

# 1. Course Name: Senses of Cinema – An Introduction to Film Criticism

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*“Cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn't give you what you desire - it tells you how to desire.” – Slavoj Zizek*

Cinema is a cunning art. It is a serious art form which successfully masquerades as entertainment. It is this essential cunningness of cinema which makes its viewing pleasurable. It opens up a space where one can think seriously without having to call oneself an intellectual or a philosopher. This masquerade gives rise to many senses of cinema: cinema as a form of entertainment; as a medium which disseminates a certain way of life, perspectives, beliefs; as a work of art which has its own aesthetic value and above all cinema as a visual narrative. The pleasure of cinema is not just in watching it but also in dissecting these various senses of cinema which are constantly battling for attention in the minds of the viewers.

This course is aimed at unravelling and understanding the various senses of cinema. The course will include the following modules:

## 1. The Moving Image – Cinema as Art

- Readings from *Film Art: An Introduction* by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson
- Readings from *The Story of Film* by Mark Cousins

## 2. Film Auteur – Director as Author

- Stanley Kubrick – *Paths of Glory, Dr. Strangelove, Full Metal Jacket, Spartacus*
  - Spike Lee – *Do The Right Thing, Clockers, Malcolm X, Mo' Better Blues*
  - Emir Kusturica – *Underground, Life is a Miracle, Black Cat White Cat, Time of the Gypsies*
- Asghar Farhadi, Jafar Panahi, Nadine Labaki, Ava DuVernay, Agnieszka Holland, Girish Karnad, Girish Kasaravalli, Shyam Benegal, Satyajit Ray, Deepa Mehta, Akira Kurosawa, Hayao Miyazaki, Alfred Hitchcock, Pa Ranjit, Nagaraj Manjule, Anurag Kashyap, Martin Scorsesse, Christopher Nolan, Wes Anderson, Alfonso Cuaron, Orson Wells, Charlie Chaplin

## 3. Deep Focus – Reading a film

- *Pan's Labyrinth* (Guillermo del Toro), *Aadukalam* (Vetri Maran)

## 4. The Cinephile– World Cinema, Film Festivals/Culture and the Internet

- Readings from *The Film Festival Reader* edited by Dina Iordino
- *Bengaluru International Film Festival* as a case study

## 5. Perspective – Writing about cinema

- Roger Ebert & Pauline Kael
- BFI's *Sight & Sound*, *Senses of Cinema*, *Cineaste*

### Internal Assessment

1. Film Essay	10 marks
2. Documenting Cinema Experience	10 marks
3. Film History Exhibition	10 marks
Total	<b>30 marks</b>

#### 1. Film Essay

**10 marks**

Students have an option to do one of the following

- a) Students are expected to write a 1500 words essay by choosing the films of a director or a studio and exploring common themes, styles, concerns or the socio political contexts in which the films are set. In case you choose the works of a particular director you are expected to track the influences on his/her style and identify some distinctive features of the set of films that you will be analysing. In case you choose to look at a set of films produced by a studio (Studio Ghibli or the Marvel films) you are expected to analyse the films by looking the larger socio-economic forces driving the interest in narrative styles and images of heroes among the film going public. In both cases you are expected to identify the importance of the distinctive styles of particular directors or studios and the relationship between the audience and the director/studio.
- b) Students are expected to write 1500 words essay exploring particular themes in films like war, migration, love, violence, humour, action, city life, etc. Students can draw from films belonging to different eras or from different languages. However, students need to identify a common connecting thread in the selected movies like common influences, references to a particular historical event or a fictional story or to a personal experience. A minimum of our films has to be selected for analysis. The essay should give a brief summary of the movie and then proceed to the analysis. Summaries can be given when the mention of that film is made. Students are expected to draw on the classroom lectures, readings and personal experiences for writing this essay.

## **2. Documenting Cinema Experience**

**10 marks**

Students have an option to do one of the following

- a) Join or create a film club and screen a minimum of 10 movies and gather the experience of watching movies as a group. The experience can be gathered in the form of interviews. Audio recordings can be edited and turned into podcasts and video recordings can be edited and posted as Vlogs. You should elicit responses from the members of the film club that covers their reason for being part of a film club, the kind of films they like, the kind of relationships they have developed by being part of film clubs and what does watching cinema mean to them. The edited audio/video clip should have a background commentary and should be organized in a proper manner so as to provide a coherent perspective of the experience gathered. Students can be creative and explore other questions and invents novel ways of documenting cinema experience.
- b) Attend an international film festival and write a personal essay of 1000 words on the experience of the film festival. Include the conversations you had with others during the festival, behaviour of the audience, reactions of audience to particular films, your own personal favourites. Explore the idea of film festivals being a 'melting pot' of different cultures in the personal essay.
- c) Attend movies of all kinds of genres and document the experience of the audience. Find out why different people like different kind of cinemas, what draws them to the big screens, what is their take away from the kind of films they watch and how do they enjoy the theatre experience. The experience can either be video recorded (only if permission is sought from the person) or written down. If it is video recording then the recording has to be edited and a background commentary has to be added to make sense of the video. The whole video should be coherent and provide the viewer with some understanding of your interpretation of the audience responses. If you decide to write then it has to be an essay of 1000 words long.

## **3. Film History Exhibition**

**10 marks**

Students will be divided into groups each consisting of seven members and each group will have to choose a theme pertaining to history of cinema and put up a stall exhibiting that particular theme. The exhibit can involve newspaper clippings, video screening through laptops, paintings, posters, cut-outs, arrangements out of cardboard boxes. Plastic or any harmful chemicals cannot be used. The exhibit should effectively convey the theme and pique the curiosity of the visitors. Out of the 10 marks allotted five marks will be calculated based on visitors perception and the remaining five by a panel of teachers who will visit the exhibits. Creativity and imaginative thinking will be rewarded.