

## I. Approaches to analysing the cinematic aspect of film (20 mins)

### Elements of Film Narrative:

- **Mise en scène** (décor, composition, lighting, framing, props)
- **Editing** (cross-cutting, shot-reverse-shot, continuity, montage)
- Cinematography
- Music & sound
- Acting & performance

### Key concept 1: Pure Cinema

- Pure Cinema, or *Cinéma Pur* refers to cinema that maximizes the medium's potential as a mechanized art of visual story-telling.

### Key Concept 2: The Gaze

- Spectator gaze; character gaze; camera gaze
- Theories: Lacan, Foucault, Mulvey

#### **The Gaze**

The concept of gaze in media studies deals with how an audience views a visual text as well as how that visual text constructs a way of looking (through framing, angles, lighting, and editing). The concept of the gaze became popular in the 1960s French intellectuals, namely Michel Foucault's description of the medical gaze and Lacan's analysis of the gaze's role in the mirror stage development of the human psyche. John Berger's *Ways of Looking* (1972) is regarded as one of the foundational texts in gaze theory as it has been developed in film, art, and media studies.

The gaze was taken up in feminist theory (Laura Mulvey), where it deals with how men look at women, how women look at themselves and other women, and how visual culture encourages this gendered angle of vision through its representations.

#### **Types of Gaze:**

Several key forms of gaze can be identified in film, and visual culture more generally. These include:

- i. **the spectator's gaze:** the gaze of the viewer at the characters and objects in the frame;
- ii. **the intra-diegetic gaze:** a gaze of one character at another within the world of the text (typically depicted in film by a subjective 'point-of-view shot');
- iii. **the look of the camera:** the way that the camera itself appears to look at the people (or objects) depicted; less metaphorically, the gaze of the film-maker or photographer.

#### **The Gaze in Vertigo**

- Analysing the camera's and Scottie's gazes through an overview of key shots/scenes.

## II. Writing about film (115 mins)

1. Ways of writing about film: reviews and critical essays
  2. Scene analysis: viewing notes handout
  3. Finding a focus: thesis statement and sustaining a line of argument
  4. Sustaining a focus: topic sentences and visual / audio evidence (shots, action points, music, sound effects)
  5. Citing and acknowledge sources
  6. Finding meaningful points of comparison
1. Pre-viewing/writing activity (20 mins)
    - Review vs critical essay (Corrigan's *Short Guide*)
    - Read (in groups) Peter Bradshaw's *Guardian* review and Ross's *New York Times* essay on *Vertigo* and map out their respective structures
  2. Scene analysis: viewing notes handout (30 mins)
    - Watch *Vertigo* opening sequence
    - Brief discussion of viewing notes
  3. Finding a focus: thesis statement activity (25 mins)
    - Brainstorm interpretations of the film (i.e. looking, doubles, powerlessness of not knowing, suspicion, desire)
  4. Sustaining a focus: crafting an outline (20 mins)
    - Topic sentences (3 or 4)
    - Visual evidence, description, analysis, transition
  5. Citing sources (10 mins)
    - Incorporating and acknowledging the voices of experts into your interpretation
  6. Comparison (10 mins)
    - Finding a meaningful point of connection between *Vertigo* & *Rear Window*

### III. Exploring strategies for assessing student work and providing feedback (25 mins)

- Read student examples and revise Intro paragraphs so that they are more focused, organised, and clear in purpose and main point.

### IV. Resources (5 mins)

#### Film Journals:

*Film Quarterly*

*Cinema Journal*

*Screen*

*Journal of Popular Film and Television*

*Quarterly Review of Film and Video*

Textbooks:

Barsam, R. and D. Monahan. (2016) *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film*. W. W. Norton.

\*Corrigan, Timothy. (2014) *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Pearson.

\*Hayward, Susan. (2017) "The Gaze" and "Gender." In *Cinema Studies: Key Concepts*. Routledge. 173-177.

Articles and Books on Hitchcock:

Adair, Gene. (2002) *Alfred Hitchcock: Filming our Fears*. Oxford University Press.

Allen, Richard et al. (2004) *Hitchcock: Past and Future*. Psychology Press.

Bronfen, Elisabeth. (2015) "Screening and Disclosing Fantasy: Rear Projection in Hitchcock." *Screen* 56.1: 1–24.

Palmer and Boyd. (2011) *Hitchcock at the Source: The Auteur as Adapter*. SUNY Press.

Articles and Books on Vertigo:

\*Belton, Robert J. (2017) *Alfred Hitchcock's Vertigo and the Hermeneutic Spiral*. Palgrave Macmillan.

\*Brody, Richard. (2018) "'Vertigo': The Search for a Cure." *New Yorker*, 25 May.

Ertuna-Howison, Irmak. (2013) "Reversal and Recognition in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*." *The Explicator* 71.1: 49-51.

\*Miller, D.A. (2008/2009) "Vertigo." *Film Quarterly* 62.2.

\*Mulvey, Laura. (1999) "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. Oxford University Press. 833-44.

Pippin, Robert B. (2017) *The Philosophical Hitchcock: "Vertigo" and the Anxieties of Unknowingness*. University of Chicago Press.

\*Lippe, Richard. (2016) "Hitchcock's *Vertigo*." *68 Cineaction* pp. 65-68.

Spinks, Randall. (2017) "The Hallucinatory (Cultural) Logic of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 34.3: 212-242.

\*Ross, Alex. (1996) "Music that Casts a Spell in *Vertigo*." *New York Times*, 6 October.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/1996/10/06/movies/the-music-that-casts-the-spells-of-vertigo.html>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Analysing a Scene: notes & noticing

Directions: Use these questions to analyse a key scene or scene sequence. When analysing both film and literature, remember that *how* things are presented is as important as the things themselves. Everything is a conscious choice of the writer or director. Think about how each choice adds meaning.

**Title of the work:**

**Director or author:**

### PART I:

#### Character

1. Who is in the scene?
2. What is each person's motivation in this scene? (In other words, what does each character want?)
3. What subtexts are at work here?
4. How does the casting influence how you see the characters?
5. How do costumes contribute to how you see the characters?

#### Setting

1. Where is the scene set?
2. Why/how is this setting significant?
3. What stands out about the setting?

#### Context

1. What is the context of this scene in the larger work?
2. What is the historical, cultural, and/or political context?

#### Framing (*mise-en-scène*)

1. What is in the shot?
2. What is centred?
3. What is excluded?
4. How do figures move within the frame?
5. Is the shot wide or long? A close-up?
6. What is in focus? Is anything blurred?
7. How is the scene lit?
8. How does the framing of the scene enhance meaning?

#### Camera Work

1. What camera angles are used here?
2. What point-of-view do the camera angles suggest? Is the camera acting as the eyes of a character (restricted or subjective p.o.v.)? Or the audience (unrestricted or omniscient p.o.v.)?
3. How does the camera move? What effect does camera movement have on viewers?
4. Does the film use slow motion?
5. How is the film edited? Is the rhythm long or quick? What effect does the editing have on you?

#### Music, Mood and Soundtrack

1. Is there music? How and when is it used? What is its effect? What mood does it create?
2. Are there other sound effects?
3. How else besides music is the mood created?

**Other**

1. What other details, such as props, are important in the scene? What are their function and effect?
2. What do you know about this director or screenwriter? How does your knowledge of his or her work add to your understanding of the film, and this particular scene?

**PART II**

**Finding your Focus**

1. Which aspects of the scene do you plan to focus on for your review/critical essay? Why?
2. What terms and techniques will help you explain your points?
3. What shots or dialogue will you use as evidence to support your points?
4. What would you like viewers to notice, understand and think about this scene?
5. What kinds of sources will be consult and quote?

\*Adapted in part from *New York Time's* Learning Network blog and "The Basics of How to Read a Film" by Holly Blackford