



LNDN FILM 3366

City Symphony:

Experimental Cinema

CAPA London Film Program

Semester and Year (Ex. Spring 2019)

Faculty name	:	TBD
E-mail	:	TBD
Class times	:	TBD
Classroom location	:	TBD
Office Hours	:	TBD



Course Description

Painters of every nationality depict the city, but only a succession of images can bring it to life.
Alberto Cavalcanti, *Rien que les heures* (1926)

The city symphony film emerged in the 1920s, when filmmakers were experimenting with the mobility of viewpoint enabled by the portable film camera and more sensitive panchromatic film stock. The city, in particular its interwar technologies of urban transport and machinery, provided the ideal testing ground for the newly sensitive and mobile camera. It demanded to be seen, and shown, in a new mode that for Brazilian director Alberto Cavalcanti, only film could provide. But of all the international cities that were given the symphony treatment in the 1920s – New York, Paris, Berlin, St Petersburg, Sao Paulo – London was missing. If London lacked its own ‘city symphony’ film in the 1920s, what were the significant representations of the urban experience? This course looks at the ways in which London both invited and defied the filmmaker’s gaze in this critical period of early cinema, and considers how a contemporary city symphony for London might be composed.

The city has been an integral part of the filmmaker’s vocabulary since cinema’s genesis in the late nineteenth century. The urban environment and the craft of film grew up together in the twentieth century, seasoned by various convergences of technology, one notable one in the 1920s with broadcast radio, telephony and the talkies, and another over the last fifteen years, with broadband, smartphone cameras, and digital media. This course bridges these two periods, drawing on history and theory to interrogate the form of the city symphony film, and consider subsequent forms such as the essay film, and develop an urban filmmaking practice that allows students to gather and formulate their own reflections on London.

The course will be run alongside **Urban Scavenger**, in which students will develop and make their own film within a taught theoretical framework. Students will be strongly encouraged to bring ideas from one to the other, and to combine critical analysis with practical filmmaking.

Course Aims

This course encourages students to both theorise and document their own experiences as visitors to London. While it is rooted in the historical context of the early twentieth century, using the genre of the city symphony as a prism through which to examine several key features of early cinema, from sound/silence to montage and visual language, it also attends to the forms and media of the present day, from essay film to vlogs. By studying both periods in parallel, with reference to both the theory and practice of urban filmmaking, students will develop a nuanced understanding of the context of cinema in different moments, encouraging them to inform their own practical exercises with a theoretical framework. Students will be prepared by the readings, screenings and discussions on the course to experience the city with a critical and documentary approach, both self-reflexive and observational. They will be required to express their experience and learning through presentations, written assignment and a film treatment, and also to reflect it in the film and written report they produce for the **Urban Scavenger** course.

Requirements and Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this class.

Learning Outcomes

- 1) Gain an understanding of the cultural and historical contexts of early cinema, with specific reference to the city, and draw parallels with the 21st-century media moment
- 2) Explore the film theory discourse around montage and sound technologies
- 3) Examine the definitions and limits of the essay form with reference to a specific essay film
- 4) Become familiar with practical filmmaking skills and write a film treatment
- 5) Adopt a theoretical framework for explorations of the city

Developmental Outcomes

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences.

Class Methodology

Paragraphs must be in Franklin Gothic Book 10pt.

Field Components

The following field trips provided by CAPA will be compulsory for this course:
 Greenwich River Boat Cruise
 East London Street Art Tour

Assessment/Grading Policy

Descriptor	Alpha	UK	US	GPA
Excellent	A	75+	93+	4.0
	A-	70-74	90-92	3.7
Good	B+	66-69	87-89	3.3
	B	63-65	83-86	3.0
	B-	60-62	80-82	2.7
Average	C+	56-59	77-79	2.3
	C	53-55	73-76	2.0

Below Average / Poor	C-	50-52	70-72	1.7
	D+	46-49	67-69	1.3
	D	40-45	60-66	0.7
				1.0
Fail	F	<40	<60	0

Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Presentation	20%
Essay	35%
Film treatment	35%
Attendance	10%

Assignments

Assignment 1: Presentation (20%) given on 28 January

Students will present for 10 minutes (including excerpts) on a 1920s city symphony film of their choice. They will be assessed on their analysis, connection with themes of the course so far, and relevant clip selection.

Assignment 2: Film treatment (35%) due 18 February

After two weeks' study of and around the form of the city symphony, students are invited to prepare a treatment for their own city symphony film. Assessment will be based on conceptual coherence, storytelling and reflection of course themes.

Assignment 3: Written essay (35%) due 4 March

A 2000-word analysis of one or several film essays, paying attention to montage techniques and their effects. Assessment will be in accordance with the PLFP specification grading rubric.

Required Readings:

Background readings are specified for many modules of the course, please see the weekly schedule for these. They will be available as PDFs before the start of term. **Students are expected to print out the readings and bring them to class having read them beforehand.** Links to film material available online, or occasionally to DVDs available for loan, may also form part of this preparatory work and students will need to undertake this viewing prior to class. There is an additional list for optional further reading.

Recommended Reading(s):

For guidance on using copyrighted materials, please consult the Pitt Library Film Studies page: <http://pitt.libguides.com/c.php?g=12123&p=64813>

For guidance on correct citations and referencing, please consult the Pitt Citation Style Guide: <http://pitt.libguides.com/citationhelp/mla8thedition>

MLA Style is recommended.

SUNY-Oswego On-line Library Resources

Students are advised to review assignments and readings. If you do not have access to sufficient additional resources from your home institution to complete the coursework for this class, you may request access to the on-line library resources of SUNY-Oswego: <http://libraryguides.oswego.edu/c.php?g=500670>. To access this resource, you must request access during the first week of the program.

Weekly Course Schedule

Session 1, Ealing Room, CAPA	
Required reading: Hicks, Jeremy <i>Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film</i> , London: IB Tauris, 2007, pp. 3-8 and pp. 58-70.	
Kino-eye: epistemological aspects of documentary cinema	Assignment 1 set
Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov's 1923 manifesto sets out a compelling first-person formulation of the film camera's kinetic possibilities. We will watch Vertov's <i>Man with a Movie Camera</i> (1929) and consider how far he achieved his manifesto's objectives. Students will be assigned one other city symphony film from the period to research and present on 28 January.	

Session 2, Ealing Room, CAPA	
Filmmaking basics	
Students will gain/review familiarity with filmmaking equipment and the editing process.	

Session 3, Ealing Room, CAPA	
Required reading: Barbara Mennel 'Modernity and the City Film: Berlin' in <i>Cities and Cinema</i> , London and New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 21-45.	
City Symphony contexts: film and the 1920s city	
We will introduce some context for the city symphony films made in the 1920s, and watch excerpts of Walter Ruttmann's <i>Berlin, Symphony of a City</i> (1927).	

Session 4, Ealing Room, CAPA	
Required reading: Webber, Andrew 'Symphony of a City: Motion Pictures and Still Lives in Weimar Berlin' in <i>Cities in Transition</i> , eds. Andrew Webber and Emma Wilson, London/New York: Wallflower Press, 2008, pp. 56 - 71.	
City Symphony contexts: modernism and modernity	Assignment 1 due
Students will present on their films, then we will explore aspects of modernism and the avant-garde that feed into the genre. We will also discuss the distinction between modernity and modernism.	

Session 5, Ealing Room, CAPA	
London: A City Symphony	Assignment 2 set
Director Alex Barrett will introduce his new city symphony film about London, with clips, followed by a Q&A session.	

Session 6, Ealing Room, CAPA	
Required reading: Keiller, Patrick. Excerpt from 'The Poetic Experience of Townscape and Landscape' <i>The View from the Train: Cities and Other Landscapes</i> , 2013, pp. 4-9. Poe, Edgar Allen 'The Man of the Crowd' (first published 1840) http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/poe/manofcro.html	
The flâneur/the flâneuse	
The essays of Edgar Allen Poe and Virginia Woolf offer exercises in different sensory modes of experiencing the city by wandering its streets. We will reflect on how far these texts were influenced by film, and how in turn they might point the way to a London city symphony.	

Session 7, Ealing Room, CAPA	
Required reading: Aumont, Jacques. <i>Montage</i> . Montreal: Caboose, 2013, pp. 32-46. Recommended viewing/reading: Blog by Adam Curtis (http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/adamcurtis)	
Montage: thought and affect	
In this session we will study the Soviet School of Montage, thinking about the rhetoric of moving images, signification and the possibility of filmic language. We will also explore differences between montage and editing aiming at continuity and introduce the concept of <i>découpage</i> . There will be a practical editing exercise.	

Session 8, Ealing Room, CAPA	
Required reading: Rascaroli, Laura, 'The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments,' <i>Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media</i> , 49, no. 2 (2008), pp. 24-47.	
Film essays, vlogs and the digital	Assignment 3 set
After reviewing classic film essayists from Chris Marker to Patrick Keiller and discussing possible definitions of the essay, we examine contemporary forms of moving image culture such as vlogs and digital art.	

Session 9, Ealing Room, CAPA	
Required reading: Brunsdon, Charlotte. 'The Elsewhere of the London Underground,' in <i>Electronic Elsewheres: Media, Technology, and the Experience of Social Space</i> . Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2010, pp. 197-223.	
Underground	
Departing from an excerpt from Anthony Asquith's <i>Underground</i> (1928), this session explores the matrix of energy, transport and viewpoint in 1920s London, and considers urban networks more broadly.	

Break	
	Assignment 2 due

Session 10, Ealing Room, CAPA	
Required reading: Henri Lefebvre <i>The Production of Space</i> tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, pp. 33.	
Mediated City	Assignment 3 due
What are the problems with living in a web of networks – of communications, transportation, energy and waste? We discuss Lefebvre's concept of spatial practice, look at films that use urban infrastructure for their narrative flow, and carry out our own mapping exercise.	

Session 11, field trip – note later class time 11am-2pm	
Viewing habits then and now	
We go on a tour of London's Cinema Museum, a fantastic resource for considering the twentieth-century history of film viewing.	

Session 12, Ealing Room, CAPA	
Required reading: Virginia Woolf 'Flying over London' in <i>Selected Essays</i> ed. David Bradshaw, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 207-212.	
Mobile camera/immersive environments	

We consider the mobility of the camera as a narrative tool, and explore the immersive experience of VR.

Session 13, Ealing Room, CAPA

Recommended reading:

Martin Stig Anderson 'Electroacoustic Sound and Audiovisual Structure in Film' eContact! 12.4 – Perspectives on the Electroacoustic Work / Perspectives sur l'œuvre électroacoustique (August 2010). http://econtact.ca/12_4/andersen_audiovisual.html

Sound

We will consider conventional approaches to sound and voiceover, and a narrative thread in the city symphony film and the documentary and essay form more generally, from John Grierson to Chris Marker to Mark Cousins. We will experiment with audio recordings during class.

Session 14, Ealing Room, CAPA

'A City Symphony in Reverse'

We will watch parts of Thom Andersen's *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003) and discuss its relationship to the 1920s films we've looked at. Reviewing some examples of the 'global symphony', we ask what the contemporary counterpart to the city symphony might be.

Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities

Attendance: CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unless otherwise expressed by your instructor, the first time a student has an unexcused absence for a class, his/her grade will not be impacted. The second time a student has an unexcused absence in that class, it will result in a 3 percent reduction of the final grade (for example: an A- [92] will become an B+ [89]). The student will be placed on academic probation at this time. Three unexcused absences per class will result in failure of the course. A pattern of three absences in more than one course will result in dismissal from the program.

Excused Absences: Absences are only excused for medical reasons, for a family emergency or for a religious holiday. To request an excused absence, students must contact excused.absence@capa.org ahead of time and provide evidence (e.g. a doctor's note) of the reason for his/her absence, otherwise the absence will not be excused. Even if the student knows the absence will not be excused, the student should still contact CAPA to inform CAPA they will not be in class.

In addition to contacting excused.absence@capa.org, it is the responsibility of the student to contact his/her instructor and make up any missed assignments.

Class Participation: Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability should contact the instructor and/or the director of academic affairs privately to discuss your specific needs.

Academic Integrity: A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism, self-plagiarism and cheating can result in dismissal from the program.

Self-plagiarism, copying an assignment entirely or partially to submit to a different class in an attempt to receive credit twice for one piece of work is unacceptable and considered cheating by duplication. Students risk receiving an "0" for any assignments in which they have duplicated their own work.

All substantial writing assignments (typically anything worth 20% or more of the final course grade) will be run through the plagiarism checking software Turnitin when submitted via CANVAS. See CAPA's Academic Standards and Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX: CAPA The Global Education Network is committed to encouraging a safe and healthy environment at our seven CAPA centers. This commitment includes the understanding of, and applicable adherence to, the guidelines outlined in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX necessitates that US universities provide equity in all educational programs and activities without sex discrimination.

CAPA understands the implications of Title IX compliance for our institutional partners and thus endeavors to support this compliance as a vital aspect of partnership. The safety and security of all students during a program is a matter of crucial importance to CAPA. To facilitate this, CAPA encourages students to openly disclose any and all information that is Title IX relevant so that CAPA staff can provide support and connect students with appropriate resources. Because students may not understand the implications of Title IX abroad, CAPA will work to advise students about the resources available through Title IX and explain the importance of compliance in Title IX reporting. CAPA will work to build student confidence in CAPA's status as a mandated reporter by outlining the advantage of disclosure for the student, reassuring them that any information disclosed will not be used in an inappropriate manner, and stressing that individuals will only be informed on a need-to-know basis.

Use of electronic equipment in class: All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

Use of Electronic Translators: In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

Late Submission: Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

Behaviour during Examinations: During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.