

Department of Media Arts

About the department

Media Arts is one of the largest, top-rated departments in the country, offering a unique mix of practical media production and media theory and analysis. Our staff are internationally recognised experts in the fields of European and World cinema and in British and American film and television. Our practice-based research benefits from close links with senior figures working in the media and creative industries. The Media Arts Department has been ranked joint sixth in the UK for its research in the Research Assessment Exercise results which have just been released. 20% of our research was deemed to be world leading and 55% of international excellence. This result, for a department which submitted considerable amounts of practice as well as theoretical work, is outstanding and rewards our serious commitment to cutting edge research.

Entry requirements

The modules listed below are open to all Study Abroad, International and Erasmus students, subject to any required previous knowledge or qualifications, as stated in the module outlines below.

Each module is either ½ or 1 unit and starts in either the Autumn Term (September) or the Spring Term (January).

The information contained in the module outlines on the following pages is correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change as part of our policy of continuous improvement and development.



[royalholloway.ac.uk/Media Arts](https://royalholloway.ac.uk/Media%20Arts)



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Module options for visiting students

Module code	Module name	½ or 1 unit	Start date	Module description/pre-requisites
MA1051	Film, Television and Digital Histories	1 unit (30 Credits)	September 2020 (all year including first 3 weeks of term 3)	This module introduces students to film, television and digital history, spanning the last 100 years from the advent of cinema to current innovations in the area of new technologies and media. This broad historical sweep is intended to give you an historical knowledge to complement the theoretical emphasis of MA1052, knowledge that will in turn prove an essential grounding for modules undertaken in Years Two and Three. Syllabus Information
MA1052	Critical Theory and Textual Analysis	1 unit (30 Credits)	September 2020 (Terms 1 and 2 only)	This module introduces the analytical and theoretical study of cinema and television. It teaches the skills of critical analysis by focussing on discrete parts of film and television history and studying these in detail. The course is split into four five-week blocks, each of which focusses on one topic and is taught by a different lecturer. Syllabus Information
MA1054	Introduction to Narrative	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	This module is an introduction to narrative structures and strategies in film and television. The aim of the course is to explore what narrative is in those media, how it is constructed, how it is transmitted and how it is linked to the cultural context of media products. Syllabus Information
MA1154	Screen Narrative: Theory and Practice	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	The module will focus on narrative structure in film and television through close analysis and practical application of screenwriting structures. It will allow students to pay close attention to narrative form in the screenplay and its resultant Audiovisual form and enable students to apply their knowledge of narrative structures and conventions by writing their own screenplay. Syllabus Information
MA2051	Women's Cinema	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	The aim of this module is to consider the contribution made by ten films directed by women to feature film making. Do these films deal with female experience in a different way than their male-directed counterparts? Are their women characters always presented positively? How do they portray male characters and masculine settings? How do they represent (or not represent) sexual behavior and desire? How do they represent violence, poverty and social restrictions? Syllabus Information



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MA2052	Documentary	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	This module examines the ideas that both audiences and filmmakers commonly use to discuss documentaries. Each week students will examine a single film whose construction highlights a particular issue, and will discuss it in conjunction with a selected written text. Syllabus Information
MA2061	Narrative and Performance	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	The central concern of this module is with point of view in narrative films, taking as case studies the films of Alfred Hitchcock. We look at various ways in which our epistemic relationship to the characters and actions of films is an essential aspect of film narrative. We are also concerned with the challenges that thinking about point of view presents to film analysis and film theory. Films guide us to ways of seeing their parts; they orientate us to ways of seeing, hearing and interpreting them. Hitchcock's films guide us to interpret their stories in ways that famously combine comedy and suspense; these matters of tone, whether of a comedic, melodramatic or romantic nature, are important when considering point of view, and they raise related concerns. Syllabus Information
MA2066	Post-Classical Hollywood	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	This module offers students the opportunity to study the American commercial film industry since 1945, with an emphasis on the changes to the Hollywood mode of production in Hollywood's "post-classical" period – i.e., the decades since the collapse of the studio system in the 1950s. Individual films and filmmakers will be considered in principal relation to the institutional, economic and stylistic changes occurring at that point on Hollywood's historical evolution. Where appropriate, reference will also be made to relevant historical context during this period of enormous social and political upheaval and momentous cultural change in the United States. Topics to be discussed include the decline of the studio system (including the Paramount Decree, the HUAC hearings, the impact of television and the demise of the Production Code), the emergence of the New Hollywood, the rise and decline of Hollywood auteurism, genre revisionism and its meanings, the shifting forms of corporate organisation in Hollywood since the 1950s and their practical and aesthetic consequences, and the impact of contemporary media technologies. Syllabus Information



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MA2077	Beyond Bollywood: Indian Cinema in a Transnational Frame	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	<p>This module provides a critical overview of the history, aesthetics, and cultural politics of cinema in India (the country that produces the highest number of films in the world), with a special focus on the Hindi cinema produced in Bombay (Mumbai) and consumed around the world under the somewhat reductive label of “Bollywood.” Throughout its history, Indian cinema has attracted audiences across its borders (in Asia, Africa, the former Soviet bloc, and the Middle East), assimilated a wide range of global cinematic influences and prevented Hollywood from making inroads into its home territory. While taking account of historical developments, we will focus on the interplay between the national and the transnational in the making of Indian film cultures during two crucial periods of transformation:</p> <p>Syllabus Information</p>
MA2801	Digital Aesthetics and Software Politics	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	<p>The module is dedicated to a systematic understanding of digital aesthetics as experience that structures, produces and acts within forms of culture that increasingly become digital and computational.</p> <p>The course works across different themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it engages with three notions of aesthetics: as visual representation, emotional experience and a political project, - and explores how these play out in the digital realm; • it looks at how things work in the digital domain and explores the changing notion of the human and the impact of technology on cultural production; • it engages with cultural production that oscillates between brilliant aesthetic acts, “creative mush” and ideological constructions to see how digital culture emerges today. <p>Syllabus Information</p>



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MA2059	European Modernism and the Avant Garde Film, 1910-1939	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	This module is designed to introduce the neglected field of avant-garde film making through a study of its development in Europe during the 1920s and '30s and its specific relationship to the thought and practice of the modernist avant-garde in other media, especially art and literature. Suitable for second year students in modern language departments as well as in media, the course provides a counter-balance to the emphasis on films made in the period for large audiences. Here the emphasis is on filmmaking as a personal practice, and its relation to developments in fine art and literary practices within western culture. The course explores a radically different imagination of film as something other than filmed theatre and linear, melodramatic narrative. This is a course about film as lived experience, not passive story, about light, movement, about a very different way of being in the world that challenges the very preconceptions on which the conventions of modern life depend. Syllabus Information
MA2080	Creative Industries	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	This is a 15-credit module in which you will study the creative industries from an industrial perspective, with a particular aim of helping you to develop your own careers. At the core of the teaching are visits by leading practitioners from different aspects of the media industry who will give you different perspectives on what they do and how the industry operates. Syllabus Information
MA2081	Exotic Cinema: Encounters with Cultural Difference	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	This module introduces students to the concept of the exotic, generally understood as a highly contested discourse on cultural difference, and the representational strategies of exotic cinema. It situates exotic cinema in the context of popular culture and the media more broadly by examining western societies' insatiable appetite for ethnic fusion food, ethno chic and the cultural appropriation of the Other in music videos and television programmes. The module compares how Hollywood, European and World Cinema imagine cultural difference, covering a broad range of examples from the 1920s to the present day, including European and British classics. Syllabus Information



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MA2067	Television Histories	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	This course takes an historical approach to the analysis of television programmes. It examines how and why television has changed by exploring the medium through a range of different historical perspectives, including technological, industrial, social, cultural and generic histories. You will learn how to critique these approaches and will explore the assumptions behind certain versions of television's historical development. By the end of the course you will have gained a greater knowledge of the historical development of television, and you will also be able to think critically about the current changes to contemporary television. As such, the course will not simply focus on increasing your knowledge of 'old' television, but will relate these debates to contemporary television in order to explore how the history of the medium shapes the ways in which we understand it in the present. Syllabus Information
MA3041	Migrant Movies	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	This module explores the representation of migrants and refugees in contemporary transnational cinema. Transnational mobility and migration belong to the key forces of social transformation in the contemporary world. Mass migration and resettlement are charged with anxiety for migrating as well as receiving communities and they reconfigure identities and societies. Over the past thirty years, representations of refugees, migrants and diasporic communities have assumed a prominent position in mainstream and art-house cinema. Filmmakers with a migratory background have introduced new narrative themes and forms. By fusing Western and non-Western aesthetic traditions, they have revitalised contemporary cinema in the West. The course embeds the analysis of films including Journey of Hope (Xavier Koller, 1990); Babel (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2006); Welcome (Philippe Lioret, 2009); Calais: The Last Border (Marc Isaacs, 2003); Brooklyn (John Crowley, 2015); Biutiful (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2010) and Le Havre (Aki Kaurismäki, 2011) in socio-political discourses on ethnicity, immigration, national identity and cultural diversity. Syllabus Information



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MA3080	Film Style and Interpretation 1	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	As a subject, Film Aesthetics includes two areas of study: film storytelling and film interpretation. Films and topics change, but these two subjects are fundamental. Both will be discussed throughout the module. To explore the first subject, the module focuses on a sample of types of cinematic expression within the narrative tradition. We study examples of canonical films in narrative filmmaking, from a wide range of periods and countries, films, about which many critics and historians have written. To explore the second subject, the course considers different ways in which these critics and historians have interpreted films. We read exceptional film criticism and consider some of its underlying principles. By considering how critics have celebrated cinema in prose, we will be studying films critically and historically. Therefore, this module will help students develop their interpretative and evaluative skills, while encouraging reflection on the principles that support these critical practices. The films and filmmakers studied on the course can be approached from multiple directions. Therefore, in addition to the focus on film storytelling and film interpretation, the course will repeatedly return to several subsidiary issues: themes and ideas; plotting and structure; style and form; genre adaptation; tone and viewpoint; the ironic tradition; fiction and realism; transcendence and cinema; social determinism. In Film Aesthetics 1, we will study films that offer challenges to thinking about value and evaluation. We will reflect on questions such as these: How should we judge films? What are the tools of aesthetic analysis that we can employ to study films? Why do we value some films more than others? How and why do we make value judgements? Can we or should we identify criteria of value? Can watching films be an education in itself, in the way that reading books can be an education? How much value should we attach to things like tradition, conventions, invention and innovation? Syllabus Information
MA3092	The Poetics of Contemporary Television	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	This module explores the " poetics " (i.e. narrative form) of television drama by studying one key text in detail - the first season of Netflix's critically acclaimed <i>House of Cards</i> (based on the 1989 novel of the same name, which was first made for TV by the BBC in 1990). In keeping with the tradition of poetics, we will study <i>House of Cards</i> from a wide range of different critical perspectives in order to develop a broad understanding of how (and why) narrative operates. Syllabus Information



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MA3075	Melodrama	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	To develop a historical and analytical knowledge of a key film genre, argued to be the most influential in Hollywood, which will enable a critical understanding of film narrative and characterization, film representations of domestic life, gender, race, class and sexuality, and the psychodynamics of sympathetic responses. The course will cover a range of films from Griffiths' 'Way Down East' to Ramsey's 'We Need to Talk about Kevin'. Key critical readings from Linda Williams, Steve Neale, Lauren Berlant, Thomas Elsaesser Laura Mulvey, Sharon Willis and Sue Thornham will be included. Syllabus Information
MA30xx	American Independent Cinema	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	Validation being finalized.
MA3044	Music Video	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	The module surveys the evolution of the music video (and filmic precursors) from the 1940s to the present, attending to the first short films used in the 1930s and 40s to promote jazz and boogie-woogie musicians such as Count Basie and Mead Lux Lewis, especially in the American 'race market', then looking at the way in 'caper' films were used in both feature films and American TV to promote bands such as the Beatles and the Monkees, and indeed The Archies, who existed only on screen as animations and were not a real band. We then progress to the emergence of video as a technology and the placement of videos within popular music TV programming from the 1960s on, culminating in the success of Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and Ultravox's 'Vienna'. After this we analyse the changes in structure and financing in the music and TV industries of the late 70s and early 80s that made possible the launch of MTV in 1981. We then turn to a bloc addressing style, theme and identity, looking at the way in which videos reflected sub-cultural difference and sexuality. Students will have a week free in mid-term (reading week) to prepare and submit the first video essay. We finish the module with a bloc addressing financial questions and low budget filmmaking, generic conventions across a range from country, heavy and death metal, industrial, shoegazing, acid house, trance and hip hop (amongst others, though not K Pop) that reflect a growing fragmentation of the music industry into niche markets since the 1980s. In the course students will get to see about 300 different videos and films from nearly 80 years of their history. We finish with a seminar of the future of the music video, starting from Beyoncé's 'Video Phone' and the Carters {} which analyses the changing purpose of the music vid in contemporary culture and its move from promotion to branding. Syllabus Information



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MA3077	Television and Digital Culture	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	<p>This module engages in key debates around digital cultures, placing these in historical context and providing opportunity to apply these analytically and creatively to current issues and trends in digital cultures. It places this understanding of digital culture within a wider history of media cultures, particularly film and television, encouraging students to consider what is “new” about digital media, what practices of production and reception have influenced the development of digital culture and how have these been theorised. The module will enable you to critically explore a wide range of issues in digital cultures, from digital identities to Web 2.0, online communities to critical digital advertising.</p> <p>Syllabus Information</p>
MA3043	African American Cinema	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	<p>Having contextualised African American culture and film in an historical overview, the module surveys African American cinema from the first films made by black directors and producers, for the ‘race market’, in the early 1920s, taking over the studio lots on the east coast of the USA abandoned by companies moving to Hollywood. It then progresses through the early sound era in which “the negro voice” was privileged, partly because of the growing popularity with white audiences for black cast stage musicals and the effect of the Harlem Renaissance in literature, painting and music. Thus a significant number of early sound films are black cast musicals, with white directors, such as Charles King Vidor’s Hallelujah (1929). These films tended to glamorise the horrendous situation of the negro in the old South and the aftermath of the Civil War. We then examine the White Liberal race film in which, with the rearticulation of the struggle for equal rights in the 1950s, Hollywood produced a series of films, culminating in Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? that addressed almost exclusively white audiences with mixed race casts (well, mostly Sidney Poitier plus white cast) and tensions of a bitterly divided society. We then move to radical films made by African American directors for primarily black audiences in the wake of the political upheavals of the 1960s, such as Killer of Sheep and Bush Mama mostly produced under the rubric of the LA Rebellion, and inspired by policies at UCLA of extending access to black filmmakers. After a reading week we turn our attention to the Blaxploitation films Shaft and Superfly as representative of excess as a metaphor for resistance to oppression in African American society and at the same time a diversionary, apolitical spectacle that often ridicules real, historical resistance. In the final weeks we turn to the ways in which African American filmmakers have created a new kind of auteurship and styles that address history and contemporary society, most notably by women directors such as Julie Dash and Leslie Harris, in Daughters of the Dust and Just Another Girl on the IRT and the work of Spike Lee, and end with the way in which contemporary African American filmmaking, in the wake of Barry Jenkins’ Hollywood success, has begun to address the modernist literary canon in black culture and also, in the work of Arthur Jaffe begun to penetrate the fine art gallery installation.</p> <p>Syllabus Information</p>



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MA3087	Sensational Technologies	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	Students taking this module will develop an advanced critical understanding of the ways in which innovation in media technology is researched, interpreted, and presented to academic and popular audiences. The module will examine how histories of media technology are presented in various forms, including academic literature, popular documentary and books, and through museums, apps, and re-enactments. In addition to examining a range of key texts relating to the history of media technology, the module will focus upon a range of central media technologies which will offer case studies for discussion during seminars. Syllabus Information
MA3042	Far-flung Families in Film	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	This module explores the representation of migrant and diasporic families in contemporary transnational cinema. It asks: Why have films with diasporic family narratives increased in prominence and popularity in recent years? How do representations of ethnic minority families differ from those of dominant social groups? How do these films adapt and inflect generic conventions such as those of the family melodrama, the romantic comedy or the road movie? As cinema tends to depict social conflicts and historical transitions indirectly through affective relations in the family, the diasporic family on screen crystallises the emotionally ambivalent response to growing ethnic diversity in the West. Therefore, even politically innocuous comedies such as <i>East Is East</i> , the girl power movie <i>Bend It Like Beckham</i> , wedding films like <i>Monsoon Wedding</i> , not to mention films about honour killings (<i>When We Leave</i>) intervene in wider public debates. Syllabus Information
MA3081	Film Style and Interpretation 2: Realism	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	As a subject, Film Aesthetics includes two areas of study: film storytelling and film interpretation. Films and topics change, but these two subjects are fundamental. Both will be discussed throughout the course. To explore the first subject, the module focuses on a sample of types of cinematic expression within the narrative tradition. We study examples of canonical films in narrative filmmaking, from a wide range of periods and countries, films, about which many critics and historians have written. To explore the second subject, the module considers different ways in which these critics and historians have interpreted films. Syllabus Information



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MA3171	British Cinema	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	<p>The module will examine issues and themes in contemporary British cinema in relation to questions of place and identity.</p> <p>Topics will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the concept of national cinema and its relationship to British cinema the concept of transnational cinema and its relationship to British cinema the relationship of British cinema to Hollywood the representation of London in British cinema the representation of the North of England in British cinema the cinema of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland representations of class, gender/masculinity/femininity, 'race', ethnicity nationality, and sexuality/sexual orientation in British cinema <p>Syllabus Information</p>
MA3050	Beyond Documentary	½ unit (15 Credits)	September 2020 (Term 1)	<p>The first half of this module concentrates on recent developments in non-fiction filmmaking, attending to the growth in first person observational documentary and autobiographical filmmaking. This looks at the essay film, at participative user-based documentary both as tradition and contemporary practice, community-based projects and at reconstructive documentary in both film and fine art performance.</p> <p>In its second half the module attends to the growing diversification of media platforms for non-fiction film, and the parallel diversification of production media. This includes studies of VR as a narrative mode, and the use of exhibitions, installations and new forms of storytelling. Syllabus Information</p>
MA3055	Film Form	½ unit (15 Credits)	January 2021 (Term 2)	<p>This module studies questions of film form via a close examination of individual film texts. The module will work with a number of canonical and contemporary films to explore the ideas critics and filmmakers have used to think through the organisation of space, time, action and occurrence in the medium. These include: mise en scène, montage, decoupage, parallel editing, alternation, and off-screen space. The central focus of each week's work will be the close examination of sequences from the films being studied. Students will be encouraged to experiment with various methods (visual, verbal, written) of representing the results of their analyses in the seminars. Syllabus Information</p>



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