of a "clash of civilizations." In many ways the story of "9/11" is a story that begins right around the end of the Cold War and evolves into its full capacity in the post Cold War 90s. The focus of this course is to observe how images and events both before and after 9/11 assist in defining the culture of contemporary America, particularly in terms of the way that politics influences media representation. Some of the topics to be covered in this course include: terrorism, empire, nationalism, globalization, torture, the religious right, the liberal blogosphere, Islam, war crimes, insurgency, censorship, enemy combatants, Hurricane Katrina, the military-industrial complex, Reaganomics, the Clinton era, Bush 41 & 43, and the historic election of Barack Obama, among others. Screenings to include: *Syriana*, *The Fog of War*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Three Kings*, *One Day in September*, *Paradise Lost*, *When the Levees Broke*, and *There Will Be Blood*.

**673 Professor Kara Keeling**

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## Symposium

### **466 Professor Leonard Maltin**

### **“Theatrical Film Symposium”**

A staple course in the School of Cinematic Arts since 1960, CTCS 466 provides students with a unique opportunity only made possible by USC’s close ties to the film industry. Each week, students are given the chance to view contemporary Hollywood films *before* their theatrical release, and meet with the film’s creators for a one-of-a-kind Q&A session, led by film critic and historian Leonard Maltin. Guests include actors, directors, writers, producers, editors, and other film industry professionals, many of whom are USC alumni. Past semesters featured *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, *Casino Royale*, *300*, *Frost/Nixon*, *Pan’s Labyrinth*, and *Slumdog Millionaire*, and such guests as Ron Howard, Robert Zemeckis, Guillermo del Toro, Bryan Singer, Morgan Freeman, Nicholas Cage, and Sir Anthony Hopkins.

### **467 Professor Howard Rosenberg**

### **“Television Symposium”**

Modeled after the popular Leonard Maltin course, Theatrical Film Symposium, the Critical Studies department offers an exciting counterpart focusing on the television industry, taught by Pulitzer Prize-winning television critic Howard Rosenberg, whose many years with the Los Angeles Times have made him one of the most respected critics of contemporary entertainment. Each week, students are shown selected television programming, followed by a moderated Q&A with guests from the show, often including the series creator. Previous guests include Helen Mirren, David Simon (*The Wire*), Silvio Horta (*Ugly Betty*), Damon Lindel (*LOST*), Marc Cherry (*Desperate Housewives*), Doug Ellin (*Entourage*), Jenji Kohan (*Weeds*), Steven Bochco (*NYPD Blue*, *Hill Street Blues*) and Shonda Rhimes (*Grey’s Anatomy*).