Syllabus

From Expressionist Theatre To "Film Noir" - 20425

Last update 07-05-2015

HU Credits: 4

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Theatre Studies

Academic year: 2

Semester: 1st Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Jeanette Malkin

Coordinator Email: jmalkin@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Wed 12:00-13:00

Teaching Staff:
Dr. Jeanette Malkin
Course/Module description:
This seminar will study the stylistic and thematic connections between Expressionist theatre — mainly German — and the cinematic genre known as "Film Noir." This genre developed mainly in the '40s and the '50s of the 20th century in the US, on which we will concentrate, as well as in France. Some of the more important directors of these films were exiles from Germany and Austria, some of whom had also worked in the theatre (Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Edgar Ulmer, Robert Siodmak, Michael Curtiz, Otto Preminger). These directors often succeeded in combining a European "gaze" with an American "voice." Students will watch a range of Noir films (on their own, in the Media library), and through them we will analyze the transformation of Expressionistic subjects and topoi such as: the anti-hero, the utopian dream, the threatening metropolis, identity and society, crime and nihilism. In the Film Noir these subjects take on an aspect of moral decay, evil and paranoia; and Expressionist stage designs are transformed into light and shadow, extreme close-up and nightmarish visions.

Course/Module aims:
To understand the principle characteristics of the German Expressionistic theatre and its influence on the important film genre, "film noir".

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:
An understanding of the history and aesthetics of the two media, theatre and cinema which, in this case, share a world view, and an understanding of the connection between them.

To understand how Film Noir 'translated' the stylistic elements of German Expressionist theatre.

Attendance requirements(%): 80%

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Class discussions and class reports on required articles.

Course/Module Content:
Changes possible

- Principles of Expressionism and Film Noir
- Expressionist plays to be read:
Oskar Kokoschka: Murderer
the Woman's Hope
Georg Kaiser: From Morn to Midnight
Ernst Toller: Transformation

- Expressionist Films:
From Morn to Midnight. Karl-Heinz Martin
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. Robert Wiene
M. Fritz Lang
Metropolis. Fritz Lang

- The move from Germany to the USA: major figures

- Film Noir:
The Third Man. Carol Reed
Detour. Edgar G. Ulmer
The Killers. Robert Siodmak
Scarlet Street. Fritz Lang
The Big Sleep. Howard Hawks
Double Indemnity. Billy Wilder
Sunset Boulevard. Billy Wilder

- Post-noir films:
Chinatown. Roman Polanski
Blade Runner. Ridley Scott

Required Reading:

Chapter 1: "The Background to Film Noir," pp. 1-26. Moodle


Siegfried Kracauer. From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German

Renate Benson. German Expressionist Drama: Ernst Toller: 10-38. Moodle


Andrew Spicer. Film Noir. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2002. Chapter 4: Themes and Narrative Strategies pp. 64-83 (excerpts); and Chapter 5: Gender in Film Noir pp. 84-93. [also, review: Chapter 1: The Background to Film Noir pp. 1-26] Moodle


Bernstein, Matthew. A Tale of Three Cities: The Banning of Scarlet Street. Cinema

“Film Noir Conventions in The Big Sleep.” In the online journal: Bear’s Film Journal.  
http://monoursblanc.com/2008/07/14/film-noir-conventions-in-the-big-sleep/

Manon, Hugh S. “Some Like It Cold: Fetishism in Billy Wilder's Double Indemnity.”  
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/cinema_journal/v044/44.4manon.html

http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/new_literary_history/v035/35.1bronfen.html


Additional Reading Material:


http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/new_literary_history/v035/35.1bronfen.html

Brook, Vincent. Driven to Darkness: Jewish Emigre Directors and the Rise of Film Noir.  


Drama.


Pam, Dorothy. Murderer, the Women’s Hope. The Drama Review 19/3 (1975): 5-17.


Rubenstein, Lenny. Caligari and the Rise of the Expressionist Film, in Bronner and
Kellner (eds), Passion and Rebellion: 363-373.


Course/Module evaluation:
End of year written/oral examination 0 %
Presentation 30 %
Participation in Tutorials 30 %
Project work 0 %
Assignments 0 %
Reports 0 %
Research project 40 %
Quizzes 0 %
Other 0 %

Additional information:
Please see the film "The Third Man" before the first meeting of the seminar