Film Studies

The Film Studies program at Emory University trains astute and discriminating critics and analysts of film art; it strengthens their critical thinking through fostering an awareness of the philosophical and aesthetic debates in film and media theory; and it provides thorough knowledge of the history of cinema and media as dynamic forms of cultural expression.

We offer two degrees: a free-standing master’s degree, and a graduate certificate for doctoral students based in other programs.

Resources and Facilities

With a dynamic and growing faculty and only six applicants admitted each year, students in Film Studies benefit from a small program closely tailored to their individual interests.

Our faculty’s research and teaching areas span the globe and cross media. They include Hollywood, Western European, former Soviet and East Asian cinemas, as well as television, video games, and new media. Faculty in other graduate programs teach courses on Latin American, Middle Eastern and African cinemas, for example, and we encourage our graduate students to formulate an interdisciplinary approach to the study of film and media.

Film Studies benefits from extensive library collections of films and related materials. Our Film and Media Studies Librarian, the internationally recognized Parajanov scholar James M. Steffen, Ph.D., updates and augments library holdings on a continual basis.

- The Woodruff Library has several large archival collections on microfilm—the Will Hays papers, the Motion Picture Producer and Distributors’ Association Production Code Administration files, and Pressbooks from the classical studio era—and every major trade paper published by the American film industry, as well as a selection of foreign language film journals.
The Manuscripts and Rare Books Library includes a wide ranging collection of posters and lobby cards for American films about race and race relations.

The Heilbrun Music and Media Library includes over 16,000 films and television shows on DVD (all regions), 9,400 films on VHS tape, and 300 Blue-ray Discs.

Class screenings feature high-quality video and, occasionally, 16mm projection. The department presents free weekly 35mm series on campus, and we also host mini-series (such as Salman Rushdie on great adaptations and the films of Elia Kazan) and special screenings of rare and important films from around the world. Off campus, the city of Atlanta has several screens devoted to alternative films, including film series at the High Museum of Art, the Atlanta Film and Video Festival, the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival and many others. Space permitting, students may intern at these festivals and at Turner Classic Movies, which is based in Atlanta.

Emory’s Film and Media Studies Department hosts prominent scholars and filmmakers. Recent speakers have included Don Bluth, David Bordwell, Donald Bogle, Todd Field, Molly Haskell, Dariush Mahjuri, Richard Maltby, Lev Manovich, Patrick McGilligan, John MacKay, Walter Mirisch, Charles Musser, Richard Neupert, R. Barton Palmer, Murray Pomerance, A.O. Scott, Jacqueline Stewart, Kevin Brownlow, Geoffrey Fletcher, Laine Kline, Claire Denis, and Michael Sragow.

Curriculum

Master’s Degree

Students typically take two years to complete an MA.

Coursework

Eight courses are required. Five must be taken in our core seminars—Authorship, Genre/Criticism, History/National Cinemas, Theory, and Methods in Film and Media Studies. The subject matter for each of these seminars grows out of the instructors’ and students’ interests. Students may also require some leveling coursework (in, for example, Classical and Contemporary Film Theory).

Thesis

The MA degree culminates in the writing and oral defense of a thesis. The thesis demonstrates the ability to formulate and address an original research question in discipline-specific language. It should display in-depth knowledge of at least one area of expertise; it must also indicate broad familiarity with the methods and discourse of film and media studies—primarily by showing how it is in dialogue with other work in the field and making the case for its own relevance. Each thesis has three faculty readers, one of whom can be from a department other than Film and Media Studies.

Graduate Certificate

The graduate certificate is for doctoral students based in other programs. It requires a minimum of four seminars: Theory, Genre/Criticism, History/National Cinemas, and Methods in Film and Media Studies. Students may also require some leveling coursework (as outlined above for MA candidate preparation).

The precise coursework will be determined by the student in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies; requirements for Film Studies Graduate Certificate students follow the requirements of their home program. (Home programs include, but are not limited to, Art History, Comparative Literature, English, French, the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts, Religion, Sociology, Spanish and Portuguese, and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies.)

In addition, Film Studies will be considered one area of the student’s Qualifying Examination in their home program, and a significant part of the dissertation must address film and/or media.

Training in Teaching

At Emory, all graduate students receive training in pedagogy and other elements of teaching through the Teaching Assistant Training and Teaching Opportunity Program (TATTO) administered by the Graduate School. The program includes a summer workshop that covers broadly applicable skills, a course on pedagogical issues, and teaching opportunities that provide a mentored and progressive development of teaching techniques and experience.

MA students enroll in this program just prior to the start of their second year at Emory. As teaching assistants, our students work closely with faculty to develop guest lectures and grading techniques.

Students

Film Studies admits, on average, six students per year into its MA program. These students are often but not always undergraduate Film Studies majors—we also welcome students who have majored in Art History, Comparative Literature, Economics, English, History, area studies (e.g., French, Italian, Spanish, Russian), Sociology and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

There is no set number of Graduate Certificate students who join the program, but typically we are a community of fifteen to twenty graduate students in any given year.
MA student theses and Ph.D. dissertations have ranged across the fields of film and media criticism, theory and history.

Sample topics of MA theses in recent years have included the films of Ang Lee; the onscreen and offscreen careers of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz; a history of Atlanta's Better Films Committee; Steven Soderbergh as a contemporary auteur; the human form in the age of CGI; trauma and temporality in Deleuze, Tarkovsky, and Godard; and a history of Majestic Pictures, 1930-1935. Some sample thesis titles are: “The Call of Conscience: Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Collaborative Adaptation of Kozintsev, Shostakovich, and Pasternak”; “Distance and Absorption: The Split Screen as Functional Paradox”; “Jim Brown: Cinematic Integration and Re-Segregation, 1967-1972”; “In Light of Luxo: Masculinity, Fatherhood and the Hardest Bodies in Pixar”; “Forging Divinity: Warner Bros.' Role in the Creation of the James Dean Icon”; “Coco Chanel in Hollywood”; “Neo-Exploitation in Contemporary American Cinema”; and “Branded Developments: The HBO Serial and Beyond.”

Ph.D. dissertation topics have included the depiction of cultural hybridity in American and New Zealand films; the experimental documentaries of French Left Bank filmmakers; the animation aesthetic in contemporary CGI films; the “German invasion” of the American market in the early 1920s; female comedy stars of Hollywood's 1930s; African-American film stars of the 1930s; cinematic aesthetics of time and love; the films of Sergei Parajanov; and the male body-in-pain as redemptive figure.

Our MA alumni have gone on to careers in publishing, film criticism, film programming (film festivals), film archives, film advertising, and many have entered Ph.D. programs. Our Graduate Certificate students have been placed in tenure track teaching positions at major research universities around the country and in Canada.

Faculty
Our program features, in addition to our full-time faculty, the teaching of film by faculty members in English, French, German and Italian, the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts, Russian and East Asian Languages and Cultures, Sociology, Spanish, and Portuguese.

MATTHEW H. BERNSTEIN
Chair and Director of Undergraduate Studies

KARLA OELER
Director of Graduate Studies
Professor Oeler teaches courses in film history, theory, criticism, and aesthetics. Course offerings include Poetic Cinema, Masculinity and Violence in American Cinema, authorship seminars on Jean-Luc Godard and Jean Renoir, Soviet and Post-Soviet Film, History and Poetics of Cinematography, Film Style and Film Sound. She is the author of A Grammar of Murder: Violent Scenes and Film Form (2009) as well as articles on Jean-Luc Godard, Jean Renoir, Andre Bazin, Sergei Parajanov, Martin Scorsese, and Fyodor Dostoevsky. She is a member of the editorial boards of The Velvet Light Trap and The Yearbook of Comparative Literature and is currently working on a book about film and interiority.
Michele Schreiber
Assistant Professor of Film and Media Studies
Professor Schreiber teaches courses in feminist film and media theory, gender in the media, popular culture, and film genres. Previous course offerings include Gender and Genre, Gender and the Monstrous Body, Feminist Film and Media Theory, and Film Authors: Michael Haneke, Catherine Breillat, and David Fincher. She is the author of “Independence at What Cost?: Economics and Female Desire in Nicole Holofcener’s Friends with Money” (2008) in Feminism at the Movies: Understanding Gender in Contemporary Popular Cinema, eds. Hilary Radner and Rebecca Stringer (2011) and “Misty Water-colored Memories of the Way We Were: Nostalgia and Post-feminism in Contemporary Romance Narratives,” in Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History, ed. Vicki Callahan (2010). She is currently working on two book projects: It’s Complicated: Romance in the Post-Feminist Media, which examines the perseverance and increasing ubiquity of the traditional romance narrative in the post-feminist political and cultural era; and The Films of David Fincher (under contract, Wallflower Press/ Columbia University Press).

Daniel Reynolds
Assistant Professor of Film and Media Studies
Professor Reynolds teaches courses in video games, film and media theory, and the relationships between media and the mind. Recent course offerings include Time Across Media, Problems of Authorship, and a writing-intensive version of the department’s Introduction to Film course. He has published scholarly articles on the exploration of video game spaces, the semiotics of shock websites, and New York City’s 34-year ban on pinball machines, and he is a founding editor of Media Fields Journal. Professor Reynolds joined the Film and Media Studies faculty in 2012 after completing his Ph.D. at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is currently working on a book about how media platforms contribute to embodied cognitive processes and on an article about depictions of infinity in media.

Eddy von Mueller
Lecturer in Film and Media Studies
Dr. Von Mueller teaches courses in film and television history, Asian national cinemas, film criticism and fiction film production. Recent course offerings include narrative filmmaking, animation, the history of the American entertainment industry, Korean cinema, Film Noir, and the cinemas of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the PRC. He has published scholarly articles on the samurai films of Akira Kurosawa, early silent film adaptations of Shakespeare, science in films, police procedurals on American television, and the nature films produced by the Walt Disney Company. He has also published extensively in the popular press as an illustrator, critic and commentator, and his most recent feature film has appeared at over 30 festivals around the world. His first book, Synthetic Cinema: Aesthetics, Visual Effects, and the Impact of Animation on Contemporary Filmmaking, is under consideration by a university press.

Contact Information
For more information, please visit our website www.filmstudies.emory.edu, where you can find detailed information about the graduate program, the requirements for the MA and Ph.D. Certificate programs, and the application process. You may also contact the Academic Department Administrator, Ms. Annie Hall (annie.hall@emory.edu) for answers to specific questions.