

Media aesthetics notes

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----- September 19th

----- Film Form; Film & Critical Analysis –

Chapter 11 * Step 1: Develop a thesis * What is interesting, disturbing or noteworthy? * Does that aspect illustrate a concept from lecture w clarity? Is it a good example of something we talked about in class? * Did it have a unique effect on you? * Step 2: Segment the film * What features stuck out the most (given that weeks class topic)? * How are those features related to the film as a whole?

Pay attention to details and how they affect the film * Step 3: Identify the outstanding instances of technique * Understand the techniques/concepts * Note specific examples of techniques * Types of lighting, angle, shots, narrative, style, etc. ----- September 26th

----- Styles of Film * Two major directions – realistic and formalistic * Directions or “ types” are defines by form, not content Three Styles of Film/Media: * Realistic (focused on content, portraying as real life) * Classicism (in-between) Formalism (manipulation, taking out of reality) Realism: * Reproduce reality with minimum distortion-objective mirror * Major concern is with content, rather than form * Subject matter is supreme * Documentary film * Imagine as we’re watching it as we would see it through our own eyes * Ex: Big Brother – raw, unscripted, stagnant cameras, not playing w manipulation * Would never see something like a birds eye view of crowds of people, because we would never see that in real life. If we were watching a conversation happening it would be from one angle Formalism: Deliberately stylized and distort images (special effects, explosions, zooming in/out, narrative structure: in real life happens in

temporal order as it would happen to us, in these movies jumps around in time) * Wants no one to mistake manipulated image for real thing (not pretending that this is reality, want to show the manipulation) * Concerned with form rather than content * Referred to as expressionist (self-expression, trying to create connections between stories/events that if watched over & over it has deeper meaning) * Avant-garde cinema Classical: What most fictional films/shows are classified as (we would never live like this but its fun to watch, drama, comedy, group of characters that the similarities can relate to your life but also an element that the story is manipulated that wouldn't be reality) * Films are strong in story, star (someone we identify), and production values (summer block busters, high financial investment in production because high financial return) * Clearly defined plot, conflict, rising climax, and resolution/closure * Avoids extremes of realism and formalism (wouldn't see camera work that seems natural, but wouldn't have random objects on the screen) (realistic enough but also fantasy)

----- Narrative as a Formal System – Chapter

3 I. Principles of Narrative Construction: * Plot & Story * Cause-Effect * Time * Space * Patterns of development II. Flow of Story Information: Narration * Range of Story Information * Depth of Story Information * Narrator Narrative Form Most common in fictional media, but can be nonfictional too (ex: Bachelor – what's going to happen next week suspense) * Identify because stories are all around us * What is narrative? Narrative is a chain of events linked by cause and effect and occurring in time (how is this constructed... chronological? Jumping from times?) and space (location, extras in background, cars, etc) Components of Narrative Form * Plots and Stories * Story is the subject matter or raw material of a narrative * A set of all events

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* Plot orders the events and actions of the story according to temporal and spatial patterns * Plots can vary – jump around or chronological, can focus on one person at a time or a group – in the end still has same story line * Cause and Effect Characters create causes and effects by making certain things happen and reacting to events * Qualities of the character influence cause-effect relationships * Physical characteristics, traits, personality* Action/Reaction * Can be a natural disaster, etc * Time * Construct story time based on order the plot presents them * We don't need mundane elements (shower, sleep) to make sense of a story * Temporal order is the order which events occur (are they happening in chronological, or flashbacks, or jumping) * Temporal duration is the length and which events p (is there a moment they pay more time to? What is the significance of that scene) * Temporal frequency is how often events within a story are revisited * Space Events occur in clearly defined locations where the action takes place * Associate other elements based on locations * Tells us information that isn't stated * Opening, closing, patterns of development * Classic paradigm most popular in media * Set of conventions are present in classical narrative structure * Characters are goal oriented * Three-act structure model * Set up, Confrontation, Resolution ----- October 3rd -----
----- Mise-en-Scene -----
----- Mise-en-Scene: the arrangement of all the visual elements of a theatrical production within a given playing area – the stage.

Derived from a French theatrical term meaning “ between the scenes” * The Frame * Composition & Design * Territorial Space * Proxemic Patterns The Frame * Each movie image is enclosed in a frame * Filmmaker doesn't fit a

frame to the subject, but the subject matter to the frame * Dimensions of a frame are known as the aspect ratio Frame: Top - suggest ideas of power, controls all visual elements (usually someone scary, or authoritative) Center - reserved for area of interest, realism (expectation that through real eyes we expect something to be there) Bottom - powerlessness Left/Right Edges - suggest insignificance, unnoticed Off the Frame - fearful, importance

Composition & Design * The visual balance in the composition of the film * Want to maintain equilibrium between elements because it is easy to follow * Depending on the type of film, a bad composition may be effective * The human eye attempts to organize elements in composition Dominant Contrast * The area of an image that immediately attracts out attention because of contrast * Stand out in some kind of isolation Subsidiary Contrast * After we take in dominant we scan for counterbalancing devices - Lines & Diagonals - Exaggerate Movement - Light & Dark, Shadow - Colour - Framing Territorial Space 1. Full Front a. Facing the camera b. Most intimate c.

Viewer feels involved 2. Quarter Turn d. Favorite position for filmmakers e. Less emotional, but high intimacy still 3. Profile Position f. Character is less aware of being observed 4. Three Quarter Turn g. Even more isolated than profile shot h. Unfriendly or anti-social 5. Back Shot i. Suggests alienation from world j. Mystery, audience wants to see more * Setting can have symbolic meaning * Sunny exterior, inside, public/private * Consider Contextual use - setting * Consider way one setting is used to create different effects Proxemic Patters * The relationship of objects within a given space * Many factors determine space * Light, climate, noise level Patterns are similar to the way people obey certain special rules in social situations *

The more distance between the camera and with subject, the more emotionally neutral we remain * “ Long shot for comedy, close up for tragedy” - Chaplin * Space is seen through 4 patterns * Intimate: extreme close * Personal: medium * Social: full range * Public: long and extreme long

----- October 17th

----- Editing Classical Cutting * French were the first to use cutting to continuity to create “ arranged scenes” * Editing for emotion and drama, rather than for purely physical reasons * Presents a series of psychologically connected shots * Film: A Trip to the Moon by Georges Melies Concepts in Classical Cutting Content Curve - where a cut should be made; point at which audience has been able to assimilate shot's information (audience wont be bored because scene is too long ex: Jaws - one frame too long risks boredom, one too shot risk audience being able to make sence) * Parallel Editing - switching of shots of one scene with another at a different location to convey idea of simultaneous time Continuity Editing * Also called “ invisible editing,” a system devised to minimize the audiences awareness of shot transitions, especially cuts, in order to improve the flow of the story to avoid interrupting the viewers immersion in it * Continuity and Space: editors follow a standard shot patter to maintain spatial continuity * Establish shot, moves to a series of individual shots, back to establishing shot * Film: American Beauty Shot/Reverse Shot: shot of one character is followed by shot of another taken from the reverse angle - as they have a convo we always see the back shoulder of the other person talking across the table so we always know how close they are * 180 Degree Rule: once camera starts filming on one side of action, it must continue filming on same side for the rest of the scene * Eyeline Matches: using characters line of

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vision as motivation for a cut, matching another characters * Continuity and Time * Match on Action: Different views of the same action pieced together to look continuous (someone jumping building to building – we see them take off & land) * Jump Cut: abrupt shift in time and place of an action which is not announced by a transition CLIP: Breathless – driving in car only shows clips of driving while they're talking = cuts out blank space * Continuity Error: any unintentional discrepancy from shot to shot (seeing a boom in the corner) * Change in location, posture, hair, costume, etc. Soviet Montage and Formalist Tradition * 1920's Soviet filmmakers developed editing style around the theory that editing should exploit the differences between shots to create meaning * Film was seen as a political tool * Soviet montage, also called collision montage – rhythmic, intellectual (The Godfather baptism scene – baptism + murder + he knows the killings are happening so this becomes a 3rd meaning) Realism Photography, TV, and cinema produce realistic images automatically * Viewed classical cutting and montage to be distorting, corrupting * After WW2 neorealism emerged which deemphasized editing * Film: Stranger than Paradise – shows boy on phone, doesn't give us other side of conversation we only know what he says – shots hardly move to accommodate characters we see what can fit into the frame – doesn't cut out useless times, shows everyone doing every action – goes black in between scenes) ----- November 14th - Film Genre Understanding Genre * Genres are various types of films that audiences and filmmakers recognize by their familiar narrative, stylistic, and thematic conventions * Various conventions I. Narrative Elements - Most important criteria for defining a genre - Character types - Plot events Thematic recurrence – general meanings from plot that surface again and

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again II. Visual, sound, objects & setting * Lighting tends to be similar in films w same genre * Sound draws attention to possibilities that neither the characters nor the audience can see * Objects/setting serve as recurring symbolic images that carry meaning from film to film III. Predictability and Variation * Genres meet audience expectations * However, a film without surprises become cliché * Sub genres begin to form - smaller clusters of films within a genre * Many films incorporate characteristics of multiple genres, creating a hybrid * No genre can be defined in a single way *