

Psychology 4540/7310: Psychocinematics
Department of Psychology, University of Manitoba
Winter Term, 2016/2017 Academic Year

Instructor

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Course description

This is a course on the cognitive science of film experience. The first five weeks will involve a good deal of reading to get everyone informed on the fundamentals and ideas in this emerging field of study. The remainder of the course will consist of student-led seminars on topics in the domain of cognitive science and various aspects of film and film experience.

Class

Fridays @ 8:30am – 11:15am in Isbister Building Room 335

Evaluation scheme

Weekly writing assignments	15%	
Written proposal	15%	(Due February 10 th)
Oral presentation	30%	(February 24 th to April 21 st)
Written paper	40%	(Due April 28 th)

Weekly writing assignments

In the lecture weeks (before the reading week), you will submit a thought paper that identifies themes and presents a critical commentary on the assigned readings in relation to cinema and cinema experience. Those thought papers should be turned in at the start of class. In the seminar weeks, you will be asked to write a thought paper on the seminars presented in class. Those thought papers should be turned at the start of class the following week. Thought papers should be two double spaced pages at 12 point Times Roman font. Your grade will reflect both the clarity of exposition and the quality of discussion.

Your assignment should be evaluative, productive, and based on the week's readings. You are expected to critically evaluate the arguments and develop a perspective that will figure into class discussion. For example, you might suggest an experiment to answer a question raised by the reading, counter-argue points raised in the assigned paper(s), point to a methodological flaw in an experiment or experiments, or describe an instance in which a point raised in the papers is exemplified in a particular film.

Written proposal

You will submit a written proposal that (a) identifies the topic and questions you wish to study, (b) presents a relevant reading list, and (c) articulates the questions you will answer. The written proposal

should be four and no more than six double spaced pages at 12 point Times Roman font, not including your cover page and reference list. Your grade will reflect the clarity, completeness, and appropriateness of your preparation.

Seminar

You will give a 30-40 minute seminar on your chosen research topic, as approved by the instructor. Your seminar will be followed by a 15-minute question/discussion period. You should use the seminar as an opportunity to organize the material that you've read and to practice your presentation of the material that you will present in your final paper. Your grade will reflect your organization, clarity, and persuasiveness as well as your presentation style and ability to handle questions from the class.

Paper

You will write a final paper on your research topic that expands your seminar presentation. I expect that your final paper will provide a more complete and in depth analysis of your research topic. I expect that you will include a discussion of relevant controversies and debates. I expect that you will provide a coherent and well-considered evaluative commentary of your topic. Your research paper will be written in APA format and the body of your paper must be 12 -15 double spaced pages, excluding cover page, figures, tables, and references. If you would like more space, please ask the instructor. Your grade will reflect the scope and quality of your investigation as well as the quality of your presentation, writing, and evaluative contribution.

Permission to share work

I would like to share thought papers and final papers with the class. I think that others in the class would benefit from seeing one another's work and, I hope, be interested in hearing about one another's thoughts and analyses. Permission will be sought in class.

Grading scheme

$0 \leq F < 50$	$60 \leq C < 65$	$70 \leq B < 75$	$80 \leq A < 90$
$50 \leq D < 60$	$65 \leq C+ < 70$	$75 \leq B+ < 80$	$90 \leq A+ \leq 100$

*** Grades are not rounded

Email policy

I accept questions by email. However, I typically answer emails at the start of each class. I can only accept messages sent from a University of Manitoba email account.

Late policy

Missed tests, missed presentations, and late papers will receive a grade of zero. Exceptions could be granted if you (a) provide a valid reason for your absence (e.g., seriously ill); (b) provide documentation to support your reason (e.g., a doctor's note indicating that you could not have written the exam at the scheduled date and time), and; (c) let the instructor know with ample time to prepare for your absence. If you know you will be unable to be present in class (e.g., extracurricular obligation), you should contact the instructor as soon as possible (at least two weeks ahead of the date) to discuss alternative arrangements.

Policy on Academic Integrity

Plagiarism or any form of cheating is subject to serious academic penalty. It is the responsibility of the student to acquaint themselves with Section 7 from the University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar for the current academic year – see Policies on Plagiarism and Cheating, and Examination: Personations. Academic dishonesty can result in serious consequences, e.g., a grade of zero on an assignment or exam, an F on a transcript (with a notation “CW” indicating compulsory withdrawal). The penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department in Arts or from all courses taught in this Faculty. The Faculty reserves the right to check any work suspected of plagiarism through electronic resources. Speak to your instructor if you have any questions.

There are three forms of academic dishonesty: (1) Plagiarism is to take the words or ideas (found on paper or electronic format) of another person and pass them off as one’s own. Submission of a paper written in part or in whole by someone other than you is considered to be plagiarism and/or cheating. (2) Cheating in examinations or exams can take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, the use of unauthorized materials, and copying material from others. An assignment that is prepared for one course cannot be submitted for another course; this is called duplicate submission and is a form of cheating. (3) Examination Personation – A student who arranges for another individual (student or non-student) to write any nature of examination, as well as the individual who writes the exam, will be subject to discipline under the University of Manitoba’s Student Discipline Bylaw.

Prerequisite

A grade of C or better in PSYC 1200 or 17.120 (or 17.121 and 17.122 or PSYC 1211 and PSYC 1221 from St. Boniface) is required as a prerequisite for this course. As this is an honours course, written consent of department head is also necessary. Students who do not have the prerequisites for this course, and who have not received written permission to waive those prerequisites from the Department Head/Coordinator, must drop this course, before the end of the registration revision period. Students who have registered on line in spite of restrictions to their registration must also drop this course. Failure to do so will result in termination of student registration in the course, notwithstanding timing during the academic year or work completed as part of the course.

Schedule

January 20 Psychocinematics

Week one is defining psychocinematics against a history of theoretical perspectives in film theory (i.e., psychoanalytic, critical, semiotic, and postmodern). What does psychocinematics have to offer?

Reading:

- Shimamura, A. P. (2013). Psychocinematics: Issues and directions. In A. P. Shimamura, *Psychocinematics: Exploring cognition at the movies* (pp. 1-26). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Prince, S. (1996). Psychoanalytic film theory and the problem of the missing spectator. In D. Bordwell & N. Carroll, *Post-theory: Reconstructing film studies* (pp. 71-86). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Suggested reading:

Plantinga, C. (2002). Cognitive Film Theory: An Insider's Appraisal. *Cinemas: Revue d'Études Cinématographiques= Journal of Film Studies*, 12, 15-37.

Viewing:

Fiennes, S. (2013). *The pervert's guide to ideology*.

Jones, K. (2015). *Hitchcock/Truffaut*.

January 27

Comprehension

Week two focuses on a psychological analysis of comprehension and how that relates to cinema experience. We will focus on the theory of situation models, how situation models figure into the story, and how film makers exploit our natural cognitive processes to make interesting stories.

Assigned reading:

Zacks, J. M. (2015). The movie in your head. In J. M. Zacks, *Flicker: Your brain on movies* (pp. 25-58). Oxford University Press: New York, NY.

Zwaan, R. A., & Radvansky, G. A. (1998). Situation models in language comprehension and memory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 123, 162-185.

Berliner, T. (2013). Hollywood storytelling and aesthetic pleasure. In A. P. Shimamura, *Psychocinematics: Exploring cognition at the movies* (pp. 195-213). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Suggested reading:

Graesser, A. C., Singer, M., & Trabasso, T. (1994). Constructing inferences during narrative text comprehension. *Psychological Review*, 101, 371-395.

Schwan, S. (2013). The art of simplifying events. In A. P. Shimamura, *Psychocinematics: Exploring cognition at the movies* (pp. 1-26). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Schwan, S., & Garsoffky (2004). The cognitive representation of filmic event summaries. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 18, 37-55.

Speer, N. K., Zacks, J. M., & Reynolds, J. R. (2007). Human brain activity time-locked to narrative event boundaries. *Psychological Science*, 18, 449-455.

Zacks, J. M. (2013). Constructing event representations during film comprehension. In A. P. Shimamura, *Psychocinematics: Exploring cognition at the movies* (pp. 1-26). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Zacks, J. M., Speer, N. K., & Reynolds, J. R. (2009). Segmentation in reading and film comprehension. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 138, 307-327.

Viewing:

Shyamalan, M. N. (2000). *Unbreakable*.

Shyamalan, M. N. (1999). *Sixth sense*.

February 3rd

Truth and persuasion

Week three is a discussion of truth and persuasion in film. We will relate work on belief and false memory to examine how film can affect and even contaminate narrative and knowledge.

Assigned reading:

- Butler, A. C., Zaromb, F. M., Lyle, K. B., & Roediger, I. (2009). Using popular films to enhance classroom learning: The good, the bad, and the interesting. *Psychological Science*, *20*, 1161-1168.
- Pennycook, G., Cheyne, J. A., Barr, N., Koehler, D. J., & Fugelsang, J. A. (2015). On the reception and detection of pseudo-profound bullshit. *Judgment and Decision Making*, *10*, 549–563.
- Zacks, J. M. (2015). How movies make memories. In J. M. Zacks, *Flicker: Your brain on movies* (pp. 85-112). Oxford University Press: New York, NY.

Suggested reading:

- Fazio, L. K., Dolan, P. O., & Marsh, E. J. (2015). Learning misinformation from fictional sources: Understanding the contributions of transportation and item-specific processing. *Memory*, *23*, 167-177.
- Fazio, L. K., Brashier, N. M., Payne, B. K., Marsh, E. J. (2015). Knowledge does not protect against illusory truth. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *144*, 993–1002.
- Fazio, L. K., & Marsh, E. J. (2008). Slowing presentation speed increases illusions of knowledge. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, *15*, 180-185.
- Fazio, L. K., Barber, S. J., Rajaram, S., Ornstein, P. A., & Marsh, E. J. (2013). Creating illusions of knowledge: Learning errors that contradict prior knowledge. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *142*, 1-5.
- Marsh, E. J., & Fazio, L. K. (2006). Learning errors from fiction: Difficulties in reducing reliance on fictional stories. *Memory & Cognition*, *34*, 1140-1149.
- Prentice, D. A., Gerrig, R. J., & Bailis, D. S. (1997). What readers bring to the processing of fictional texts. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, *4*, 416-420.
- Rogers, S. (2013). Truth, lies, and meaning in slow motion images. In A. P. Shimamura, *Psychocinematics: Exploring cognition at the movies* (pp. 1-26). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Viewing:

Moore, M. (2002). *Bowling for Columbine*.
Blackfish
Amanda Knox

**February 10
Attention**

Week four is a discussion of how directors and editors construct films to simulate and exploit our cognition (especially attention) and how those simulations make movies easy, exciting, immersive, and compelling.

Assigned reading:

- Zacks, J. M. (2015). Sleight of hand. In J. M. Zacks, *Flicker: Your brain on movies* (pp. 229-245). Oxford University Press: New York, NY.
- Smith, T. J. (2012). The attentional theory of cinematic continuity. *Projections*, *6*, 1-27.
- Simons D. J., Chabris C. F. (1999). Gorillas in our midst: Sustained inattention blindness for dynamic events. *Perception*, *28*, 1059–1074. ([Example 1](#), [Example 2](#))
- Smith, T. J. (2013). Watching you watch movies: Using eye tracking to inform film theory. In A. P. Shimamura, *Psychocinematics: Exploring cognition at the movies* (pp. 1-26). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Suggested reading:

- Carroll, N., & Seeley, W. P. (2013). Cognitivism, psychology, and neuroscience: Movies as attentional engines. In A. P. Shimamura, *Psychocinematics: Exploring cognition at the movies* (pp. 1-26). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Kuhn, G., Amlani, A. A., & Rensink, R. A. (2008). Towards a science of magic. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 12, 349-354.
- Rensink, R. A., & Kuhn, G. (2015). *A framework for using magic to study the mind*. *Frontiers in Psychology* ([Link](#))
- Rensink, R. A., O'Regan, J. K., & Clark, J. J. (1997). To see or not to see: The need for attention to perceive changes in scenes. *Psychological science*, 8, 368-373.
- Zacks, J. M. (2015). Bottlenecks, spotlights, and chunks. In J. M. Zacks, *Flicker: Your brain on movies* (pp. 197-228). Oxford University Press: New York, NY.

Viewing:

- Hanson, C. (1997). *L.A. confidential*.
- Nolan, C. (2006). *The prestige*.

February 17
Neurocinematics

Week five focuses on work and data using methods from neuroscience to examine how the brain and body reacts and operates during cinematic experience.

Assigned reading:

- Zacks, J. M. (2015). Your brain wasn't made for movies. In J. M. Zacks, *Flicker: Your brain on movies* (pp. 3-24). Oxford University Press: New York, NY.
- Hasson, U., Landesman, O., Knappmeyer, B., Vallines, I., Rubin, N., & Heeger, D. J. (2008). Neurocinematics: The neuroscience of film. *Projections*, 2, 1-26.
- Zacks, J. M., Braver, T. S., Sheridan, M. A., Donaldson, D. I., Snyder, A. Z., Ollinger, J. M., & Raichle, M. E. (2001). Human brain activity time-locked to perceptual event boundaries. *Nature neuroscience*, 4, 651-655.
- Rizzolatti, G., & Craighero, L. (2004). The mirror-neuron system. *Annual Review of Neuroscience*, 27, 169-192.

Suggested reading:

- Miller, G. (2014). How movies synchronize the brains of an audience. *Wired* ([Link](#))
- Miller, G. (2014). For Filmmakers, Higher Frame Rates Pose Opportunities—And Challenges. *Wired* ([Link](#))
- Miller, G. (2014). How movies manipulate your brain to keep you entertained. *Wired* ([Link](#))
- Miller, G. (2014). How movies trick your brain in empathizing with characters. *Wired* ([Link](#))
- Miller, G. (2014). Cinematic cuts exploit how your brain edits what you see. *Wired* ([Link](#))
- Gallese, V., & Guerra, M. (2012). Embodying movies: Embodied simulation and film studies. *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image*, 3, 183-210.

Viewing:

- Leone, S. (1966). *The good the bad and the ugly*.
- Gondry, M. (2004). *Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind*.
- Glatzer, R. & Westmoreland, W. (2014). *Still Alice*.

February 24th
Reading week – No class

March 3rd
Seminar week 1

March 10th
Seminar week 2

March 17th
Off week – No class

March 24th
Seminar week 3

March 31st
Seminar week 4

April 7th
Seminar week 5

April 14th
Seminar week 6

April 21st
Seminar week 7
Wrapup

A group discussion and retrospective piecing back together of themes, data, and theory from the term