

Liverpool Film Seminar

2010 – 2011 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.

Below you'll find a list of speakers and topics from the 2011 – 2012 series:

Dr Warren Buckland (Oxford Brookes University)

Understanding David Lynch's *Inland Empire*

In his review of David Lynch's *Inland Empire* (2006), Michael Atkinson wrote that "the surest way to find disappointment in Lynch's Byzantine, exhaustive howl is to hunt for codes and readings" (*Sight and Sound*, April 2007, p. 69), which points to the limitations of film analysis in fixing the meaning of the unpredictable films of David Lynch.

In his presentation, Warren will not try to explain what the film means, for this activity is reductionist and takes something away from the film. Like Raymond Bellour in his later textual analyses (such as his essay called "The Film We Accompany"), he will "accompany the film as it unfolds," reading "from the film" rather than reading "into it."

Biography:



Warren Buckland is Reader in Film Studies at Oxford Brookes University. He has seven books to his name: *Film Theory & Contemporary Hollywood Movies* (2009); *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema* (2009); *Directed by Steven Spielberg: Poetics of the Contemporary Hollywood Blockbuster* (2006); *Studying Contemporary American Film: A Guide to Movie Analysis* (2002) (with

Thomas Elsaesser); *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film* (2000); the best-selling *Teach Yourself Film Studies* (1998; third edition, 2008); and *The Film Spectator* (1995). He also edits the journal the *New Review of Film and Television Studies* for Routledge while, currently, he is working on the monograph *Film Theory: Rational Reconstructions* (Routledge, 2012) and co-authoring (with Edward Branigan) the *Encyclopedia of Film Theory* (Routledge, forthcoming).

Professor Robert C. Allen (University of North Carolina)

Cinema Archaeology: Excavating Spaces, Reclaiming Experience

Biography:



Robert Allen's teaching and research interests are broad and interdisciplinary. His research has focused on the history of American popular entertainment and popular culture. He has written on the history of U.S. radio and television (*Speaking of Soap Operas*, 1985), film history and historiography (*Film History: Theory and Practice*, 1985), and American popular theater of the nineteenth and early twentieth century (*Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*, 1992).

He is also the editor of *To Be Continued: Soap Operas Around the World* (1995) and of two editions of the widely-used television criticism anthology, *Channels of Discourse and Channels of Discourse, Reassembled* (1987, 1994). He is the co-editor of *The Television Studies Reader* (2004) and *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema* (2007).

His teaching interests include the history of American film and media, globalization and national identity, the family and social change in America, and comparative social and cultural history (especially American and Australian histories). He is currently working on a digital humanities project, "Going to the Show," which documents the history of moviegoing in North Carolina through maps, photographs, newspaper ads, and other materials. He was on research leave during the 2008-09 academic year as a National Endowment for the Humanities Digital Humanities Fellow.

Prof Paul McDonald (University of Portsmouth)

Hollywood, Post-studio Stardom, and “The Will Smith Business”

Since the vertical disintegration of the Hollywood studios, the production of stardom has moved outside the studios, forming a ‘post-studio’ star system. Taking the example of Will Smith, this paper focuses on three dynamics which now define the place and value of Hollywood stardom in the post-studio era. Although stars are no longer tied to studios under long term contract, they are still dependent on the major studios to provide the scale of production and distribution exposure necessary to make and maintain their fame.

Taking the example of Smith’s on-going relationship with Columbia, the paper will initially argue the relationship of stars to studios should be conceptualized in terms of ‘relative independence’. Secondly, the star-based independent production company (what will be referred to here as the ‘sindie’) is now a standard feature of the Hollywood film industry. Profiling Smith’s company Overbrook Entertainment, the paper outlines five forms of relationship which exist between sindies and the studios. Finally, with Hollywood continually looking for new opportunities in overseas markets, the paper concludes by examining Smith and Overbrook’s well-orchestrated international strategy, particularly how the star and company have cultivated business relationships with India and China.

Biography:



Paul McDonald is Professor of Cinema at the University of Portsmouth. His research specialises in two key areas: cinema and film industries, with an emphasis on the structural, operational, technological and legal dynamics which shape the workings of the film business; and stardom and acting, with a particular focus on Hollywood Cinema.

His books include: *Video and DVD Industries* (BFI, 2007); *The Star System: Hollywood’s Production of Popular Identities* (Wallflower, 2000), the collection *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry* (Blackwell, 2008 - with Janet Wasko) and his most recent, *Branded Bodies: Stardom in Contemporary Hollywood* (Blackwell, forthcoming), the research for which was supported by a Leverhulme fellowship. He is also co-editing the "International Screen Industries" book series for the BFI, which so far has published seven titles.

Professor Sean Cubitt

(University of Southampton, Winchester School of Art)

Order, coherence, codecs and vectors: Time in the moving image

This seminar looks at the central ways that time enters the moving image: succession, scan, latency and vector prediction. It argues that contemporary chip design has opened up an extraordinary new mode of time inside the individual frame, from capture to release. At the same time however, the compression-decompression algorithms used universally in storage and transmission betraying the most fundamental tool of the potential liberation of time, the vector, by using it as a means to control the effervescence of the new temporality. The paper includes clips from a number of digital videos and feature films which work at the dialectical edge between these struggles over the meaning and nature of system and structure, field and frame.

Biography:



Sean Cubitt is Professor of Global Media and Communication and director of the Research Centre in Global Art and Culture at Winchester School of Art (University of Southampton).

His publications include *Timeshift: On Video Culture* (Comedia/Routledge, 1991), *Videography: Video Media as Art and Culture* (Macmillans/St Martins Press, 1993), *Digital Aesthetics* (Theory, Culture and Society/Sage, 1998), *Simulation and Social Theory* (Theory, Culture and Society/ Sage, 2001), *The Cinema Effect* (MIT Press, 2004) and *EcoMedia* (Rodopi, 2005). He was the coeditor of *Aliens R Us: Postcolonial Science Fiction* with Ziauddin Sardar (Pluto Press 2002) and *The Third Text Reader* with Rasheed Araeen and Ziauddin Sardar (Athlone/Continuum 2002) and *How to Study the Event Film: The Lord of the Rings* (Manchester University Press, 2008).

He is an editor of *Cultural Politics* and serves on the editorial boards of a dozen journals including *Screen*, *Third Text*, *Visual Communication*, *Futures* and *The International Journal of Cultural Studies*.

Professor Yvonne Tasker (University of East Anglia)

A Provocative Presence: Military women in film and visual culture

This paper explores the military woman as a compelling figure in film and visual culture. Taking examples from the UK and the US it explores some of the ways in which the military woman – a figure who has generated cultural comment and intense political debate at different historical moments – signals wider social preoccupations to do with gender, work and power. By turns celebrated, normalised and demonised, the military woman is a contradictory icon of both modernity and continuity. The paper focuses on examples drawn from WWII while seeking to draw out the contemporary resonance of wartime discourses.

Biography:



Yvonne Tasker is Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of East Anglia. She is the author and editor of a number of books exploring aspects of gender and popular culture including *Interrogating Postfeminism: gender and the politics of popular culture* (with Diane Negra). Her next book *Soldiers' Stories: military women in cinema and television since WWII* will be published by Duke University press in July.