

# **MA IN FILM STUDIES**

## **SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSES**

### **I. BASIC SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO FILM STUDIES**

The course provides a general introduction to the methodology of film analysis and to the fundamental theoretical concepts present in film criticism. The lectures discuss basic aesthetic features and technical aspects of the medium, and the fundamental elements of filmic language, as editing and montage, narration, genre and style. Each of the lectures uses a wide sample of film excerpts as starting points for the exploration of specific topics such as medium-specificity, genre and mass culture, authorship and auteur-theory, fiction and documentary, politics of representation and questions of spectator, audience and response.

### **II. MAIN ACADEMIC MODUL**

#### **FILM HISTORY LECTURES AND SEMINARS**

Part of the main academic module, film history lectures focus on the characteristics of select eras, stylistic trends and genres. The detailed interpretation of select films plays an important role in the content of the courses. The selection of courses varies each semester. Examples for the lectures and seminars are listed below.

#### **Concise History of European and American Cinema from the Silent Era till the 1950's**

The course gives an introduction to the history of silent cinema through the examination of the first moving pictures, the expansion of film production and distribution, and the development of filmic narration. It will give a brief overview of the formation and operation of the Hollywood film industry until the 1950s and the main genres of early Hollywood cinema. Furthermore, the course will discuss certain art-film tendencies coming to life in Europe, such as the different avant-garde movements of European cinema in the 1920s or the Italian neo-realist movement.

#### **American Cinema in the 1930s and 40s**

The course introduces students to the most important tendencies of the American film history between 1927 and 1946. The lectures use two main approaches to understand historical developments of the Hollywood Cinema. The first focuses on the social-historical aspect: looking more closely at the changing economic characteristics of the film industry, the shifting social and political expectations of the so called "pre-code" and "post-code years", and also the rising genres of the early talkies like the horror, the mob- and cop movies, the musical, the screwball comedy, the early film noir. The other approach puts emphasis on the most remarkable filmmakers and their influence: Hawks, Ford, Capra or Lubitsch. We will also discuss the effects of the most important political and economic events on American Cinema during the two decades: Great Depression and World War II.

#### **Postclassical American Cinema: Social Approaches**

This seminar attempts to map the shifting institutional and cultural paradigms that have significantly impacted the development of American cinema after the 1948 Paramount

Decree. Throughout the course, we will critically investigate the transformation of the mainstream and alternative modes of production, distribution and exhibition after 1948.

### **Contemporary Global Cinema: authors and nations**

This class is designed as a selective course for global contemporary film after Italian Neorealism. It does not attempt to cover the development of the medium in a comprehensive way, but rather engages with chosen authors and/or national cinemas that proved influential from a stylistic/narrative perspective. Topics will include the French New Wave, European and Japanese Modernism, New German Cinema, Third Cinema in Latin America, Hollywood Renaissance, new realism in Europe and contemporary American trends.

### **Concise History of Hungarian Cinema until 1989**

The course surveys the history of Hungarian cinema providing a historical and cultural overview of certain trends and periods. Lectures focus on questions such as European and Hungarian identity, the coexistence of author cinema and popular genre films, the influence of literature and other arts on film, and the importance of documentary and animated films in Hungarian cinema. The course also introduces certain films or artists who became influential in European or world cinema.

### **Contemporary Hungarian Cinema**

This course gives an overview of contemporary Hungarian cinema, discussing the most important films and the most important artists. Using films as points of reference, questions of Hungarian history, society and culture will be addressed. We will survey the last two decades (seventies and eighties) of communist era before the 'regime change' as well as the different tendencies and important directors after the democratic transition. The course will also introduce other current social trends in contemporary filmmaking, such as the representation of Roma and other ethnic minorities and questions of gender. Furthermore, we will identify thematic trends in contemporary films (e.g. how young people struggle to find their place in contemporary Hungarian society, generational struggles etc.).

## **FILM THEORY LECTURES AND SEMINARS**

Part of the main academic module, film theory lectures and seminars focus on the characteristics of selected eras, trends and personalities of film theory. The lectures cover periods of film theory's history from the beginnings till contemporary trends, and seminars focus on more detailed examination and interpretation of texts and concepts by important authors of film theory.

The selection of courses varies each semester. Examples for the lectures are listed below.

### **Introduction to Film Theory**

The course is designed as a topical introduction into film theory. Instead of investigating film theory through its historical progression, we will rather focus on problems that stand in the forefront of the discipline. Primarily, we will examine broad patterns in how the medium conveys meaning, elicits emotion and addresses audiences. It is concerned with the nature of the medium itself and with the conventions it has developed for what is 'cinematic.' The secondary focus of the course is to acquire skills in applying these theoretical ideas to particular film texts, testing these ideas to see how well they fit individual cases.

### **Classical Film Theory**

The course reviews two of the determining tendencies of classical film theory: the realism and the formalism trend. Within this dualistic framework, we will discuss the theories of prominent film creators (such as the classic avant-garde film-makers' film theories and the Russian montage theory), and the theoretical work of key thinkers from the beginnings to the sixties, including Rudolf Arnheim, Béla Balázs, André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer and Jean Mitry.

### **Contemporary Film Theory**

The lecture provides a general introduction to the most important trends and theorists of modern and contemporary film theories. The lectures move from the birth of modern film theory in the 1960s through to the latest developments in the field such as cognitive theory, queer theory, postcolonial theory and digital theory.

### **FILM ANALYSIS SEMINARS**

Part of the main academic module, small group film analysis seminars build on the basic interpretive skills already acquired by students in order to enable them to perform complex film analyses, following comprehensive film aesthetics guidelines. The selection of courses varies each semester.

### **Film Analysis: The Image, Editing / Montage, Narration**

The goal of the course is to allow students to develop complex skills in film analysis. Each semester, the group discusses various aspects of the cinematography, filmic editing / montage and narration and the ways in which these elements can be used to create meaning. Each week, after a short overview of the basic terms in relation to the discussed topic, we will collectively analyze scenes from various films in order to develop skills to recognize and interpret the function of these elements. From the third week onwards, students will be asked to bring clips to class and hold a presentation on *one* visual element of the scene in question. The emphasis of the course is the practicing of the skills of film analysis.

### **PROFESSIONAL WRITING**

The course focuses on developing academic writing skills necessary for completing an academic thesis. Through a series of in-class and home assignments, students will develop their reading and writing techniques; purposefully extract, summarize and paraphrase ideas from readings; and to write well-formed and appropriate short academic English texts. The course is meant to provide the foundations necessary to progress from writing extended one-paragraph, source-based academic texts to longer, multi-paragraph academic texts.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This seminar is designed specifically for second-year Master's students and will facilitate students' preparation of a Master's thesis built on individual research and analysis. Using key primary and secondary theoretical texts, the module explores the methods used in film (and media) studies research including quantitative, qualitative, interpretive and rhetorical methods; formulating research questions, planning and designing the research project, data collection, data analysis and interpretation. By allowing every student to follow his/her own particular interest, the training will cover the various aspects of conceiving, pursuing, organizing, and successfully completing research projects in film studies.

### **III. ELECTIVE ACADEMIC MODUL**

#### **FILM THEORY SPECIALIZATION**

##### **FILM HISTORY LECTURES AND SEMINARS**

Part of the elective academic module, history lectures and seminars on world cinema and Hungarian cinema investigate specialized topics such as the detailed examination of select eras, national cinemas, oeuvres of important filmmakers, periods of genre history and production histories. In case of seminars students are expected to take an active part in the course work. The selection of courses varies each semester. Examples for the lectures and seminars are listed below.

##### **Founding Fathers of Hollywood**

The course provides a biographical survey focusing on the early career of the founding fathers of Hollywood, the first studio-moguls, who were all immigrants with East-European roots. Furthermore, we discuss the silent area, the first three decades of the American cinema and we also make an attempt to find connections between the personal taste, cultural background of the first Studio-owners: the founders of Paramount, MGM, Universal, Fox, Warner Bros., Columbia – and the styles, topics, genres of the films used to be made in accordance with these people's strategical decisions.

##### **Representations of History in Contemporary Eastern European Cinemas**

The course attempts to map the main mnemonic trends in Eastern European feature film production after 1989. The focus will be on films from the former GDR, former Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary. Primarily we will concentrate on the imprints of major social-historical shifts on cinema, i.e. aspects of cultural memory in select countries within the region. Questions in focus include: how does cinema reflect the political changes that accompany the end of the Cold War? Which are the thematic and stylistic elements of the post-communist cinemas? What are the major differences between the various national cinemas and their ways of remembering the past?

##### **Multiple Modernities: Romanian Cinema**

This seminar engages with the contemporary phenomenon of the new Romanian cinema via the historical concept of modernity. Throughout the class sessions, the group will investigate how the emergence of recent films can be put into a historical context by locating similar gestures from the state socialist era. The course is designed to progress along the analysis of the reflexive gestures on the conditions of possibility of cinematic expressions, and how these gestures are embedded in the socio-historical contexts surrounding their production.

##### **The Film Musical**

The course provides a general introduction to the basic concepts of studying film genres and then concentrates on the most prominent form of film musical history: the classical Hollywood musical. The lectures and seminars explore the cultural and technological roots of the genre and examine the stylistic features of the sub-genres. Analytical surveys of a wide selection of musicals from each remarkable periods of the genre's history helps students to understand the stylistic and thematic developments present in musical history.

##### **The Western and the American Myth**

The course first will offer an overview of the Western both as a unique phenomenon within American film history and as an independent genre with a rich typology and numerous ways of classification. On the other hand, the “Western phenomenon” is going to be analyzed (in workshop format) as the richest reservoir of cinematographic reflections on the American Myth. In this respect we will rely on Western theory and Western typology of Will Wright (*Six-Guns and Society, Berkeley: California Press, 1975.*) as a guideline. Before dealing with the genre and the movies in this context we are going to touch on some related topics, first of all the idea of the “Frontier” (using and discussing the different generic interpretations of the Turner Theory), and the “Myth”, referring to *C.G. Jung* and *Bronislaw Malinowski*.

### **Stalinism in Eastern European Cinemas**

Critical examination of the past has been one of the most important topics of Eastern European cinemas during Socialism. The course will give an overview of cinematic memories of the near past, namely the Stalinist Fifties in East-European cinemas – produced from the Sixties till the post-Socialist decades. The lectures will explore the topics with special regard to the similarities and differences between East-European film cultures (Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Russian) and will discuss the transformations in the representation of Stalinism in the contexts of political and cultural changes.

### **Fate and History: István Szabó’s cinema**

István Szabó in his whole career was focusing on the unprepared individual being forced to encounter the always hostile East-European history. In his films made from the early 60s Szabó depicts different sorts of surviving strategies of the average civilian when this 20<sup>th</sup> century’s history – unpredictable fate embodied by the series of well-known severe political events – arrives. These strategies in the Eastern European region are always desperate, always deniable – and sometimes they are adopted just too late.

### **FILM THEORY LECTURES AND SEMINARS**

Part of the elective academic module, film theory lectures and seminars attempt to investigate specialized topics such as the detailed examination of select eras in the history of film theory, theoretical approaches to specific genres, theoretical trends, media theory and history, or the work of important theoretical writers. The selection of courses varies each semester. Examples for the lectures are listed below.

### **A Philosophy of Vision**

This course discusses the meaning and significance of vision in experience in general. We will start with a classical text (Diderot), and then focus on phenomenology (Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Lévinas, Marion). Later, we will also read authors from the psychoanalytical tradition (Lacan), from post-structuralism (Foucault) and art history (Didi-Huberman). Fundamental philosophical issues, closely connected to vision, will also be discussed such as the problem of consciousness, the relation of mind and body, the relation of the I and the other, and so forth.

### **Feminism and Film**

The course provides a general introduction to the history of feminism, feminist theory and feminist film theory. The lectures and seminars explore the development of feminist thought from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century till today. Readings concentrate on the oeuvre of the most important figures of feminist film theory. The analytical survey of key films from a feminist point of view helps students to understand theoretical concepts.

### **Self-reflexivity in Film**

The course provides a comprehensive survey of the concept of self-reflexivity in film history and film theory. The lectures and seminars concentrate on defining self-reflexivity in film and narrowing down this universal concept and transform it into a useful analytical tool. The analytical survey of dominant self-reflexive films of different phases of film history prepares students to understand historical changes in the concept of cinematic self-reflexivity. Readings concentrate on theoretical trends present in the study of self-reflexivity in general and cinematic self-reflexivity in particular.

### **Contemporary Digital Cinema**

This course plans to examine some of the most important aspects of the digital turn in film production processes that shape the visual style of contemporary movies. With the help of some theoretical texts, short clips and case studies, we will explore such issues raised by the shift from analog to digital filmmaking practices as analog nostalgia; the changing nature of cinematic spectacle; the digital's relationship to the real; changes in methods of production and acting; and the development of computer generated imagery, effects, and animation.

### **Domestic Melodramas in American Cinema**

This seminar works with the assumption that in a large majority of American domestic melodramas the middle-class family represents a miniature model of society. Through an investigation of the development of the genre, we will interrogate issues of sexuality, gender and ethnic- and class identities in American society across the 20th-century. The first part of the class focuses mainly on theoretical questions, which will be followed by a historically motivated study of the various transformations of domestic melodrama, from its beginnings towards the contemporary remakes. In last section of the course, we will examine conceptual issues related to genre theory, and attempt to locate the position of melodramas amongst other traditional genres within American cinema.

### **TEXTUAL ANALYSIS SEMINAR**

Part of the elective academic module, the textual analysis seminar is designed to deepen students' ability to understand, analyze and appreciate theoretical texts about art in general, and cinema in particular. After a general introduction to the 'art' of reading and understanding academic texts, each semester the course covers the collective analysis of three to four seminal theoretical essays from art and cinema theory. The course's main aim is to help students in developing best practices to understand 'difficult' texts, and to discover how analytical strategies and theoretical concepts are used in academic literature.

### **FILM AND AUDIOVISUAL CULTURE**

Courses on film and audiovisual culture aim to explore the technical and artistic context of film as a medium and as a form of art in cultural history. Courses may discuss the relationship of film to other forms of art, like theatre, dance, comics etc., or to different audiovisual products of new media like multimedia works, computer games, interactive installations and so on. The selection of courses varies each semester. Examples for the lectures and seminars are listed below.

### **Film and Digital Culture**

This lecture surveys the historical and theoretical connections between film and the new media. The course will investigate potential links between the new media and previous cultural representation formats; the language of new media products; the techniques and possibilities of creating an illusion of reality; and the relevance of conventions used and solidified by the old media for the new media. The lectures discuss the basics of film language, film form and technology in the context of the internet, virtual realities, multimedia, computer games, interactive installations, digital video, and new media objects arising from the human-computer interface.

### **Adaptation and intermediality**

The course provides an introduction to the problems of intermediality through the examination of different cases of adaptation. The case studies will reveal the specific characteristics of the different media (such as literary text, drama, comics, computer games etc.), their relationship to film and the special adaptation problems they create. During the course the following theoretical problems will also be discussed: abstraction vs. concrete visual representation, homogeneous vs. complex ways of expression, different structures of narrative, construction of space and time, the person of the narrator, the adaptation of stylistic elements. Beside the basic questions of intermediality, problems of intercultural adaptations and remakes will also be discussed.

### **RESEARCH SEMINAR**

Research seminars are organized around the Department's specific research fields, like social history of Hungarian cinema; qualitative/statistical film analysis; contemporary East and Central European cinema. The course aims at providing students intensive knowledge on the academic research on exemplary fields of Film Studies. The seminars offer deep insights and practices in specific research fields of Film Studies, working closely together with participants' academic tutors / scientific investigators. Students will work in small groups in order to have detailed understanding and insight into the given area of Film Studies.

### **PROJECT SEMINAR**

Project seminars are usually held by faculty members from two or three departments of our institute (i.e. Film Studies, Media and Communication Studies and Aesthetics). Students will work in small groups, together with their tutors. All groups will be working on a specific practical work project, ranging from making short videos, multimedia products, infographics, visual demonstration databases. The objective of these courses is that students acquire intensive practical working experience and enhance their skills in multimedia / audiovisual content production. The collective working experience aims at developing their skills and enable them for more market-oriented practices.

### **PROFESSIONAL WRITING**

The seminars develop students' professional writing skills that they can use in their professional or academic careers. The courses attempt to cover a wide variety of writing modes: academic and theoretical essays, film criticism, film reviews in written or audiovisual format, etc. The seminar's main objective is to give MA students writing skills they can use on the job market. Examples for the seminars are listed below. The selection of courses varies each semester.

## **Videographic Criticism**

Since its inception, film studies has been producing analyses on moving images in a text-based format. However, with the wide availability of digital screen media production tools, it has become possible to manipulate images on personal computers. Videographic criticism, an emerging mode of scholarship, takes this dramatic change into consideration, as it opens up a new field for students and scholars to present critical and academic ideas in an audiovisual format. In this course students will (1) become familiar with some historical examples of the video essay, engage with theoretical debates around using audiovisual texts as academic arguments; (2) produce an annotated video with still images; and (3) create short video essays in teams.

## **Blogging Budapest**

In this course students will plan, design, edit and write a blog in English that reports on student life in Budapest. Hungarian and international students will cooperate in developing the concept and producing the content (articles, interviews, photos, videos) of the blog that - hopefully – will keep running after the end of term. Students' required activities include participation in the editorial work, fieldwork, and producing material in different media.

## **ACADEMIC WRITING**

This course maps the various methods used in the praxis of academic writing. Each week the group will discuss technical question related to the composition of academic prose, and collectively analyze various methods and genres applied by chosen authors. The goal of the course is to allow participants to develop solid academic writing skills. At the end of the semester, students will hand in a completed chapter of their future thesis.

## **CONSULTATION**

This is a required course for all MA students in each semester. In individually arranged meetings and consultation sessions, students develop their research project that will allow them to hand in their thesis during the last semester of their studies.

## **FILMMAKING SPECIALIZATION**

*Courses of the Filmmaking Specialization are offered in cooperation with Budapest Film Academy and can only be attended under certain circumstances. For further information, please address to [film\\_film\\_at\\_btk.elte.hu](mailto:film_film_at_btk.elte.hu).*

## **FILM DIRECTING**

During the film directing courses students will be initiated to the fundamentals of direction through the analysis, staging and visualization of one scene of a chosen script or play. With the help of film analysis, acting practices and increasingly complex tasks of improvisation they will learn how to build up a character and how to improve a scene or a dialogue. They will get acquainted with the most important methods of acting and will get experience in directing actors and accomplishing a successful casting. They will learn the ways of staging a scene, the role and use of the different elements of mise-en-scene. During project work they will get to know how to cooperate with the cinematographer and other members of the crew.

## **SCREENWRITING**



During the screenwriting courses students explore the writing process in depth from concept to final draft. Using both the student's writing and that of the masters of cinema, we discuss story structure, theme, genre, creating tension and conflict, handling exposition, storytelling through dialogue and action, and perfecting pace within well-constructed scenes, sequences, and acts. Hand-on exercises give students the opportunity to try their hand at creating characters and dramatizing conflicts in various formats, and group tasks help foster their ability to create and develop stories within teams. At the same time they refine their skills in creating the supporting materials they'll need to sell their script: the logline, synopsis, one-page, and more.

## **CINEMATOGRAPHY**

During the cinematography courses, apart from getting an overall experience of the fundamentals of digital photography (white balance, shutter speed, focus, video latitude, gels and filters etc.) students will learn how to tell a story visually, how to prepare a storyboard and prepare for and manage the technical problems of cinematography. They will learn the nuances of controlling light source and shadow, and discover how to create the lighting that helps the director to tell a great story in a unique atmosphere. They will get acquainted with the problems of camera placement, framing, angles and movement, and lens choice. They will get experience in shooting on location or in a set, and will learn how to prepare differently for these different methods of cinematography.

## **EDITING**

During the editing courses students will get experience of editing, sound recording and post-production work through the editing and post-production of certain scenes or short features. They will get to know the different edited versions and their function. In addition to covering the basics (cutting shots, scene construction, in and out points, title sequences, transitions, pacing, rhythm, continuity, color correction, and more), through the analysis of their own works and of certain classic films they will be initiated to the art of film editing: they will learn how to create rhythm, different interpretations of the same scene through different cuts, and how to generate some ambience with the help of sound or music. They will get basic knowledge of digital timing and will get to know the basic methods of sound recording.

## **PRODUCTION BASICS**

The aim of the producing courses is to provide a comprehensive knowledge of the basics of international film financing and a blueprint for how to create co-productions. Particular attention is paid to the legal and business aspects of independent filmmaking, including the basics of distribution agreements, option deals, copyrights, contract law, and other legal matters. We also examine how different deal structures affect movies. Students learn the processes of pre- and post-production (including how to create financing plans, budgets, shooting schedules, call sheets, etc.), and they get to know about the duties of line producers, assistant directors, and script supervisors. During the shooting of student films producing students will take on different tasks and in a real life situation will learn how to run and control a set.

## **PRACTICAL WORKSHOP**

The objective of this course is that students explore the professional culture and practices of film and media industry. Select students are offered the possibility of participating in practical workshop at our department's partner organizations and institutions and can complete their professional practice at the given company or organization.

### **PROJECT SEMINAR**

Project seminars are usually held by faculty members from two or three departments of our institute (i.e. Film Studies, Media and Communication Studies and Aesthetics). Students will work in small groups, together with their tutors. All groups will be working on a specific practical work project, ranging from making short videos, multimedia products, infographics, visual demonstration databases. The objective of these courses is that students acquire intensive practical working experience and enhance their skills in multimedia / audiovisual content production. The collective working experience aims at developing their skills and enable them for more market-oriented practices.

### **CONSULTATION FOR FILMMAKING**

During the consultation courses students regularly discuss with their tutors how they perform in accomplishing the tasks during the different phases of the masterwork-program. The consultations are occasionally held collectively, and the students present and discuss their creative works.