
Chapter 1 – Introduction to Film Studies

Film studies is an academic discipline that deals with various theoretical, historical, and critical approaches to cinema as an art form and a medium. It is sometimes subsumed within media studies and is often compared to television studies.

Film studies is less concerned with advancing proficiency in film production than it is with exploring the narrative, artistic, cultural, economic, and political implications of the cinema. In searching for these social-ideological values, film studies take a series of critical approaches for the analysis of production, theoretical framework, context, and creation. Also, in studying film, possible careers include critic or production. Overall the study of film continues to grow, as does the industry on which it focuses.

Academic journals publishing film studies work include *Sight & Sound*, *Film Comment*, *Film International*, *CineAction*, *Screen*, *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, *Film Quarterly*, and *Journal of Film and Video*.

Modern film studies

Today film studies exist worldwide as a discipline with specific schools dedicated to it. The aspects of film studies have grown to encompass numerous methods for teaching history, culture and society. Many liberal arts colleges and universities contain courses specifically geared toward the analysis of film. Also exemplifying the increased diversity of film studies is the fact that high schools across the United States offer classes on film theory. Many programs conjoin film studies with media and television studies, taking knowledge from all parts of visual production in the approach. With the growing technologies such as 3-D film and YouTube, films are now concretely used to teach a reflection of culture and art around the world as a primary medium. Due to the ever-growing dynamic of film studies, a wide variety of curricula have emerged for analysis of critical approaches used in film. Although each institution has the power to form the study material, students are usually expected to grasp a knowledge of conceptual shifts in film, a vocabulary for the analysis of film form and style, a sense of ideological dimensions of film, and an awareness of extra textual domains and possible direction of film in the future. Universities offer their students a course in the field of film analysis to critically engage with the production of films which also allows the students to take part in research and seminars of specialized topics to enhance their critical abilities.

Common curriculum

The curriculum of tertiary level film studies programs often include but are not limited to:

- Introduction to film studies
- Modes of film studies

- Close analysis of film
- History of film/media
- Analysis with emphasis
 1. Attention to time period
 2. Attention to regional creation
 3. Attention to genre
 4. Attention to creators
- Methods of film production

With diverse courses that make up for film studies majors or minors come to exist within schools.

What is Film Studies? An Overview of the Academic Discipline

Film studies is an institutionalized academic discipline that focuses on the serious study of films, cinematic history and film culture and is majorly informed by film theory. Unlike what some people may believe, film studies is not concerned with filmmaking or the technicalities of film production itself but is rather focused on studying cinema the way one would with art or literature. It involves not just analysing the content of a film, but also looking into its form, the narrative, technique, stylistic elements and the historical, socio-political, economic, and cultural aspects and context surrounding it. This article aims to provide an introduction to what the field entails by delving into its history and further looking into some of the major concepts involved.

History of Film Studies

The invention of film technology and the creation of motion pictures itself is a relatively new chapter in human history. A critical approach towards cinema emerged a while later, with writings on film history first published in the 1920s along with the launch of journals. The first film school was set up in 1919 in Moscow, and more cropped up in France, the United States and the UK in the next couple of years however they were all institutes dedicated mainly to filmmaking and film production, with film studies only being a part of the larger, mainly practical work-based programs. At that time, classes on film appreciation were being introduced in schools in part as an effort to educate them about this newer but growingly popular medium of communication.

However, the field of film studies is one that has been around only for the last few decades. The creation of film theory and the idea of film studies as an institutionalized field first came about in the 1940s in France, under the “filmologie” movement, and names such as “cinematology” were considered. It seriously began taking shape a decade later and came to be known as film studies. Scholars and critics mainly looked at and studied mainstream Hollywood and other national film movements such as those of Soviet Cinema and German Expressionism. Recently, however, the focus has been more towards world cinema. We have also been witnessing in the past few years

the changes that digital technology has brought to the cinema, both in terms of filmmaking and the rise of streaming services which have sparked debates on the future of films and the cinema.

Conclusion

Today, there are numerous film studies programs and courses being offered by universities and colleges across the world, either as fully-fledged programs or a subsection of media studies. There is no one common curriculum for film studies as it is an academic discipline that developed and was shaped by the critiques and cinematic analysis of academics, film critics and people from the industry. However, the important elements that form the basis for students include various film movements, waves of cinema, cinematic genres and tropes, modes of analysis, film language, methods of production, ways of filmmaking and various theories. Film studies courses are useful not just for those who wish to enter the industry but are also a good pick for those who may be studying subjects such as philosophy, cultural studies or sociology and are passionate about cinema, and wish to explore it deeper from these angles.

Career Opportunities

Jobs directly related to your degree include:

- Broadcast presenter
- Film director
- Film/video editor
- Location manager
- Production designer, theatre/television/film
- Programme researcher, broadcasting/film/video
- Television camera operator
- Television/film/video producer
- Television production coordinator

Jobs where your degree would be useful include:

- Advertising art director
- Arts administrator
- Community arts worker
- Concept artist
- Event manager
- Marketing executive
- Public relations officer
- Runner, broadcasting/film/video
- Special effects technician
- Talent agent
- VFX artist

Remember that many employers accept applications from graduates with any degree subject, so don't restrict your thinking to the jobs listed here.

Keywords about film

Mise-en-scène • From the French, it was originally a stage (not screen) term that meant that which has been put into the scene or put onstage. • In cinema, mise-en-scene consists of all of the elements placed in front of the camera to be photographed: • figure behavior • meaning actors • their gestures • and their facial expressions • and the camera's actions • and angles • and the cinematography. Settings props lighting costumes makeup

• A shorter definition might be “the totality of expressive content within the image.” • Also, since a film or director can have a very distinctive mise-en-scene, the term can be synonymous for “style” as in visual style.

Basic Terms • Shot: A shot is the basic element of filmmaking—a piece of film run through the camera, exposed, and developed; an uninterrupted run of the camera; or an uninterrupted image on film. • Scene: While a shot is a unit of length or duration—a minimal unit of dramatic material, a scene is a longer unit, usually of several shots or more. • Take: a single recording of a shot. If the director doesn't like something that occurs in Take 1, she may run the shot again by calling out “Take 2”—until she is ready to call “print!”

• Cut: A cut is the basic element of film editing—an abrupt film transition from one sequence to another. The cut, dissolve and wipe serve as the three primary transitions. • Dissolve: moving gradually from one picture to another. Sometimes refers to a series of such transitions. • Wipe: one shot replaces another by traveling from one side of the frame to another or with a special shape. • Fade: The terms fade-out and fade-in are used to describe a transition to and from a blank image.

Reading Mise-en-scène Because of the expressive importance of mise-en-scene, every detail matter. Every detail is a statement of meaning, whether you want it to be or not. Look at the questions Alfred Hitchcock faced when he made his groundbreaking 1960 film, Psycho: Is the actress (Janet Leigh) in the scene pretty? What does that mean? What if the actress were unattractive? What would that mean? What is she wearing? What does that mean? This is why mise-en-scene is important: it tells us something above and beyond the event itself.

Camera Distance One-way directors have of providing expression to each shot they film is to vary the distance between the camera and the subject being filmed. In general, the closer the camera is to the subject, the more emotional weight the subject gains: • A CLOSE-UP is a shot that isolates an object in the image, making it appear relatively large. • An EXTREME CLOSE-UP might be of the person's eyes—or mouth—or nose—or any element isolated at very close range in the image. • A MEDIUM SHOT appears to be taken from a medium distance; in terms of the human body, it's from the waist up.

• A THREEQUARTER SHOT takes in the human body from just below the knees. • A FULL SHOT is of the entire human body. • A LONG SHOT appears to be taken from a long distance. Remember: lenses are able to create the illusion of distance or closeness. • There

are also **EXTREME LONG SHOTS**, which show the object or person at a vast distance surrounded by a great amount of the surrounding space.

Camera Angles In addition to subject-camera distance, directors employ different camera angles to provide expressive content to the subjects they film. When directors simply want to film a person or room or landscape from an angle that seems unobtrusive and normal (whatever the word normal actually means), they place the camera at the level of an adult's eyes, which is to say five or six feet off the ground when the characters are standing, lower when they are seated. This, not surprisingly, is called an **EYE LEVEL SHOT**.

When the director shoots his or her subjects from below, the result is a **LOW-ANGLE SHOT**; with a low-angle shot, the camera is in effect looking up at the subject. Typically, directors use low-angle shots to aggrandize their subjects. After all, "to look up to someone" means that you admire that person.

And when he or she shoots the subject from above, the result is a **HIGH-ANGLE SHOT**; the camera is looking down. High-angle shots, because they look down on the subject, are often used to subtly criticize the subject by making him or her seem slightly diminished, or to distance an audience emotionally from the character.

But these are just broad tendencies, and as always, the effect of a particular camera angle depends on the context in which it appears. In *Citizen Kane*, for instance, Welles chooses to film his central character in a low-angle shot at precisely the moment of his greatest humiliation, and a technical device that is often employed to signal admiration achieves exactly the opposite effect by making Kane look clumsy and too big for his surroundings, and therefore more pitiable and pathetic.

An extreme overhead shot, taken seemingly from the sky or ceiling and looking straight down on the subject, is known as a **BIRD'S-EYE VIEW**.

The terms close-up, low-angle shot, extreme long shot, and others assume that the camera is facing the subject squarely, and for the most part shots in feature films are indeed taken straight-on. But a camera can tilt laterally on its axis, too. When the camera tilts horizontally and/or vertically it's called a **DUTCH TILT** or a canted angle.

When a director sets up a **TWO-SHOT**, he or she creates a shot in which two people appear, generally in medium distance or closer, though of course there can be two-shots of a couple or other type of pair walking that would reveal more of their lower bodies. The point is that two-shots are dominated spatially by two people, making them ideal for conversations.

REVERSE-SHOT PATTERN: an editing technique that records the interaction between two characters, usually a conversation, who are facing one another with one series of shots often taken over the shoulder of one character and another series of shots taken over the shoulder of the other character; note that the so-called reverse shot is not actually taken from the truly opposite angle, because such an angle would violate the 180° system.

A **THREE-SHOT**, of course, contains three people—not three people surrounded by a crowd, but three people who are framed in such a way as to constitute a distinct group.

Finally, a **MASTER SHOT** is a shot taken from a long distance that includes as much of the set or location as possible as well all the characters in the scene. For example, a scene

set in a dining room could be filmed in master shot if the camera was placed so that it captured.

Framing Camera height, distance, angle and level can be changed within the shot – mobile framing – a unique aspect of film

The change of framing is achieved by moving the camera during filming. Several kinds of camera movement Pan, Tilt, Tracking, and Crane

The pan turns the camera horizontally on a vertical axis - horizontal scanning of space psycho

The tilt moves the camera vertically up and down on a horizontal axis Rear Window Tilt up and tilt down

In the tracking (dolly or trucking or traveling) shot, the camera as a whole change position Day for Night Pan & Travelling shot Day for Night

In the crane shot, the camera moves above the ground level, being carried by a crane.

Perspective One-point perspective: One vanishing point is typically used for roads, railway tracks, hallways, or buildings viewed so that the front is directly facing the viewer. from above (or below).

Two-point perspective: Two-point perspective can be used to draw the same objects as one-point perspective, rotated: looking at the corner of a house, or looking at two forked roads shrink into the distance, for example

Three-point perspective: Three-point perspective is usually used for buildings seen from above (or below). In addition to the two vanishing points from before, one for each wall, there is now one for how those walls recede into the ground or into the sky.