

Liverpool Film Seminar

2016 – 2017 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 Philippe Meers (Antwerp)

What's new about 'new cinema history'? Historical cinema cultures, exhibition and audiences in comparative perspective.

Over the last fifteen years, various aspects of film exhibition and reception have appeared more prominently on film scholars' research agenda. Emerging trends in investigating the history of cinema as a significant social and cultural institution focus on its audiences and the cinematic experience, rather than on the film as the central topic of examining textually constructed spectatorship. This new multidisciplinary field has been labelled 'new cinema history' by Richard Maltby. Next to the study of the political and economic contours of the film business in terms of production, distribution and exhibition, research on film exhibition and reception allows for a better view on the historical conditions of the cinematic experience. The second part of the talk goes into experiences from a series of large scale research projects on cinema cultures in Belgium, Europe and Latin America, reflecting on the advantages and challenges of comparative research on historical cinema cultures. The call for more systematic comparative research has been high on the agenda, while most studies still focus on very specific local practices and experiences, often concentrating on film exhibition and audience experiences in particular cities, neighbourhoods or venues. The rise of studies on various aspects of film exhibition and cinema-going creates an enormous potential for data to be integrated and compared, and larger patterns to be discovered. We argue that a comparative perspective might be helpful in trying to understand larger trends, factors or conditions explaining differences and similarities in cinema cultures.

Biography:



Philippe Meers is Professor in Film and Media Studies at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, where he is director of the Center for Mexican Studies and deputy director of the Visual and Digital Cultures Research Center (ViDi). He publishes regularly on historical and contemporary film culture in e.g. *The Journal of Popular Film and Television*, *Screen*, *Communications*, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*; *Participations*, *Alphaville*; and in readers e.g. *The Contemporary Hollywood Reader* (Routledge, 2009). With Richard Maltby and Daniel Biltereyst, he edited *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) and *Audiences, Cinema and Modernity: New Perspectives on European Cinema History* (Routledge, 2012). With the same co-editors, he is currently finishing *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* (Routledge, forthcoming). With Annette Kuhn and Daniel Biltereyst, he edited a special issue of *Memory Studies* (2017) on cinema-going. He was a founding member of HoMER (History of Moviegoing, Exhibition and Reception) and founding chair of the ECREA film studies section. Currently he leads projects on contemporary young film audiences in Belgium (*Screen(ing) Audiences*) and on historical cinema cultures in Latin America (*Cultura de la Pantalla*).