

Course Outline

Course:		LAWS 5903F Socio-Legal Engagements in Film and Television: Theory in Non-textual Narratives
Term:		Fall 2012
Prerequisites:		
Class:	Day & Time:	Mondays, 11:35 – 2:25
	Room:	LA D492
Instructor:		Diana Young
Contact:	Office:	Loeb Building D498
	Office Hrs:	Thursdays 12:00 – 1:00
	Telephone:	613-520-2600 ex 1981
	Email:	Diana_Young@carleton.ca

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is not to look at courtroom dramas or critique popular conceptions of the criminal justice system per se. Instead I would like to look at a few popular genres in screen art (i.e., film and television) and consider them in light of some of the theoretical perspectives students might be familiar with. My hope is that the course will work for students on three levels:

- 1) The study of screen art can provide students with an opportunity to think about how social and legal theoretical perspectives that they might have studied through text may also be conveyed through other means: through visual representations, sound, acting and editing techniques, and fictional narrative.
- 2) Thinking about film and its relationship to these theoretical perspectives may generate new deeper insights into these perspectives, as well as provide interesting new ways of appreciating popular art forms.
- 3) The act of unpacking the cultural reference points with which meaning is conveyed through popular culture may provide insights into the assumptions that underlie much of legal discourse, and suggest critical perspectives on law and the justice system.

Film and television are obviously varied media and the selections I have made for this course are not intended to be a canon. All of the selections are drawn from popular American culture, but are also complex and multi-layered. Although I suggest various approaches to thinking about the selections we will study, of course any art form can be interpreted in a variety of ways and students are welcome to suggest alternatives to those suggested in the syllabus.

We will watch some of the films together in class but time constraints require that along with their readings, students will also screen some films outside of class. We can schedule a time to meet for these screenings or students can watch the films on their own.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Students will be required to purchase a course pack at Allegra Printing at 1069 Bank Street (near Sunnyside). Some additional material may be posted on WebCT

EVALUATION

Participation – 25%

Presentation – 25%

Response paper – 10% (Due on November 5 at the latest)

Final paper – 40% (Due on December 2)

The presentation will be scheduled during the last four weeks of the course. Students may present an alternate theoretical approach to a film that we have discussed in class, or provide a presentation on a film that has not been included in these course materials. The presentation may be done individually or in groups of two, and presenters will be asked to discuss their topic with the instructor ahead of time. The final paper should be 15 to 20 pages in length and be based on the presentation. It should include research apart from the material covered in class. Please remember that if you do your presentation with another class member, your final paper must be your own work. The response paper should be a 3 to 4 page discussion of any one of the films covered in class and/or the assigned readings that accompany it. It can be submitted at any time during the semester but must be received by March 10 at the latest.

SCHEDULE

September 10

Introduction to the Course

To start us off, we will talk a little bit about how film conveys meaning. We won't become experts on the filmmaker's art in this class; however, we should not just think of films as narratives with a "message" about law or legal studies. We should also think about how filmmakers use techniques that are particular to the medium – colour, movement, sound, editing and acting techniques – to evoke responses in the viewer. In the first class we will consider some of these techniques.

The material in this course is also drawn from many different time periods. We will talk a bit about the effect of time on the meaning of popular film. When contemporary audiences watch a film made decades ago, how is the film's meaning transformed? When modern films are made about earlier generations, how does the identity of the contemporary audience change the tools available to the filmmaker for analysis and critique? What does this tell us about the use of popular

We will also talk in general terms about the relationship between popular culture and socio-legal studies. How can images from popular film and television be used to enhance understanding of complex ideas about how society is regulated? How can sociolegal theory enhance our understanding of popular culture?

Readings: Richard K. Sherwin, "Imagining Law as Film (Representation without a Reference?)" in Austin Sarat et al., eds., *Law and the Humanities: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp. 241-268.

Part I: Gender and Authenticity

September 17

In this class, we will be thinking more specifically about theory and representation in popular culture – specifically, gender identity in light of Billy Wilder's 1959 classic, *Some Like It Hot* and Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity. This film blurs the "naturalist" distinction between genders as men who cross-dress seem to adopt the characteristics and survival strategies of women. However, on a deeper level the casting of Marilyn Monroe as the female lead seems to unsettle assumptions about what constitutes the authentically feminine.

Readings: Judith Butler, "Introduction" in *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993)

Films: *Some Like It Hot* (1959) Billy Wilder
Tootsie (1982) Sydney Pollack

Recommended Viewing: *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) Kimberly Peirce

Part II: Alfred Hitchcock and Rebellious Women

September 24

How is the meaning of a representation transformed depending on the cultural and temporal context in which it is viewed, by the identity of the viewer, and the character with whom the viewer chooses to identify? Does Hitchcock participate in silencing women, provide an apolitical examination of women living in conditions of gender oppression, or use film narrative to transcend those conditions?

Readings: Orit Kamir, "Blackmail: Hitchcock's Sound and the New Woman's Guilty Silence" in *Framed: Women in Law and Film* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2006)
Susan White, "Vertigo and Problems of Knowledge in Feminist Film Theory" in Richard Allen and S. Ishii-Gonzales, *Alfred Hitchcock, Centenary Essays* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999)
Lara Karaian, "Troubling the Definition of Pornography: Little Sisters, and New Defining Moment in Feminists' Engagement with the Law?" (2005) 17 *Canadian J. of Women and the Law* 117.

Films: *Blackmail* (1929) Alfred Hitchcock

Recommended Viewing: *Vertigo* (1958) Alfred Hitchcock
Notorious (1946) Alfred Hitchcock

October 1

Our discussion of the films studied in this class may build on the material already covered on perspective and interpretation in Hitchcock's portrayal of women. We will also consider how the films "Marnie" and "The Birds" represent the use of legal and psy discourses not as means of seeking truth, but as the means of asserting power.

Readings: Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power" in Colin Gordon, ed., *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972)
Carol Smart, "Law, Power, and Women's Bodies" in *Feminism and the Power of Law* (London; New York: Routledge, 1989) c. 6

Films: *The Birds* (1963) Alfred Hitchcock
Marnie (1964) Alfred Hitchcock

Part III: Conceptions of Subjectivity in Science Fiction: Identity and the Manufactured Being

October 8

In this section we will consider the treatment of manufactured humans in science fiction films, why they provoke anxiety in the popular imagination and the paradoxes of subjectivity. We will also look at notions of citizenship and power through the manipulation of identity.

Readings: Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and

Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991)
Varun Begley, *Bladerunner and the Post Modern: A Reconsideration* (2004) 32
Literature Film Quarterly 3 186.

Films: *Bladerunner* (1982/1993)
Moon (2009)

October 15

Statutory Holiday – no class

October 22

Identity and the Manufactured Being cont'd

The Normalized Body

Readings: Seyla Benhabib, "Feminism and Post-Modernism" in Seyla Benhabib et. al., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995)
Amy Kind, "I'm Sharon, But I'm A Different Sharon": The Identity of Cylons" in Jason T. Eberl, *Battlestar Galactica and Philosophy* Malden; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2008)

Films: *Gattaca* (1997) Andrew Niccol
Battlestar Galactica (Television program)

Part IV: The Western – Grand Theories and Competing Discourses

October 29

Classical Westerns often present the civilization of the West as a Hegelian evolution of the subject through legalization. The stark esthetic of these films presents the west as a legal void, awaiting colonization by the universal norms of ethics and political organization emanating from the East. Some more recent Westerns have revised this vision, envisaging the history of the west as a more chaotic and unpredictable coalescence of social forces.

Readings: Charles Taylor, "Kant's Theory of Freedom" in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
Scott Simmon "Time, Space, and the Western" in *The Invention of the Western Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
Barry Langford, *Revisiting the "Revisionist" Western* (2003) 33 *Film & History* 26

Films: *My Darling Clementine* (1946) John Ford
High Noon (1952) Fred Zinnemann

Recommended Viewing: *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) John Ford
True Grit (2009) Ethan Cohen, Joel Cohen
3:10 to Yuma (1957) Delmer Daves
(2007) James Mangold

November 5

Readings: Diana Young, *Law and the Foucauldian Wild West in Michael Cimino's "Heaven's Gate"* (2011) 7 *Law Culture and the Humanities* 2, 310
Jim Kitses, "An Exemplary Post-Modern Western: The Ballad of Little Jo" in Gregg Rickman, Jim Kitses, eds., *The Western Reader* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1999)

Films: *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993) Maggie Greenwald
Heaven's Gate (1979) Michael Cimino

Part V: Student Presentations

November 12

November 19

November 26

December 3