Film 101: Introduction to Cinema

Hunter College
Fall 2025


(Museum of the Moving Image, NYC)

Professor: Pedro Cabello del Moral
Schedule: Thursdays 1:30-3:20 pm
Office Hours: Fridays 11:30 am -1:30 pm or by appointment
Zoom Link: https://gc-cuny-edu.zoom.us/j/86159134008?pwd=kzkruis2OU7IEN9E1bOGds1qaGeSB2.1

Make sure you check Brightspace for readings, assignments, links to films, and other materials.

Make sure you register for the zoom meeting the first time. Once you do it, you can join the rest of the sessions.

Make sure you have the necessary information about your discussion section (professor's name, location, schedule, assignments, etc.)

Course Description:

Film 101 is an introductory course for students with little or no prior experience in film studies or production. Throughout the semester, students will engage with the formal

elements of cinema—including cinematography, mise-en-scène, editing, sound, and narrative—while gaining skills to analyze films through critical and historical lenses.

Students will watch a range of significant films, including both canonical works and counter-narratives that represent underrepresented voices in film history. Emphasis is placed on the detailed analysis of scenes, helping students understand how formal choices shape meaning and viewer experience.

Learning Goals:

- Understand advanced vocabulary to describe technical, aesthetic, and narratological aspects of films.
- Develop a habit of watching films and media critically.
- Analyze film scenes using appropriate terminology and critical approaches.
- Become acquainted with major topics in film history and film theory.
- Participate in a community of viewers and learners which is intellectually supportive and challenging.

Methodology:

This course consists of 14 sessions divided into lectures and discussions. Students meet twice a week: once for the lecture and once for the discussion section.

Every session will have a combination of the following tasks to do prior or during it:

1. Reading: Read the assigned articles or book chapters.
2. Viewing: Study the films assigned for every session.
3. Film Diary: Weekly responses analyzing the films watched in light of the course theory.
4. Lecture: Introduction, contextualization, and analysis of the different theoretical concepts and audiovisual examples.
5. Video tutorials: Watch useful videos introducing some of the major concepts and theories.
6. Discussion questions and exams: Graded exercises to test knowledge and Course Calendar comprehension of the course materials.

The discussion sessions will review the theoretical concepts exemplified in the films and help students plan their research and coordinate their group work.

Students are expected to study one film per lesson. The films are listed in the "Course Calendar" section of this syllabus. Please take time to watch them multiple times and take notes, since the movies are also the basis of activities, assignments, and exams.

Remote Meetings

Required technology: You will need a laptop (not a phone or tablet) to participate fully in synchronous class sessions.

Recording class sessions: Class sessions will not be recorded. Any exceptions will be announced in advance.

Assignments and Grading:

The percentages and specificities vary depending on the discussion session you are in

Attendance and participation

Film Diary

Close analysis

Group Work: Students will work in groups choosing a film from the additional list

Discussion questions

Final exam

Late work is accepted but will have a penalization.

Course Resources:

Textbooks: Used are fine and prints or ebooks are fine. Access codes/supplemental materials not required.

- David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 13th 12th, or 11th edition.
- Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses*, 2nd or 3rd edition.
- Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience,* 6th, 5th, or 4th edition.

Additional readings: Will be made available as PDFs via BrightSpace.

Required screenings: Where possible, films will be made available via the course site and links in this syllabus. Occasionally, a film rental may be required.

Online Resources:

- The Film Experience Website: http://thefilmexperience.net
- David Bordwell's blog: http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/
- Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses: https://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9781138824300/default.php
- Film Analysis 2.0 Website: https://filmanalysis.yale.edu/?ref=zacharyxavier.com
- Moving Pictures: An Introduction to Cinema: https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Theater_Film_and_Storytelling/Moving_Pictures_-_An_Introduction_to_Cinema_(Sharman)

Video Tutorials:

- Cinematography 101: What is Cinematography? (RocketJump Film School, 2015): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXAr2yiYCV4
- "Introductory Film Studies 01: Shot Composition" (Screen & Sound, 2016): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2AUPvoGwKI
- "Cuts and Transitions 101" (RocketJump Film School, 2016): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAH0MoAv2CI
- "Early Film History" (WPUSD - Media Arts, 2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBSCBF-WWMA
- "Early Film Trends" (Kris Pistole, 2023): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjbypNustcA
- "The Cinema of Attractions" (Zawieszony, 2021): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4R9c7OwqSFQ
- "Depth of Field Explained: Ultimate Guide to Camera Focus" (Studio Binder, 2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGNUqNFfD8M
- "Continuity Editing" (Overmind, 2021): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NA93vKm2Zhw
- "3 Strategies Behind the Best Long Takes" (Studio Binder, 2018): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9AEYFYPYTM
- "Types of Documentaries" (Peacock Media Journey, 2017): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAcg4X7xH5o

- "What is an Auteur?" (The Media Insider, 2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MXv41Ja3h4
- "Unpacking the Male Gaze: Birds of Prey vs. Suicide Squad" (Bowman, 2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MTtYyZ1zd8
- "Are women still objectified? | Laura Mulvey Male Gaze theory explained!" (The Media Insider, 2016): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yl2Eh8swrEs
- "The Bechdel Test for Women in Movies" (Feminist Frequency, 2009): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLF6sAAMb4s&t=3s
- "RackFocus" (Studio Binder, 2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kb8QmEZjcto
- "How to Use a Zoom Shot — Why the Best Shots Work" (Studio Binder, 2025): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdOGBQV-k5I
- "Breaking The Rules - The French New Wave" (The Cinema Cartography, 2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0R7R0JHvvgo
- "Steve Neale's Genre Theory Explained!" (The Media Insider, 2017): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uiNqtfWvGw

Course Calendar:

August 28: Session 1: Introduction to the course

Excerpts from: *Spartacus* (Stanley Kubrick, 1960)*, Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976)*, Old Boy* (Park Chan-wook, 2003)*, The Swamp* (Lucrecia Martel, 2001), and *Tokio Story* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1953).

Questions to discuss:

- What is film language?
- What is film analysis?
- What is a critical lens?
- What is the subject of analysis? shot, scene, sequence

September 4: Session 2: Continuity

Film: ***His Girl Friday*** (Howard Hawks, 1940)

Read:

- *Film Art*, Chapter 5: The Shot: Cinematography (p. 168-195 and 209-215)
- *Film Experience*, Chapter 3: Cinematography: Framing What We See, pp. 106-119.

- *Film Art*, *His Girl Friday,* p. 460-464.
- Nöel Burch, "A Primitive Mode of Representation?"

Excerpts from films from: Lumière Brothers, Méliès, Segundo de Chomón, Alice Guy-Blanché, and *The Russian Ark* (Alexandr Sokúrov, 2002)

Questions to Discuss:

- Type of shots
- Long Take
- Continuity: 30 degrees and 180 degrees rules, Eye line matching

September 11: Session 3: Fragmentation

Film: ***Mulholland Drive*** (David Lynch, 2001)

Read:

- *Film Art*. Chapter 6
- *Film Experience*, Chapter 4 (pp. 135-137 and 138-140)
- Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Spectator and the Avant-Garde"

Excerpts from: *Screening at the Grand Café* (Lumière 1896)*, What it Feels like to be Run Over* (Hepworth, 1900), *The Big Swallow* (Williamson's Kinematograph,1901), *What Happened in the Tunnel* (Edison Co., 1903), *Across Brooklyn Bridge* (Mutoscope, 1898): *Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)*, Entr'acte* (René Clair, 1294), *An Andalusian Dog* (Luis Buñuel, 1928)*, Bridges Go Around* (Shirley Clarke, 1958).

Questions to discuss:

- Cinema of attractions
- Avant-garde and oneiric sequences
- *Nouvelle vague*
- Jump Cuts
- Brecht's Estrangement effect

September 18: Session 4: Montage

Film: ***Battleship Potemkin*** (Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925)

Read:

- *Film Experience*, Chapter 4
- *Film Art* (*Battleship Potemkin*), p. 474-478
- *Film Experience* (*Battleship Potemkin*), p. 170-171
- Sergei M. Eisenstein, “Methods of Montage”
- Nöel Burch, “Film's Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response”

Excerpts from: October (Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1927), *Old and New* (Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1929), *Man with a Movie Camera (*Dziga Vertov, 1929), *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), *Killers of the Flower Moon* (Martin Scorsese, 2023).

Questions to discuss:

- Intellectual montage
- Parallel Editing
- Montage sequence

September 25: Session 5: Mise-en-scène

Film: ***Dance Girl Dance*** (Dorothy Arzner, 1940 Swank)

Read:

- *Film Experience,* Chapter 2
- *Film Art*, The mobile frame (pp. 195-215)
- Claire Johnston, “Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema”
- Raymond Bellour, “The Obvious and the Code” / “Motion Picture Production Code (1934)”

Excerpts from: *The Rules of the Game* (Jean Renoir, 1939), *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958), *Cabaret* (Bob Fosse, 1972), *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946), *The Killers* (Robert Siodmak, 1946), *D.O.A.* (Rudolph Maté, 1949).

Questions to discuss:

- Camera movements
- Composition
- Depth of Field
- On screen/Off Screen
- The Hays Code
- Musical

- Film Noir

October 9: Session 6: Sound

Film: ***Delicatessen*** (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1991)

Read:

- *Film Art*, Chapter 7
- *Film Experience*, Chapter 5
- Michel Chion, *Audiovision* (excerpts)

Excerpts from: *Singing in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952), *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974), *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), *Neighboring Sounds* (Kleber Mendoça Filho, 2012), *Playtime* (Jacques Tati, 1967).

Questions to discuss:

- Soundtrack
- Motives
- Functions of sound
- Off screen sounds

October 16: Session 7: Identification

Film: ***Rear Window*** (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954 Swank)

Read:

- *Film Experience*, Point of view, p. 104
- *Film Theory*, Chapter 1: Window and Frame
- Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier* (excerpts)
- Jacques Aumont, “The Point of View”

Excerpts from: *The Lady in the Lake* (Robert Montgomery), *Psycho* (Afred Hitchcock, 1960), *The Wrong Man* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1956), *Chungking Express* (Won Kar-wai, 1994), *Killers of the Flower Moon* (Martin Scorsese, 2023), *High and Low* (Akira Kurosawa, 1963)

Questions to discuss:

- Primary and secondary identification
- Fetishism
- Subjectivity and objectivity

October 23: Session 8: Time

Film: ***Rashomon*** (Akira Kurosawa, 1950)

Read:

- *Film Art,* Chapter 3
- Gilles Deleuze, *Time-Image* (excerpts)

Excerpts from: *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000), *Lady Vengeance* (Park Chan-wook, 2005), *Last Year at Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961), *I Killed My Mother* (Xavier Dolan, 2009).

Questions to discuss:

- Plot and Story
- Flashback, Ellipsis, Flashforward
- Puzzle films

October 30: Session 9: Melodrama

Film: ***Imitation of Life*** (Douglas Sirk, 1959 Swank)

Read:

- *Steve Neal, Genre and Hollywood* (excerpts)
- Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (excerpts)
- Marina Heung, “What's the Matter with Sara Jane?": Daughters and Mothers in Douglas Sirk's ‘Imitation of Life.’”

Excerpts from: *All About My Mother* (Pedro Almodóvar), *My Life Without Me* (Isabel Coixet, 2003), *Pather Panchali* (Satyajit Ray, 1955), *Ali: Fear the Eats Soul* (René Werner Fassbinder, 1974).

Questions for discussion:

- Generic conventions
- Character identification
- Genre and gender

November 6: Session 10: Gaze

Film: ***Black Girl*** (Ousmane Sembène, 1966)

Read:

- Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"
- *Film Theory,* Chapter 4: Cinema as Eye

Excerpts from: *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1967), *Some Like it Hot* (Billy Wilder, 1959) *The Great Beauty* (Paolo Sorrentino, 2013), *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (Chantal Akerman, 1975), *Cleo from 5 to 7* (Agnès Varda, 1962).

Questions for discussion:

- Male gaze
- Colonial gaze
- Feminist gaze
- The Bechdel Test

November 13: Session 11: Touch

Film: ***Monsoon Wedding*** (Mira Nair, 2001 Swank)

Read:

- *Film Theory*, Chapter 5: Cinema as Skin
- Laura Marks, *The Skin of Film* (excerpts)

Excerpts from: *Persona* (Ingmar Bergman, 1966), *Eat Drink Man Woman* (Ang Lee, 1994)

Questions for discussion:

- Haptic cinema
- Multisensorial spectator, cinesthetic subject
- Accented cinema
- Intercultural cinema
- Affect

November 20: Session 12: Identity

Film: ***Do the Right Thing*** (Spike Lee, 1989 Swank)

Read:

- bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators”
- *Film Experience*, pp. 80-85
- *Film Art* (Do the Right Thing) p. 406
- Ed Guerrero, *Do the Right Thing* (excerpts)

Excerpts from: *The Rite of Spring* (Fernando Franco, 2022), *La Haine/Hate* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995), *Moonlight* (Barry Jenkins, 2016), *Parasite* (Bong Joon-ho, 2019)

Questions for discussion:

- Representations of gender, race, sexual orientation, and disability

December 4: Session 13: Identity and Intersectionality

Film: ***Paris is Burning*** (Jennie Livingston, 1990 Also available on Netflix)

Read:

- Lucas Hilderbrand, *Paris is Burning, A Queer Film Classic* (excerpts)

Excerpts from: *Blue is the Warmest Color* (Abdellatif Kechiche, 2013), *Divines* (Houda Benyamina, 2016), *Carmen and Lola* (Arantxa Echevarría, 2018), *Bad Hair* (Mariana Rondón, 2013)

Questions for discussion:

- Representation of intersectionality
- Marginality and cinema
- Director’s ethics

December 11: Session 14: Reality

Film: ***The Gleaners and I*** (Agnes Varda, 2000)

Read:

- *Film Experience*, Chapter 7
- Maya Deren, “Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality”

Excerpts from: *F For Fake* (Orson Welles, 1973), *One Way or Another* (Sara Gómez, 1974), *Sirat* (Oliver Laxe, 2025).

Questions for discussion:

- Ontological realism
- Controlled accident
- Documentary vs. Fiction
- Objectivity and subjectivity

Additional List of Films:

- *Killer of the Sheep* (Charles Burnett, 1978)
- *Chronicle of a Summer* (Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, 1961)
- *The Motorcycle Diaries* (Walter Salles, 2004, Swank)
- *The Apartment* (Billy Wilder, 1960 Swank)
- *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962)
- *Shadows* (John Cassavetes, 1959)
- *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* (William Greaves, 1968)
- *And Your Mother Too* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2001, Netflix)
- *Daughters of the Dust* (Julie Dash, 1991)
- Tokyo Story (Yasujirō Ozu, 1953)
- *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959)
- *Ikiru* (Akira Kurosawa, 1952)
- *The Man with the Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929)
- *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950, Swank)
- *The Celebration* (Thomas Vinterberg, 1998, Swank)
- *Happy Together* (Wong Kar-wai, 1997)
- *Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)
- *The 400 Blows* (François Truffaut, 1959)
- *Three Colors: White* (Kristof Kieslowski, 1994)
- *Through the Olive Trees* (Abbas Kiarostami, 1994)
- *Body and Soul* (Oscar Micheaux, 1925)
- *Paisà/Paisan* (Roberto Rosellini, 1946)
- *The Marriage of Maria von Braun* (René Werner Fassbinder, 1979)
- *The Last Laugh* (Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, 1924)
- *The Swamp* (Lucrecia Martel, 2001)
- *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)
- *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979)
- *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941, Swank)
- *Killers of the Flower Moon* (Martin Scorsese, 2023, Swank)
- *Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948, Kanopy)

- *Cleo from Five to Seven* (Agnes Vardà, 1962)

Additional Bibliography:

Monographies and compilations:

- Richard Barsam and Dave Monahan, *Looking at Movies*
- Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. Eds., *Film Theory and Criticism*
- Pam Cook and Philip Dodd. Eds., *Women and Film*
- Pam Cook and Mieke Bernink. Eds., *The Cinema Book*
- Patricia Erens. Ed., *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*
- John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson. Eds., *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*
- Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*
- Ann Kaplan. E. Ed., *Feminism and Film*
- James Monaco, *How to Read a Film. Movies, Media, Multimedia*
- Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema. Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*.
- Bill Nichols, Ed. *Movies and Methods*. *Vol. I and Vol. II*
- Michael Renov, Ed., *Theorizing Documentary*
- Philip Rosen. Ed., *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*
- Robert Stam, Robert. *Film Theory. An Introduction*
- Robert Stam and Toby Miller. *A Companion to Film Theory*
- David Thompson and Ian Christie. Eds. *Scorsese On Scorsese*
- Fatimah Rony Tobing, *The Third Eye. Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle*.
- Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card*

Articles:

- André Bazin, “The Evolution of Film Language”
- David Bordwell, “Who Blinked First?”
- Kevin Brownlow, “The Continuity System: Griffith and Beyond”
- Noël Carroll, “Toward a Theory of Point-of-View Editing: Communication, Emotion, and the Movies”
- Tom Conley, “A Rape of the Eye”
- Jean-Luc Cornolli and Jean Narboni, “Cinema/Criticism/Ideology”
- Mary Ann Doane, “The Close-up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema”
- Richard Dyer, “Entertainment and Utopia”

- Thomas Elssaeser, “Tales of Sound and Fury. Observations of the Family Melodrama”
- Henry Jenkins, “The Work of Theory in the Age of Digital Transformation”
- Claire Johnston, “Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema”
- Ivone Margulies, “The Equivalence of Events”
- Vivian Sobchack, “What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh”
- Robert Stam, “Third World and Postcolonial Cinema”
- Michael Walsh, “The First Durational Cinema and the Real of Time”

Course policies and Useful Information:

HUNTER POLICY ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link

HUNTER COLLEGE POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

ACCESSIBILITY

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772-4857 or (212) 650-3230