IDSEM-UG 1702 Spectacle and Mass Media Fall 2012

Professor: Moya Luckett
Fridays, 11 a.m.-1.45 p.m.,
Office Hours: Fridays 1.45-3.15 p.m. and by appointment
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Course Description

It is not surprising that concepts of spectacle have been of great importance for studies of visual media. From the earliest modernist theories that linked spectacle to medium specificity, historians, theoreticians and critics have attempted to understand the centrality of spectacle to mass media. This class looks at some of the pivotal ways in which spectacle has been understood, exploring the differences between modern and post-modern critics and the distinctions and overlaps between historical and theoretical investigations. Starting with Tom Gunning’s idea of attractions, a concept that revolutionized understanding of early cinema and its seemingly cavalier approach to narrative, we will explore how the concept of spectacle links history/theory and representation/reception. We will look at modernist debates around the image and consider their consequences for theories of perception, exploring the impact of consumerism in reshaping the image. We will also consider the relationship of spectacle and narrative, looking at how theorists like Laura Mulvey tied this regimen into the presentation of sexual difference. Mulvey is one of many critics to link spectacle to femininity, a topic we will explore as we consider the relationship of spectacle to sexuality. Finally, we will consider the postmodern consumerist spectacle and the creation of virtual and immersive gazes.

Required Texts

The following are available from the NYU Book Center:


Required readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on Blackboard.
Readings are listed for the week they will be discussed in class—ensure you have completed them by these dates.

Course Requirements

You will be evaluated on participation and the following written assignments.

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation, Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Paper 2</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
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All assignments should all be typed, double-spaced in an acceptable 12-point font (Times, Palatino) with 1-inch margins.

Presentations
Each week, two-three students will give brief presentations on the readings (either one reading of your choice or a presentation about the issues the reading brings up). You should also bring in three questions for class discussion. These presentations are worth 10% of your grade.

Participation/Discussion and Attendance Policies

Participation and Discussion is REQUIRED. Although I will give a short lecture each day, this is not a lecture class as such, so you should come to class having studied the readings and be prepared to contribute to class.

ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY and will be taken at the beginning of class. Not attending class will severely damage your grade unless you have a well-documented excuse. Lectures include material not covered in the readings, screenings, video clips, discussion and in-class exercises.

More than TWO late arrivals during the semester will affect your participation grade.

NO CELL PHONE OR INTERNET USE DURING CLASS, INCLUDING SCREENINGS.
Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves presenting somebody else’s work as your own. It is extremely serious: a form of theft, fraud and deception.

Plagiarism includes—but is not limited to:
- Downloading a paper from the internet.
- Copying material from the internet, from a book or some other source and presenting it as your own.
- Asking someone to write a paper for you (or writing one for someone else).
- Collaborating on an assignment in such a way that you and your friend both have the same paper or answers.
- Poor citation protocol.
- Confusion about the way you reference someone else’s ideas.

There will be no tolerance for plagiarism in this class. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please speak to me or email me. If in doubt, cite your source—whether it is a website, a book, an article or something said in class.

Late Papers

Late work will only be accepted if you have contacted me in advance and have a valid reason like a religious holiday, sickness, family problems or other unexpected disasters. Please let me know when you will be able to complete the work and keep in touch with me should any eventuality prevent you from completing work on time.

Incompletes

As with late work, incompletes will be given only to students who have contacted me in advance (where possible) and have valid reasons for not completing the course work on time (illness, family problems, unexpected disasters). Students taking incompletes should also contact me to discuss a reasonable schedule for finishing the course.

Use of Laptops/Tablets

Laptops are permitted in class but ONLY for course-related activities like taking notes and looking up relevant examples online. They must NOT be used for google chat, IM, email, Facebook, shopping, game playing, etc.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1, Friday, 9/7: Introduction—Media, Spectacle, Gender, Consumerism and Politics

Week 2, Friday, 9/14: Modernity and the Cinema of Attractions
Screening: Selected early films

Week 3, Friday, 9/21: Vision and Modernity: Technologies of Attraction
Readings: Strauven, pp. 121-138, 159-179, 227-244
Screening: Early films, Slides of optical toys

Week 4, Friday, 9/28: Boredom, Attraction, Spectacle and the History of Vision
Screening: The Cheat (Cecil B. De Mille, 1915). Clips from The Affairs of Anatol (Cecil B. DeMille, 1921)

Week 5, Friday, 10/5: Visual Pleasure
Screening: Clips from The Scarlet Empress (Josef Von Stroheim, 1934) and Dames (Ray Enright, 1934)
PAPER 1 DUE IN CLASS

Week 6, Friday 10/12: Gender, Spectacle and Mainstream Media
Screening: Clips from Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Howard Hawks, 1953) and Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)

Week 7, Friday 10/19: Female Spectacle and Feminine Self Assertion
Screenings: Kiki (Clarence Brown, 1926), Sex and the City (HBO, 1998-2004) and Girls (HB), 2012–

Week 8, Friday, 10/26: Consumerism, Spectacle and Desire
Screenings: Clips from Confessions of a Shopaholic (P.J. Hogan, 2009) and Darling (John Schlesinger, 1965)
Week 9, Friday, 11/2: Ornamentation, Politics and Mass Culture
Screenings: Clips from Triumph of the Will (Leni Riefenstahl, 1934)

Week 10, Friday, 11/9: Aethetics: Truth and Prettiness
Readings: Galt, pp. 1-74
Screening: Clips from Le Prise De Pouvoir Par Louis XIV (Roberto Rossellini, 1966, TV), Marie Antoinette (Sofia Coppola, 2006) and Menilmontant (Dimitri Kursanoff, 1926, France)
PAPER TWO DUE IN CLASS

Week 11: Friday, 11/16: Spectacle and Immersion
Readings: Griffiths, pp. 1-14, 79-158.
Screenings: TBA

Friday, 11/23: Thanksgiving Break—No Class

Week 12, Friday, 11/30: Immersion, New Technologies and New Forms of Vision
Screening: TBA

Week 13, Friday, 12/7: Spectacle and Ornamentation: Detail, Settings and the Surface Image
Readings: Galt, pp. 75-176
Screening: Clips from Moulin Rouge and Barry Lyndon (Stanley Kubrick, 1975)

Week 14: Friday, 12/14: Guest Speaker TBA

FINAL PAPER DUE 12/18