

British Cinema: From Hitchcock to *Morvern Callar*.

London Term, Fall 2007

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Though it is today enjoying a tremendous renaissance, the British film industry has long been overshadowed by Hollywood and by the more prolific, better-funded national cinemas of France, Italy and Germany. Yet, despite this, British cinema remains a central fixture of British popular culture and individual British films and directors have enjoyed considerable international prestige over the years.

This course will take a critical look at the tumultuous history of British cinema from its early years to the present (with a particular focus on the post-WWII period). It will introduce students to the significant movements, styles, writers, directors, actors, films and studios that helped to shape that history. It will also explore the economic organization of the UK's film industry and the role government policy has played in promoting film production. Special emphasis will be placed on various ways films produced in the UK have both reflected and commented upon changes in postwar British society, politics and culture.

In addition to learning about British cinema through the course readings, lectures and required film screening, we will take group field trips to some of London's many film festivals as well as to the BBC and the British Film Institute.

Students will write several short film reviews, will complete one medium-length director (or studio) profile (10-12 pages) and will take a midterm and a final exam.

Required Text:

Robert Murphy ed., **The British Cinema Book** 2nd Edition (2002)

Students will also read a small packet of photocopied articles.

Procedures, Requirements & Expectations

Course Format. This course presupposes the active involvement and collaboration of everyone enrolled. I will give one prepared lecture a week. Many weeks we will also watch a full length film (either in class, at a film festival or at BFI's National Film Theater). The rest of class time will be given over to structured group discussion of issues and questions raised by the films, lectures, guest speakers, field trips and assigned reading. That means that you'll have to do the required reading for each session, attend class regularly and make an effort to participate. In class discussions, it will be my job to facilitate and to keep the conversation flowing.

Note Taking. Because many of the films you'll be watching for class are not readily available from the local video store, it is imperative that you take decent notes on the films we see during our screenings. I'll talk a little about how to do this in class. If you find you're having trouble with note taking, talk to me and I'll work with you on this.

You may find that the note taking skills you pick up in this class come in handy in other classes as well.

Writing Assignments. You will be asked to complete a total of five writing assignments for the course: three film reviews (4-5 pages); a take home midterm (4-6 pages); and a 10-12 page profile of a British director, producer or studio of your choice. All writing assignments should be machine produced (i.e. typed or printed) double-spaced in 12 point Times or New York font and should be relatively free of mechanical and grammatical error. My grading criteria for your written work are laid out in detail at the end of this syllabus.

Final. In addition to your written work, students in this class will take a comprehensive final which will cover the readings, films and lectures and will consist of identification, short answer and essay questions.

Attendance. It will be extremely difficult for you to do well in this course if you don't come to class. I expect you to attend class regularly, to be on time and to stay for the entire session. I'll allow you two (2) unexcused absences without penalty; after that I will lower your final grade by 5% for each unexcused absence.

Participation. The amount and quality of your contributions to class discussion will determine 10% of your final grade. To receive a high score for your participation, you should not only do the reading for class but also come prepared to say something. It might help if you came to class with a list of questions about the films we've seen or a passage from one of the books you'd like to hear discussed. At the end of the course I will give you a short written evaluation of your participation.

Grades. Your grade for the course will be based on your 3 reviews, your comparative cinematic style essay, your midterm, your final, your director/studio profile and your participation in class discussions. The reviews and comparative essay will each be worth ten (10) percent of your final grade. The mid-term and final exam will each count for twenty (20) percent. The director/studio profile will count for twenty (20) percent. And your class participation will count for (10) ten percent. To make it easier for me to calculate final grades, each assignment or grade component will receive both a letter grade and a corresponding point score. On my grading scale, an A is 93% to 100% of the possible points, 90 to 92% is an A-, 87% to 89% is a B+, 83% to 86% is a B, 80% to 82% is a B-, 77% to 79% is a C +, 73% to 76% is a C, 70% to 72% is a C-, 67% to 69% is a D+, 60% to 68% is a D and anything less than 59% is an F. Below is a breakdown of the points for each assignment or final grade component:

3 film reviews @ 100 points=	300 points
1 take-home midterm exam @ 200 points=	200 points
1 final exam@ 200 points=	200 points
1 director/studio profile @ 200 points=	200 points
Class participation=	100 points

1000 total points possible

If you want to figure out how you are doing in the class at any time during the semester, simply divide the points you've earned so far by the number of points you could've earned.

Late Work. The due dates for each of the writing assignments are clearly listed on the schedule below. All written work will be docked half a grade for each week it is overdue.

Plagiarism. I expect you to do your own work in this class. Anyone caught plagiarizing-- representing the work of others as his or her own-- will fail the course.

Tentative 14 Week Schedule

Below is a tentative 14 week schedule for the course. Note that, as with your other London courses, the field trips are subject to change, which of course will effect the rest of the schedule. Still, we will try to stick to this schedule if at all possible.

Week 1. Introduction; The Early British Film Industry

Field Trip: BFI Southbank – Mediatheque

Reading: Introduction, Chapters 1-3, 18 & 19 and Postscript in **The British Cinema Book**

Week 2. British Cinema Between the Wars

Screening: *The 39 Steps* (1935)

Reading: Chapters 4-6, 26 in **The British Cinema Book**

Week 3. WWII and the Immediate Postwar Years

Field Trip: Raindance Film Festival

Reading: Chapters 8-11, 13, 14 in **The British Cinema Book**

Week 4. The Kitchen Sink Drama/The New Wave

Screening: *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*(1961)

Reading: Chapters 12 &17, and Pauline Kael, “Commitment and the Strait-Jacket” (to be distributed)

Week 5. New Wave (continued)/The Swinging 60s

Screening: *If....* (1969)

Reading: Chapters 24 & 29 in **The British Cinema Book**

Film Review #1 Due.

Week 6. The Malaise of the 70s/Punk and Cinema//London Film Festival

Oct 18

Field Trip: London Film Festival

Reading: Chapters 31 & 32 in **The British Cinema Book**

Take Home Midterm Due.

Week 7. Midterm Break Oct 19-28.

Week 8. The Film Industry in the 80s and 90s

Reading: Chapters 25 & 33 in **The British Cinema Book**

John Hill, “Contemporary British Cinema: Industry, Policy and Identity” (to be distributed)

Week 9. The Thatcher Years: Film and Heritage Culture

Screening: *Chariots of Fire* (1981)

Reading: Chapters 15 and 23 in **The British Cinema Book**

Amy Sargent, “Making and Selling Heritage Culture” (to be distributed)

Week 10. TV and its Impact on Film Production

Field Trip: Visit to BBC center

No reading. Work on your director/studio profiles!

Film Review #2 Due.

Week 11. Class and Class Struggle from Thatcherism through “New Labour”: Brit-Grit

Screening: *The Navigators* (2002)

Reading: Chapter 30 in **The British Cinema Book**

John Hill, “From the New Wave to Brit Grit”

Claire Monk, “Underbelly UK”

Richard Kelly, “We shouldn’t be doing this’: *The Navigators: Stories from the Tracksides*” (to be distributed)

Week 12. Ethnic Identity

Screening: *East is East* (1999)

Reading: Chapter 21 in **The British Cinema Book**

Cary Rajinder Sawhney, “Another Kind of British: An Exploration of British Asian Films” (to be distributed)

Week 13. Regionalism

Screening: *Ratcatcher* (1999)

Reading: Chapter 22 in **The British Cinema Book**

Duncan Petrie, “Devolving British Cinema: The New Scottish Cinema and European Art Film” (to be distributed)

Film Review #3 Due.

Week 14. Finals

Final Paper Due

Guidelines for Written Work

- All written work must be typed or printed in dark ink, double-spaced, stapled (not paper clipped) together, in 12 point Times or New York font and should have a title page. It must be responsive to all aspects of the assignment, including length, and should use the Modern Language Association (MLA) system of documentation and style.

- Written work should be relatively free of mechanical and grammatical error.
- Document every reference, including page numbers whenever possible.
- Feel free to write in the first person. Support claims not common knowledge with evidence and conclusions with argument. Take time to plan your papers and devote some time to rewriting them. Always keep a second copy of your work.
- Assume your reader has not taken this course. Define all terms whose definitions are controversial or obscure. Take time to explain the theories you are using. Include as much detail as you need to support your argument. Illustrations (diagrams, storyboards, photographs, photos of still frames, etc.) are always welcome.

- Avoid racist, sexist and homophobic language.
- Grades: Failure to follow any of the above guidelines will result in a lower grade. Otherwise, here are my standards:

An "A" paper demonstrates that the writer has not only mastered the concepts of the course, but has applied them in an imaginative and incisive manner. The paper shows a command of the language that allows the writer to express ideas and observations clearly, effectively, in detail and with virtually no mechanical errors. The paper includes adequate documentation. "A"s are reserved for exceptional essays.

A "B" paper demonstrates that the writer has understood the concepts of the course and has applied them with some originality. The paper shows the writer can organize a coherent essay with few errors. The paper for the most part includes adequate documentation.

A "C" paper demonstrates that the writer has understood most of the concepts of the course but needs to pay more attention to reading or writing. Documentation is erratic.

A "D" paper demonstrates that the writer has only a minimal understanding of the concepts of the course. Significant gaps in the writer's comprehension indicate the need for more study. The paper shows the writer's basic compositional skills are below satisfactory. Documentation is unsatisfactory.

A "F" paper demonstrates that the writer has little, if any, understanding of the concepts of the course. Because of the writer's lack of skill or concern, the work includes gross errors as well as a lack of content. Documentation is negligible. The paper may also fail to address parts of the assignment.

A paper may combine characteristics of different levels of work. In that case, the grade will depend on the paper's overall demonstration of knowledge of the material and of college writing skills.

Please see me if you have questions about my standards or about any of your grades for the course.