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# Contemporary British Film

**COURSE DESIGNATOR** LNDN 3218

**LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION** English

**NUMBER OF CREDITS** 3

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The 1990s and 2000s saw the British film industry undergo a number of dramatic changes. From an all-time low at the end of 1980s, during the early 1990s British cinema entered a period of confidence and success that was mirrored by a major structural and financial reorganization. Important new directors and actors emerged as a new generation of filmmakers began to redefine longstanding British cinema traditions such as horror, comedy and social realism, refashioning them for the contemporary political and social world.

The course will chart the development of British film during the period 1994-2012 through the critical study of key films, and will examine the way that these films both emerge from and transform the earlier British cinema tradition. Readings will focus on the critical reception of the films and the manner in which they have been absorbed into the canon. There will also be particular focus on the political and social context of the films.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

All students should have developed basic skills in analyzing film texts. They should also develop a good grasp of long- and short-term trends and themes in British cinema, and the way that British films respond to contemporary social and political conditions.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course students should have a good grasp of recent developments in British cinema. They should be able to analyse a film in terms of both filmic content and social context; identify areas where critical analysis is required with regard to a given film; apply various research methods and communicate their findings to a group; give productive critical feedback to their peers; analyse and criticise arguments and theories; learn how to research toward mastering an academic or historical field.

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences.

## METHODOLOGY

Each class held within the classroom will feature an introduction to the film by one or more students, a film viewing, and then conclude with a class discussion centered on the week's readings with reference to the viewed film.

## MY EDUCATION

Students are expected to go to the cinema as regularly as they can during the course, either to see new releases or older pictures. They will be expected to make a special effort to see new British films that are on general release, and will be asked to comment critically on new British films they have seen with relation to themes that arise during the course. If there are films of particular interest, the course leader will notify the class. Students are also expected to choose from the following co-curricular activities. All students will be expected to hand in a 500 word report on their My Education experience by the final week, completion of which is worth 10% of their grade.

### Visit the Cinema Museum

<http://www.cinemamuseum.org.uk/>  
2 Dugard Way, London SE11 4TH  
Tel.: +44 (0)20 7840 2200  
Email: [info@cinemamuseum.org.uk](mailto:info@cinemamuseum.org.uk)

Youtube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/CinemaMuseum>

The Cinema Museum houses a broad variety of material relating to cinema and film history, ranging from throwaway ephemera to camera hardware and cinema fittings. The museum is a great destination for anyone interested in film, and students should view their visit as providing materials for understanding the broad history of cinema as a social and economic practice as well as an art form. NB The Cinema Museum is only open to visitors by appointment by email or phone, and must be booked at least 24 hours in advance. All visitors are given a guided tour. Entry & tour fee is Adults £7, concessions £5.

### **Catch a movie at the BFI IMAX cinema**

BFI IMAX

1 Charlie Chaplin Walk

South Bank

Waterloo

London SE1 8XR

[http://www.bfi.org.uk/whatson/bfi\\_imax](http://www.bfi.org.uk/whatson/bfi_imax)

Student prices begin at £10.50, but there are various price bands.

The BFI IMAX boasts Britain's largest screen, and shows both specially produced IMAX and 3D films, and also mainstream releases in IMAX formats. Students should understand the IMAX as part of a continuum of novel cinema technologies that stretches back to the earliest days of film exhibition. Since the introduction of affordable television sets in the post-war era, cinema exhibitors and film producers have sought to provide cinema experiences that would compete against the small screen. The IMAX is a recent development, but it has a heritage in the Cinerama system of the 1950s, and modern day 3-D is also the descendant of a post-TV film industry. Catching a film on the imposing IMAX screen is an experience that can be critically related to the history of cinema that is displayed at the Cinema Museum.

### **Attend a film screening as part of the Tate gallery's film programme.**

Tate Modern

Bankside

London SE1 9TG

[www.tate.org.uk/modern](http://www.tate.org.uk/modern)

<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/film/>

The Tate Modern gallery in Bankside offers an ongoing programme of screenings that both highlight films about specific artists, and also brings to light a much less well-travelled road of film production than the mainstream cinema – the artist's film. This huge area of film production stretches back to the very beginnings of film as a medium, and continues to be a source of exciting and challenging pieces. Tate's programme often contains rare films that are rarely screened anywhere and frequently includes titles and pieces that have never been shown in the UK.

## **REQUIRED READING AND RESOURCES**

Murphy, Robert ed. *British Cinema of the 90s* (BFI, 2000)

Dyja, Eddie *Studying British Cinema: the 1990s* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2010)

Fitzgerald, John *Studying British Cinema 1999-2009* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2010)

Students will be expected to go to the cinema as part of the My Education part of the course, so some allowance should be made for tickets.

## **GRADING**

### **CAPA PROGRAM AND INSTRUCTOR POLICY**

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. This means to gain full attendance you must attend all classes, you must not be late (unless with a valid reason) and you must be respectful of the professor and of other students by not talking/whispering in class when others are talking or presenting. Persistent

lateness or lack of attention in class, i.e., reading materials other than the work assigned, may result in a low or zero grade for participation, and possible referral to the CAO. **No electronic equipment will be used in class**, including laptops, phones, ipods, cell phones, etc, unless you have written permission from the Chief Academic Officer prior to the course. If you are caught using any electronic equipment, you may receive a zero grade for participation.

Plagiarism will be dealt with very seriously, and will be referred to the Chief Academic Officer in London. You may receive an F for the course. If all work is not submitted by the end of the program, you will receive an F for the course.

### CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

Attendance at all classes is mandated by CAPA; students who miss a class without permission from CAPA’s Chief Academic Officer will have their grade for the course lowered. Informed participation is expected in every class, so students must have read the full assignment carefully before coming and be ready to discuss it if called upon. At any meeting there may be a brief, pass-fail two-minute quiz on some utterly obvious fact in the assigned reading. Students will also be asked to complete informal in-class writing assignments on a regular basis, which will require them to demonstrate their familiarity with the assigned materials. Students who repeatedly demonstrate unsatisfactory performance on these quizzes and exercises will be penalized in the participation grade.

### CRITERIA FOR GRADING AND GRADING STANDARDS

Grading Rubric		
A	93+	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90-92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87-89	
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77-79	
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
D+	67-69	
D	60-66	
F	<59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

### GRADING FOR ASSIGNMENTS

Class participation	10%
My Education participation	10%
Assignment 1: short paper	30%
Assignment 2: long paper	50%
Overall Grade	100%

### SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Course Topics	
Week 1	<p><i>Four Weddings and a Funeral</i> (1994)</p> <p>Combs, Richard ‘New British Cinema: A Prospect and Six Views’  <i>Film Comment</i> v31 n6 Nov/Dec 1995 pp.52-60</p>

	<p>Roddick, Nick 'Four Weddings and a Final Reckoning' <i>Sight and Sound</i> v5 n1 Jan 1995 pp.12-16</p> <p>Hunter, Allan 'A Funny Old Business' Shackleton, Liz 'Playing the English Joker' <i>Screen International</i> n971 1994 pp.12-16</p> <p>Mather, Nigel <i>Tears of Laughter: Comedy-drama in 1990s British Cinema</i> (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) Ch. 3: 'Romantic comedy and new beginnings in 1990s British cinema' pp.119-83, esp. pp.149-59</p> <p>Myers, Caren 'Four Weddings a Funeral', review <i>Sight and Sound</i> v4 n6 June 1994</p>
Week 2	<p><i>The Full Monty</i> (1997)</p> <p>Mather, Nigel <i>Tears of Laughter: Comedy-drama in 1990s British Cinema</i> (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) Ch.1 "'Things can only get better...': comedies of class, culture and community' pp. 5-58 esp. pp.42-52</p> <p>Monk, Claire 'Men in the 90s' pp.156-166 in Murphy, Robert, ed., <i>British Cinema of the 90s</i> (London: BFI, 2000)</p> <p>Howard, Greg 'Exhibitionism and Repression in <i>The Full Monty</i>' <i>Film Criticism</i>, v23 n1 1999, pp.22-39</p>
Week 3	<p><i>Nil by Mouth</i> (1997)</p> <p>Purcell, Kerry William 'Reimagining the Working Class', pp. 113-131 in Rowbotham, Sheila and Beynon, Huw <i>Looking at Class: Film, Television and the Working Class in Britain</i> (London: Rivers Oram, 2001)</p> <p>Lay, Samantha <i>British Social Realism</i> (London: Wallflower 2002) pp.99-115 '1990s and Beyond: Contemporary Social Realism'</p> <p>James, Nick 'Being There' <i>Sight and Sound</i> v7 n10 October 1997, pp.6-10</p> <p>McNab, Geoffrey '<i>Nil By Mouth</i>' review <i>Sight and Sound</i> v7 n10 October 1997, p.55</p>
Week 4	<p><i>Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels</i> (1998)</p> <p>Dyja, Eddie <i>Studying British Cinema: the 1990s</i> (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2010), ch.2 'Change is Going to Come' pp.39-44, and section on <i>Lock Stock...</i> pp. 53-63</p> <p>Catterall, Ali and Wells, Simon <i>Your Face Here: British Cult Movies since the Sixties</i> (London: Fourth Estate, 2001), pp. 230-50 'The Footballer, the Gangster, the Icon and Her Lover'</p> <p>Leigh, Danny 'Get Smarter' <i>Sight and Sound</i> v10 n6 June 2000 pp.22-25</p> <p>Leigh, Danny '<i>Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels</i>' review <i>Sight and Sound</i>, v8 n9 Sept 1998 pp.46-7</p>
Week 5	<p>Assignment of short (1000-1500 word) paper</p> <p><i>Ratcatcher</i> (1999)</p> <p>Dyja, Eddie <i>Studying British Cinema: the 1990s</i> (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2010) Ch.6 'It's a Lottery' pp. 151-5 and section on '<i>Ratcatcher</i>' pp.165-75</p> <p>Wilson, Emma <i>Cinema's Missing Children</i> (London: Wallflower Press, 2003) pp.108-122, 'Still Time: <i>Ratcatcher</i>'</p>

	<p>Spencer, Liese 'What are you looking at?' <i>Sight and Sound</i> v9 n10 Oct 1999 pp.16-19</p> <p>O'Sullivan, Charlotte 'Ratcatcher' review <i>Sight and Sound</i> v9 n11 Nov 1999 pp.50-1</p>
Week 6	<p><i>In This World</i> (2002)</p> <p>Graham, Mark <i>Afghanistan in the Cinema</i> (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010) pp. 113-30 'The West Unveiled: <i>In This World</i></p> <p>Prime, Rebecca 'Stranger Than Fiction: Genre and Hybridity in the "Refugee Film"' <i>Post Script</i> v25 n2 2006 pp.56-66</p> <p>Jones, Kent 'I Walk the Line' <i>Film Comment</i> v41 n1 Jan/Feb 2005 pp.30-3</p> <p>Kelly, Richard '<i>In This World</i>' review <i>Sight and Sound</i> v13 n4 April 2003</p>
Week 7	Reading Week
Week 8	<p>Short paper deadline</p> <p><i>Dirty Pretty Things</i> (2002)</p> <p>Lucia, Cynthia 'The Complexities of Cultural Change: an Interview with Steven Frears' <i>Cinéaste</i> v28 n4 2003 pp.8-15</p> <p>Sinclair, Iain 'Heartsnatch Hotel' <i>Sight and Sound</i> v12 n12 Dec 2002, pp.32-4</p> <p>Fitzgerald, John <i>Studying British Cinema 1999-2009</i> (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2010) pp.93-5 and pp.101-6</p> <p>Roddick, Nick '<i>Dirty Pretty Things</i>' review <i>Sight and Sound</i> v12 n12 Dec 2002, p45</p>
Week 9	<p>Shaun of the Dead (2004)</p> <p>Rose, James <i>Beyond Hammer: British Horror Since 1970</i> (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2009) pp. 125-136</p> <p>Fitzgerald, John <i>Studying British Cinema 1999-2009</i> (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2010) pp. 203-9</p> <p>Newman, Kim '<i>Shaun of the Dead</i>' review <i>Sight and Sound</i> v14 n5 May 2004 p.72</p>
Week 10	<p>Field Trip</p> <p>BFI Southbank &amp; Mediatheque</p> <p><a href="http://www.bfi.org.uk/whatson/bfi_southbank/mediatheque">http://www.bfi.org.uk/whatson/bfi_southbank/mediatheque</a></p> <p>BFI Southbank</p> <p>Belvedere Road</p> <p>South Bank</p> <p>London SE1 8XT</p> <p>The BFI Mediatheque at the BFI Southbank centre is a unique way for students to explore the heritage of British film and the vast collections of the BFI National Film Archive. In a specially constructed room, numerous individual viewing stations can be used to view hundreds of British films and television programmes selected from the archives, and visitors can search and view in their own time. The Mediatheque offers an unprecedented glimpse in the moving image history of Britain, and the great majority of the films available to view cannot be seen anywhere else. A session selecting and viewing films at the visitors leisure is not only fascinating, and but significantly aids in the comprehension of the cinematic and televisual past, and will put the Contemporary British Film course in historical perspective.</p>
Week 11	<p>Assignment of main paper (2500-3500 words)</p> <p><i>This is England</i> (2006)</p> <p>Fitzgerald, John <i>Studying British Cinema 1999-2009</i> (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2010) 'Shane Meadows: a breed apart' pp. 125-136</p>

	<p>Sinker, Mark 'Control; Joe Strummer: The Future is Unwritten; This is England' <i>Film Quarterly</i> v61 n2 winter 2007-08 pp.22-9</p> <p>Savage, Jon 'New Boots and Rants' <i>Sight and Sound</i> v17 n5 May 2007 pp. 38-42</p> <p>Felperin, Leslie 'This is England' review <i>Sight and Sound</i> v17 n5 May 2007 p.84</p>
Week 12	<p><i>Fish Tank</i> (2009)</p> <p>Mullen, Lisa 'Estate of Mind'</p> <p>Roddick, Nick 'Do we know where we're going?' <i>Sight and Sound</i> v19 n10 Oct 2009 pp.16-20</p> <p>Kemp, Philip 'Fish Tank' review <i>Sight and Sound</i> v19 n10 Oct 2009 pp.59-60</p>
Week 13	<p><i>Tyrannosaur</i> (2011)</p> <p>'Angry Bastards' interview with Paddy Considine and Jim Mullan, <i>Sight and Sound</i>, v21 no11 Nov 2011, p.40</p> <p>Review, <i>Sight and Sound</i>, <a href="http://old.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/review/6503">http://old.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/review/6503</a></p> <p>Review, <i>Guardian</i> <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/oct/06/tyrannosaur-film-review">http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/oct/06/tyrannosaur-film-review</a></p> <p>Interview, Olivia Colman: <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/sep/09/olivia-colman-tyrannosaur-paddy-considine">http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/sep/09/olivia-colman-tyrannosaur-paddy-considine</a></p>
Week 14	<p>Long paper deadline</p> <p><i>London Babylon</i> (2012)</p> <p>Review, <i>Guardian</i>: <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/aug/02/london-the-modern-babylon-review">http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/aug/02/london-the-modern-babylon-review</a></p> <p>Patrik Sjoberg 'A brief history of compilation films' pp.23-26 <i>The World in Pieces</i> (Sjoberg, 2001).</p>

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in order to earn full marks. The final grade will take into consideration preparation required for class (i.e. readings) and participation in class discussions. If you miss any meetings without an excused absence from the on-site director, your final grade will be dropped accordingly. In the case of absences, it is the student's responsibility to find out what information was given in class including any announcements made.

## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

### SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

### STUDENT CONDUCT

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct and student needs. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.