

MODULE TITLE AND CODE: Melodrama (FSS003 / FS4029)

LECTURER: Dr. Paula Quigley

CONTACT HOURS: 22 lecture/seminar hours

22 screening hours

SEMESTER: 2 (Hilary Term)

ECTS value: 5 / 10 ECTS

Rationale and aims

This module will consider a wide range of variations on the 'melodramatic mode', including examples from early cinema, classical Hollywood cinema, as well as current American and European cinema. We will explore key theoretical debates around melodrama and link these debates with critically informed close analyses of the films under discussion.

Course Content

Defining melodrama

Genre and sub-genres

Film style and mise-en-scène

Questions of authorship

Issues of audience and spectatorship

Social and cultural contexts

National and industrial contexts

Critical responses

Textual analyses

Generic revisionism

Resources

There is no set text for this course. Required viewing and reading is set each week. Further viewing and reading is recommended as appropriate.

The following titles are useful accompaniments to the module as a whole.

Basinger, J. *A Woman's View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women 1930-1960*. London, Chatto & Windus, 1994.

Bratton, Jackie et al. (eds) *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*. London: BFI, 1994.

Brooks, P. *The Melodramatic Imagination*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Byars, J. *All that Heaven allows: Re-reading gender in 1950s melodrama*. University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

Campbell, J. *Film and cinema spectatorship: melodrama and mimesis*. Polity Press, 2005.

Doane, M.A. *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s*. London: MacMillan, 1987.

Gledhill, C. *Home is where the heart is: studies in melodrama and the woman's film*. BFI, 1987.

Lang, R. *American Film Melodrama: Griffith, Vidor, Minnelli*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Laing, H. *The Gendered Score: Music in 1940s Melodrama and the Woman's Film*. Ashgate Publishing, 2007.

Landy, M. (ed.) *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991.

Mercer, J. and Shingler, M. *Melodrama: Genre, Style and Sensibility*. London, Wallflower Press, 2004.

Singer, B. *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts*. Columbia University Press, 2001.

Stewart, M. (ed) *Melodrama in Contemporary Film and Television*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Zarzosa, A. *Refiguring Melodrama in Film and Television*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2013.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

Synthesise their knowledge of melodrama within a wider economic, industrial, aesthetic and socio-cultural context;

Analyse current issues within the study of melodrama within the broader context of currents within film studies;

Recognise the range of material that characterizes the category of melodrama;

Apply the theoretical models and critical approaches under discussion to specific films and film styles.

Methods of Teaching and Student Learning

Teaching methods include film screenings, lectures and seminar discussions. Students will be expected to attend all classes and screenings; read from primary as well as secondary sources and comment upon these readings; participate in class discussion; perform the required assessment. Students may be required to make a class presentation on some aspect of the course covered.

Methods of assessment

90% Coursework

10% Participation

Module Evaluation

Course and Teaching Surveys will be circulated to students at the end of the module. Feedback will be used to reflect on course development.
