

Liverpool Film Seminar

2017 – 2018 series

Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

Professor Rosalind Galt (King's College, London)

Pontianak trouble: gender and geopolitics in the Malay vampire film

The pontianak is a female vampire from Malay folklore, popular primarily in the Singaporean studio films of the 1950s and 60s and in contemporary Malaysian horror, but visible also in films from Thailand, Indonesia, and the diaspora. The pontianak film first emerges in Singapore at the moment of decolonization, and this return to a pre-colonial myth exactly as debate on the future of the postcolonial nation was at its height is suggestive of the role of cinema in animating popular decolonial discourse. A figure of transgressive female agency, the pontianak registers a series of intersecting anxieties: about gender roles and national identity; about the tension between indigenous and transnational cultural influences; and about changing relationships to the global. This talk will introduce the history of the pontianak film and will discuss how the figure centres gender to negotiate identities and postcolonial modes of being.

Biography:

Rosalind Galt is Professor of Film Studies at King's College London. Her research addresses transnational cinemas, aesthetics, politics and queer and feminist theories. Her publications include *Queer Cinema in the World* (Duke UP, 2016), coauthored with Karl Schoonover, *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image* (Columbia UP, 2011), and *The New European Cinema: Redrawing the Map* (Columbia UP, 2006).

