

Liverpool Film Seminar

2011 – 2012 series

Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites six 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 Robert Burgoyne (University of St Andrews)

Ethics and Politics of the Body in *The Hurt Locker* and *Paradise Now*

Of the many cinematic forms that can be described as body genres, the war film is clearly a defining example, drawing its most memorable scenes and its most intensive cultural meanings from the way the body, both as agent and patient, as living and dead, is depicted. Situated in the shadow zone between organic life and national purpose, between sacrificial object and agent of sovereign violence, the body of the soldier conveys in visceral form a vision of history produced from intensive sensual impressions.

In the contemporary period, however, the imagery of the body in war – its ethics and its politics -- has been transformed by dramatic shifts in the forms of combat. What Edward Luttwak calls the new “postheroic war” -- continuous war without contours -- has created a particular challenge for film, displacing the theme of the “body at risk” from its position of central importance.

In this talk, I explore *The Hurt Locker* (2008) and *Paradise Now* (2005) as films that reframe the imagery of embodiment in the new wars and conflicts of the 21st century. Engaging the central questions of present day warfare, both films foreground the ethics and the politics of the body in contemporary conflict settings.

Biography:



Robert Burgoyne is Professor and Chair of the Department of Film Studies at the University of St Andrews. His work centres on modes of historical representation in film, with a particular emphasis on themes of embodiment, affect and cultural memory. His recent publications include *The Epic Film in World Culture*; *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History*; and *The Hollywood Historical Film*. He is currently working on the history of the war film, with a special focus on the “body at risk” as an emblem of generational memory.