Course Structure: 6 x 1.5 hr seminars, weeks 2-7, Lent Term. Mondays at 4pm, MML Rm. 142.

Essays: Students are asked to generate their own essay topics, arising from, responding to, or extending the ideas and approaches of the course.

Overview: Film studies and continental philosophy are no strangers to each other, but film theory has been dominated by psychoanalytic approaches (in particular those influenced by Lacan) or by Deleuzean approaches (inspired by his two volumes on cinema). The relationship between deconstruction – in particular Jacques Derrida’s thought – and film, has been less well explored. In fact, Peter Brunette describes Derrida’s influence on film studies and theory as ‘powerful, but subterranean’. On this course we will venture into this underground area in order to shed light on the productive, if strange, intimacy between deconstruction and film.

The course is ostensibly divided into two halves. In the first three weeks we will focus on creating a solid theoretical grounding in the relationship between deconstruction and film. In the second three weeks we will use this theoretical grounding in order to venture into practical analysis of films, informed by ideas from deconstruction. The weeks in the second half of the course are case studies in how a deconstructive film criticism might work. At the same time, however, the course will deconstruct this very distinction between theory and practice, with the theoretical weeks involving close reading of specific films, and the film weeks engaging productively with relevant theory. It is intended that the combination of a solid theoretical grounding and some example practical criticism will provide students with the skills needed in order to explore their own combinations of philosophy and film.

Playing himself in the film Ghost Dance, Derrida famously described cinema as ‘the science of ghosts’. Inspired by this, discussion in all weeks will be haunted by ideas of the spectre, loss, betrayal, mourning, resurrection and the living dead.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FOR 2014-15 STUDENTS:
On Friday 30\textsuperscript{th} and Saturday 31\textsuperscript{st} January 2015, a symposium entitled ‘Imagining Derrida: from fact to fiction’ will be held in the Faculty of English. Full details of the event can be found here: \url{http://imaginingderrida.drsarahdillon.com/}. Students on ‘Deconstructing Film’ are strongly encouraged to attend the event, which will be free to them (although registration is still necessary). At the least, ‘Deconstructing Film’ students should attend the screening of Love in the Post on the Friday evening, followed by a Q&A with the writers and director. Love in the Post is our set text for Week 2 of the course and discussion during this week, and elsewhere, may well refer back to the ‘Imagining Derrida’ symposium.
BACKGROUND READING SUGGESTIONS

This course will be taught based on the assumption that many students will have little or no previous knowledge of film criticism and theory and/or the philosophy of deconstruction. It will, however, of course be advantageous if students can develop their background knowledge in some or all of these areas before the start of the course. Below are suggestions for works that students might look at in order to do so. Please note you are not expected to read all of the works below. You should browse amongst them for those you find most interesting and stimulating and/or relevant to you specific interests.

Film Criticism and Theory – Primary Texts


Film Criticism and Theory – Guides/Introductions


Monaco, James, *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).


**Film and/as Philosophy**


**Deconstruction**


COURSE OUTLINE

PART I: THEORY

Seminar 1: Film on Deconstruction

Set Viewing:


Set Reading:


Suggested Further Reading:


Chisholm, D., Review of Screen/Play, Screen 34:2 (1993), 190-5.

Conley, Tom, Film Hieroglyphics (Minneapolis: University of Minnnesota Press, 2006).


**Seminar 2: Deconstructive Film**

**Set Viewing:**


**Set Reading:**


**Suggested Further Viewing:**


*Peeping Tom* (1960, dir. Michael Powell).


*Man with a Movie Camera* (1929, dir. Dziga Vertov).


*Contempt* (1963, dir. Jean-Luc Godard).

**Suggested Further Reading:**


**Seminar 3: Deconstruction on Film**

**Set Viewing:**


**Set Reading:**


**Suggested Further Viewing:**


**Suggested Further Reading:**


Imboden, Roberta, The Dark Creative Passage: A Derridean Journey from the Literary Text to the Film (Trier: WVT, 2005).


Ropers, Marie-Claire, ‘The Disembodied Voice (India Song)’, Yale French Studies, Special Issue on ‘Cinema/Sound’, 60 (1980), 241-68.


Wall-Romana, C., ‘Mallarme’s “Cinepoetics”: The Poem Uncoiled by the Cinematographe’, PMLA 120:1 (Jan 2005),


PART II: PRACTICE

Seminar 4: On Photography

Set Viewing:


Set Reading:


Suggested Further Viewing:


The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant (1972, dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder).


Suggested Further Reading:


**Seminar 5: On Mourning**

**Set Viewing:**


**Set Reading:**


**Suggested Further Viewing:**

Any film directed by Coixet.

Any film directed or starred in by Sarah Polley.


Suggested Further Reading:


Berger, John, To the Wedding (London: Bloomsbury, 1995).

Bersani, Leo, Forms of Being: Cinema, Aesthetics, Subjectivity (London: British Film Institute, 2004).


Kincaid, Nanci, Pretending the Bed is a Raft (New York: Delta, 1997).


Richardson, Brian, “‘At First You Feel a Bit Lost’: The Varieties of Second Person Narration”, in *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction* (Ohio State University Press, 2006), pp. 17-36.


**Seminar 6: On Touching**

**Set Viewing:**

*Another Earth* (2011, dir. Mike Cahill).

**Set Reading:**


**Suggested Further Reading:**


Sanders, Steven M., *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2009).