"Information Explosion from Educational Films to Blockbusters"

Brno Lectures, November 5-7, 2012

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This series of lectures will address the role of ideas about media technology as they appear in, and are advanced by, moving image culture and industries. We will specifically examine how our current digital society has its roots in film and media pedagogy from the mid-20th century. And though many scholars now accept that film is a cross-media entity - whether in terms of technology, industry, or use - we will examine how this intermediality has been a longstanding feature important to the development of what we think of as "the information society." We will also treat the historiographical and methodological implications of re-valorizing previously neglected pockets of film and media history, and the challenges we now face in the analysis of global film culture.

Lecture 1 (Nov. 5; 12.30-14.05): "Always Already Big Data"

This talk introduces the turn to "digital humanities," traces the origins of some of its foundational claims, and elaborates the implications for film and media studies.

Readings:
Lisa Gitelman (2010) "Welcome to the Bubble Chamber: Online in the Humanities Today," *The Communication Review*, vol 13 no. 1
Alan Lui (2012) "Where is the Cultural Criticism in the Digital Humanities?," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*

Lecture 2 (Nov. 5; 14.10-15.45): "Edgar Dale and the Information Explosion"

This talk treats one of the leading American voices in the audiovisual instruction movement, showing how his ideas grew from the advancement of film appreciation to a concern with global media saturation.

Readings:
Charles Acland (2009) "Curtains, Carts, and the Mobile Screen," *Screen*
Charles Acland (2011) "Hollywood's Educators: Mark May and Teaching Film Custodians," in *Useful Cinema*

Lecture 3 (Nov. 6; 12.30-14.05): "Delivering Blockbusters"

This talk challenges existing narratives about how the term "blockbuster" came to be associated with movies, unearthing its use as a popular description of a WWII military ordinance of the Allied forces.

Readings:

Miriam Hansen (1997:1993) "Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Transformations of the Public Sphere," in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, ed. Linda Williams, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 134-152.
Sheldon Hall, "Tall Revenue Features: The Genealogy of the Modern Blockbuster," in *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, ed. Steve Neale, London: BFI Publishing, 2002, 11-26.

Lecture 4 (Nov. 6; 14.10-15.45): "Cosmopolitan Artlessness"

This talk looks at how American blockbusters of the 1950s established connections with technological innovation, prestige, and internationalism, and in the process set up taste hierarchies that continue to influence contemporary big-budget movies.

Charles Acland (2003) "Cinemagoing as 'Felt Internationalism," in *Screen Traffic*
Vanessa Schwartz (2007) "The Cosmopolitan Film: From *Around the World in Eighty Days* to Making Movies Around the World," in *It's So French*

Lecture 5 (Nov. 7; 10.50-12.25): "The End of the Quiet Years of James Cameron"

This lecture proposes the concept of the "technological tentpole," in which blockbusters are not only cross-media entities but also vehicles to advance new technological systems. This is discussed with a focus on the recent wave of 3D technologies and on the surprising success of *Avatar*.

Charles Acland (2010) "*Avatar* as Technological Tentpole," *FlowTV*, 11.05, www.flowtv.org
Charles Acland (2011) "You Haven't Seen *Avatar* Yet," *FlowTV*, 13.08, www.flowtv.org
Sean Cubitt (2004) "Neobaroque Film," in *The Cinema Effect*

Graduate Seminar (Nov. 7; 12.30-14.05):

This seminar will involve a guided discussion of international contemporary film practices, with a special focus on research methods and modes of cross-cultural comparison.

Charles Acland (2012) "Analysis of the 2010 UIS Survey of Feature Films: From International Blockbusters to National Hits," UNESCO Institute of Statistics, http://www.uis.unesco.org/Culture/Pages/movie-statistics.aspx