



Storytelling in Moving-Image Production

30 hp

Module 1: Elements of Storytelling, 7.5

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This module provides an introduction to the role of storytelling in effective communication for commercials and fictional-film productions. Through an exploration of the key elements of storytelling, including narrative, character, and emotion, this module demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach for producing dynamic media-content.

The approach taken in this first module is based on detailed analysis of examples of short films and commercials. We then extract from these examples, techniques, ideas, strategies, and practises that could be useful to you in producing your own work later in the course. It does not presume any prior knowledge of filmmaking.

Class format:

This class will consist of lectures, group work, and seminar preparation. You will have reading to do before you come to class. Exercises will be based on selected films all of which will be available via Kau Play.

Readings: these are provided throughout the module as pdfs.

Films: All the films listed in the handbook are available via the link to Kau play. You should be able to access these easily via the links below.

Zoom address for all classes: <https://kau-se.zoom.us/j/7495730769>

Class 1

Introduction: The basics of storytelling

In this first class we want to establish the centrality of storytelling to human culture and the material traces that point to how images on a surface or screen are used to support a relationship of creating and consuming. What might be some of the established structures for human narratives of being in the world? What role does technology play in this? What is so special about film that has seen it become the dominant medium for this experience today?

Aims

- To introduce ourselves
- To think about why we tell stories and film is a unique medium for doing so
- To learn about the key elements of a story
- To think about what works in moving image to tell a story

Readings

Patricia Cooper, Ken Dancyger, *Writing the Short Film*, ch1: Storytelling in General

Brian Dunnigan, 'Storytelling and Film, Fairy Tales, Myth and Happy Endings', https://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_18/section_1/artc1A.html

Anna Higgs 'The importance of storytelling in the digital age', <https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/2014/nov/17/-sp-storytelling-digital-film-4>

News, 11 December 2019, 'Is this cave painting humanity's oldest story?' <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03826-4>

Chris Roe, 'Storytelling 101: The 6 Elements of Every Complete Narrative' <https://blog.pond5.com/author/chris/>

Bernard Stiegler, 'Cinematic Time', *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, 2011

Screening: *The Red Balloon* (1956)



The Red Balloon is a 1956 French fantasy comedy-drama featurette written, produced, and directed by Albert Lamorisse. The thirty-five-minute short, which follows the adventures of a young boy who one day finds a sentient, mute, red balloon, was filmed in the Ménilmontant neighbourhood of Paris.

Class 2

Lecture: Neorealism and emotion

Today we want to explore some of the ideas and practices that can be found in the Neorealist tradition of filmmaking. Here, we can find the poetic of the everyday and a commitment to the places of life that are normally overlooked. Creating films that touch upon the intimacy of human relationships, certain filmmakers have produced work that captures the beauty and profundity of life. We look in detail at some the work of the work of the Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami and finish with an example from the Irish filmmakers of Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor.

Aims

- To understand something about the neorealist style in film and why it is important to filmmakers
- To think about what we need to develop good storytelling in film with minimal material
- To see how our filmmakers have developed poetic techniques that we can develop in our own filmmaking

Readings

Donna Honarparisheh, 'Waves of Stasis: Photographic Tendency and a Cinema of Kindness in Kiarostami's *Five (Dedicated to Ozu)*' in *Iran Namaq*, Volume 2, Number 4 (Winter 2018)

Luke Buckle, 'Chapter One Abbas Kiarostami the Filmmaker' in MA, *Contemporary Neorealist Principles in Abbas Kiarostami's Filmmaking (1997- 2005)*, 2011, <http://filmint.nu/contemporary-neorealist-principles-in-abbas-kiarostamis-filmmaking-1997-2005/>

Matthew Abbott, '4 - Five: Artifice and the Ordinary' in *Abbas Kiarostami and Film-Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, 2017

Richard Brody, 'The paradox at the heart of Abbas Kiarostami's early films' *The New Yorker*, July 26, 2019.

Sandra E. Lim, 'Realism, Morality and Care in Where Is the Friend's House? (Abbas Kiarostami, 1987).' 2020. *Senses of Cinema*, no. 95 (July), <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2020/cteq/where-is-the-friends-house-abbas-kiarostami-1987/>

A.O. Scott, 'Trips to Nowhere and Everywhere, With Iran's Poet of the Cinema', *New York Times*, March 1, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/01/movies/01kiar.html>

Screenings

Five: Dedicated to Ozu (2003)



The Making of Five (2003)



My Friend's House (1987)



Leisure Centre (2005)

Class 3

Local Filmmakers

The seminar today is based on this award-winning short film from 2003 that was made in Värmland. A sensitive and subtle examination of the world of one character, *Natan* shows us how to pace and structure what seems to be a simple story in a thoughtful yet pragmatic way.

Screening: *Natan*



Written & Directed: Jonas Bergergård and Jonas Holmström, Producer: Carina Ekman, Sweden, 2003, colour, 35 mm, 12 min.

Readings

Morten Bak Hansen, *Natan*, https://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_19/section_4/artc6A.html

Brian Dunnigan, 'An essay on *Natan* - a short film Being human: character in narrative film'
https://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_19/section_4/artc5A.html

Natan, Special issue, *Short Film Studies*, Volume 3 Number 1, multiple articles.

Class 4

Lecture: The Commercials of Ingmar Bergman & Roy Andersson

This class we examine some commercials by the great Swedish film makers Ingmar Bergman and Roy Andersson. Bergman made his commercials in the 1950s and Andersson in the 1980s, both for television. Whilst they produce commercials with a clear message of a product identification, we can also see how they use the commercials to refine their style and tone which later become their signature. With obvious levels of reflectiveness and humour, they produce some memorable material.

Aims

- To establish some of the ways in which commercials are different from film
- To consider how Bergman and Andersson adopt different stylistic approaches to commercials
- To develop some ideas about how storytelling techniques can be adopted in commercials.

Readings

Conor Bateman, 'The Mise en scène is the Message – The Advertisements of Errol Morris and Roy Andersson' April 10, 2015.
<https://fourthreefilm.com/2015/04/the-mise-en-scene-is-the-message-the-auteurs-who-make-ads/>

Giannantoni Daniele, 'Storytelling in commercials', https://www.academia.edu/19341493/Storytelling_in_commercials

Jin-Ae Kang , Sookyeong Hong, Glenn T. Hubbard, 'The role of storytelling in advertising: Consumer emotion, narrative engagement level, and word-of-mouth intention' *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. 2020; 19:47–56.

Screenings



Ingmar Bergman



Roy Andersson

Class 5

Character, camerawork and atmosphere

Today, we look at an Oscar-winning short film by the British filmmaker, Andrea Arnold. Renown for her strong social-realist style, Arnold procures films that occupy the world of the central character in a visceral way. With tight framing and hand-held camera work, she creates a sense of the struggles of her female characters against the confines of their worlds. Without sentiment or judgement, she elaborates something of the lives of these characters drawn from the director's experience of growing up in such environments.

Screening: *Wasp*, Andrea Arnold, 2003.



Think about the following ideas and how they are communicated cinematically:

- Describe the main character
- Who is the protagonist in the film?
- What kind of place does she live?
- Do we sympathize with her?
- Does it seem like we are asked to judge her?
- Describe the camera work and framing

Readings

Dan Norman 'Fear of Wasp' <https://thefinerthingsclubsite.com/2017/06/24/fear-of-wasp/>

Cynthia Felando Ch.3, Short Film Specificity: Narrative Compression, Unity, Character, and Endings' in *Discovering Short Films: The History and Style of Live-Action Fiction Shorts*; Palgrave, 2015.

Class 6

From idea to script to film

Our class today is to consider the process by which a film goes from screenplay to production. The best way to describe this perhaps is as a kind of translation from one language to another, from text to image. If you are shooting from your own script then there is an inherent continuity between these things, yet, you may well be asked to direct something that was written by someone else. Nevertheless, making a film is a collaborative process and being able to communicate your wishes to other crew members is a necessary and important skill. I have included two short films that I made myself to describe for you something of the experience.

Aims

- To consider in detail what a screen play looks like and why
- To establish an understanding of the development of a script to a film production and the steps in between
- To develop a useful vocabulary for describing what is needed to get from the words of the script to a scene or shot and the intended tone of the work

Readings

Kambole Campbell, 'A beginner's guide to the films of Lynne Ramsay', <https://lwlies.com/articles/the-films-of-lynne-ramsay-ratcatcher-we-need-to-talk-about-kevin/>

M.B. Cheung, 'The Melancholies of Being Young – A Scene Analysis of *Small Deaths*', <http://blogs.ubc.ca/mbcheung/files/2017/03/Small-Deaths-Essay.pdf>

Amanda Brason, 'Camera Work: The Cinema of Lynne Ramsay', Apr 11, 2019, <https://www.tiff.net/the-review/camera-work-the-cinema-of-lynne-ramsay>

Hillary Weston, 'A Life at the Pictures: A Conversation with Lynne Ramsay', April 16, 2018, <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/5551-a-life-at-the-pictures-a-conversation-with-lynne-ramsay>

John Lynch, *Kami*, 2011, screenplay

John Lynch, *Kung Fu Love*, 2010, screenplay

Screenings

Lynne Ramsay, *Small Deaths*



Lynne Ramsay, *Small Deaths*



John Lynch, *Kung Fu Love*



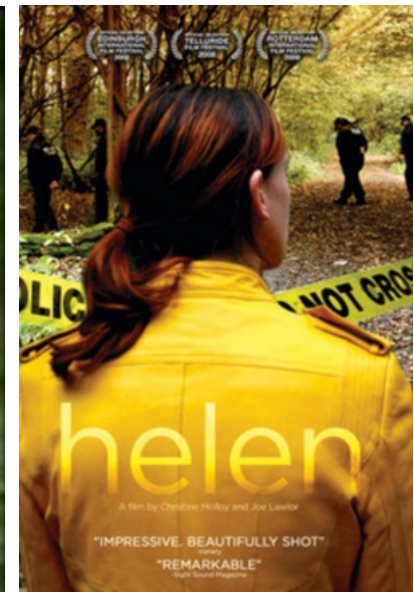
John Lynch, *Kami*

Class 7

Worldbuilding and sound design

In our final session for this module, we consider the importance of sound design in the creation of the on-screen world that we encounter. Our focus will be Molloy & Lawlor's film *Helen*, a feature that was developed out of their short film, *Joy*. Mainly using non-professional actors, this sparse and meditative exploration of identity and loss has a complex score that works to carry the sense of menace and haunting that permeates the film.

Screening: *Helen*, Lawlor & Molloy, 2008



Readings

Jason Wood, 2009. "The Lives of Others." *Sight & Sound* 19 (5)

Jerry White, 'Helen and the longer take', https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/volume-4-issue-3-summer-2009/missing-camera-action-helen-and-the-longer-take/

Examination

Examination will be a home-based paper that will test the key ideas discussed on the module.