

Film Studies: Progression Yr11 -Yr12

The Lumiere Brothers

Most film historians would argue that cinema began in Paris in 1895 with the screening of the films of the Lumiere Brothers. You can see some of their biggest hits here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nj0vEO4Q6s>



What problem have you got with these films?

Once the excitement of seeing moving images had worn off, some saw cinema as an invention without a future. Without some kind of story/narrative, people would soon get bored of recording actual events.

Even film makers like Georges Melies with their special effects and basic narratives, didn't really use film as a way of telling stories. There was no editing, simply fixed camera positions that filmed what was in front of the camera.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNAHcMMOHE8>

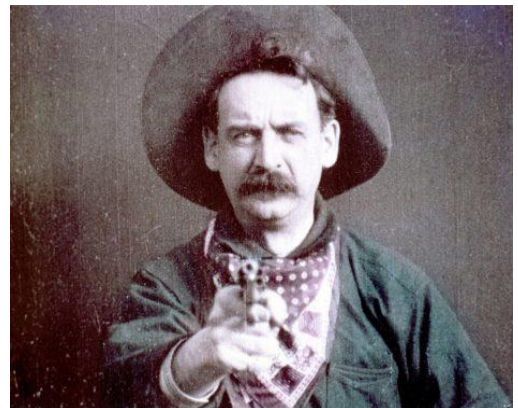
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8is28gAOTc>

The Birth of Editing

It was filmmakers such as Edwin S Porter and D.W. Griffiths who started to make films that we would recognize as films today through their use of editing and cinematography:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7ZHd1xU2w8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaBmjhmKWTs>



What editing styles and shot types did these two film pioneers introduce?

Shot Types

It seems ridiculous today that filmmakers just placed the camera in front of an event and started filming it until the reel ran out. The advent of different shot types revolutionised the audiences' relationship with what they were watching.

It would be useful to know about some of the different type of shots that make up the palette that filmmakers can choose from. **Go to activity 1.1 and complete the task there (p6-8).**

The Classical Style

It was Hollywood where the 'classical' style developed. This consisted of a 'grammar' of film that used parallel, montage and continuity editing to produce swift moving stories that moved from place to place and time to time rapidly but still maintained a unity of time and space that an audience could understand.

Have a look at the sequence from the Birds (Hitchcock, 1963)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdOF7xg5lug>



Unity of Time and Space

You should have been able to understand the spatial relationships between the three different locations.

Task: See if you can draw a map of the three different locations – the restaurant, the man lighting a cigar and the gas station.

You should have been able to make sense of the spatial arrangement of the sequence due to the use of the parallel and continuity editing linked together through the use of the eye-line matches.

You should be able to easily understand what is happening, when it is happening and where it is happening.

Activity 1.2 To reinforce this understanding, try to place the randomly shuffled images into their proper order using the tables below the images (p9-14).

There are 29 images. Try not to use the clip to help you – you should have a sense of what happens and it doesn't matter if you get every shot correct – you should still be able to demonstrate your understanding of the sequence through your ordering of the images.

You see the correct order on sheet 1.3 (p15-17)

Hollywood wanted to produce exciting narratives but narratives that were easily understandable through their use of a grammar of film – rules that made things make sense

This became a standardized model of how you made a film and audiences went crazy for it and studios were set up to satisfy the demand for these exciting narratives.

This became the Hollywood studio system.

The Hollywood Studio System

Studios were big businesses and were motivated by profit. They started to organize the way that films were made along the lines of an industrial assembly line that enabled them to make films cheaply and quickly.

Task: Look at the Fact file on the Hollywood Studio system (Sheet 1.4, p18-19) I want to read the three following sections:

- Assembly Line Production Model
- Genre Codes and Conventions
- Directors and Producers

Now answer the following questions:

1. In what ways was making a film like making an industrial product in a factory?
2. How was genre useful to the studios in making films quickly and cheaply?
3. How much freedom did the directors of these films have?

Hollywood Today

This economic model of filmmaking is similar to the model that we have today.

The films in the table below are the top ten films of all time at the Global box office (that means they've taken the most money not been watched by the most people)

| Rank | Year | Movie | Worldwide Box Office | Domestic Box Office | International Box Office |
|------|------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | 2019 | Avengers: Endgame | \$2,797,800,564 | \$858,373,000 | \$1,939,427,564 |
| 2 | 2009 | Avatar | \$2,788,701,337 | \$760,507,625 | \$2,028,193,712 |
| 3 | 1997 | Titanic | \$2,208,208,395 | \$659,363,944 | \$1,548,844,451 |
| 4 | 2015 | Star Wars Ep. VII: The Force Awakens | \$2,068,223,624 | \$936,662,225 | \$1,131,561,399 |
| 5 | 2018 | Avengers: Infinity War | \$2,048,359,754 | \$678,815,482 | \$1,369,544,272 |
| 6 | 2015 | Jurassic World | \$1,670,400,637 | \$652,270,625 | \$1,018,130,012 |
| 7 | 2019 | The Lion King | \$1,656,943,394 | \$543,638,043 | \$1,113,305,351 |
| 8 | 2012 | The Avengers | \$1,518,812,988 | \$623,357,910 | \$895,455,078 |
| 9 | 2015 | Furious 7 | \$1,518,722,794 | \$353,007,020 | \$1,165,715,774 |
| 10 | 2019 | Frozen II | \$1,450,026,933 | \$477,373,578 | \$972,653,355 |

Using a site such as [imdb.com](https://www.imdb.com) and Wikipedia or review sites such as Rotten Tomatoes, take one of the films (it would be useful if you'd seen the film) and try and find out the following:

| | |
|---|--|
| Who produced the film? | |
| Who distributed the film? | |
| Who was in (or voiced) the film? | |
| Did it have lots of special effects or used lots of technology? | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Does it belong to a genre? Which one? | |
| Is the narrative simple to follow? | |
| Does the narrative have a happy ending? | |
| Does it have a central character who has a clear psychological goal? | |
| Do they achieve that goal? | |
| Was it front-loading? (That is was it a sequel or a prequel or part of a franchise, based on a book or a computer game – anything that meant that there is a pre-existing audience who have heard of the concept and are more likely to go and see it?) | |
| Does it have a lot of associated merchandise? (Games, records, toys, clothes, food tie-ins etc) | |
| How many cinemas/screens did the film open on? | |
| How much money did it take? | |

After filling in the table above, try to record your thoughts about this using the two questions below to guide you:

- 1. What sort of films are most likely to get made by the big studios?**
- 2. Why do you think this is the case?**
- 3. Have you got any concerns about this?**

Developing your skills as a critical Spectator

This booklet has hopefully given you a bit of an insight into how cinema developed into using cinematography and editing to produce stories/narratives that audiences wanted to see. Big studios developed these basic rules (the grammar of film) into a standardized way of making films and then made these films along assembly line production methods. You could argue that the cinema we have today is a highly efficient product that is designed to appeal to the largest audiences and to maximise profit.

Your job as a Film Studies student is to start to watch these ‘products’ critically and to interrogate the messages and values contained within them. This is what we will look at on the course.

To aid you with this, over the summer you should watch as many films as you can. Try to find reviews of the films you’ve watched. You could look at the sources below to help you:

<https://www.empireonline.com/movies/reviews/>

<https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine>

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/film>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCxKPNMqjinqbxVEt1tyDUUsA>

<https://www.rottentomatoes.com/>

Use the table on Activity sheet 1.5 (p20), fill in the information about the film but more importantly; try to record some critical response to the film to see how professionals have responded to the film and see if this coincides in any way with your own response.

You don’t have to stop at three films – just create new tables for as many film as you can watch.

Good luck

Activity 1.1 Try to identify the different shot types (write the number of the image in the first column next to the term that you think it exemplifies) and make a basic comment on the effect of that choice of shot type.



Shot sizes

| Example image | Shot name | Shot description | Dramatic effect |
|---------------|-------------------|---|-----------------|
| | Extreme long shot | The camera is at its furthest distance from the subject, emphasising the background. You can see the whole person or object and they will often be quite small. | |
| | Long shot | Shot which shows all or most of a fairly large subject (for example, a person) and usually much of the surroundings. | |
| | Medium long shot | In the case of a standing actor, the lower frame line cuts off their feet and ankles. | |
| | Medium shot | In such a shot the subject or actor and its setting occupy roughly equal areas in the frame. In the case of the standing actor, the lower frame passes through the waist. There is space for hand gestures to be seen. | |
| | Medium close-up | The setting can still be seen. The lower frame line passes through the chest of the actor; usually just the head and shoulders can be seen. | |
| | Close-up | A shot that shows a fairly small part of the scene, such as a character's face, in great detail so that it is the dominant object in the screen. | |
| | Big close-up | These focus attention on a person's feelings or reactions, and are sometimes used in interviews to show people in a state of emotional excitement, grief or joy. This usually is seen through a shot of forehead to chin or in the case of an object, taking up almost all of the screen. | |
| | Extreme close-up | When the screen is taken up by an image made of nothing but the image. You usually cannot see the background. This is often done to subject's faces when showing reactions or when highlighting detail. | |

Camera Angles

| Example image | Shot name | Shot description | Dramatic effect |
|---------------|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| | Over the shoulder shot | The camera literally looks over someone or somethings shoulder at another person, object or landscape. The shoulder being looked over is often in the shot. | |
| | Low angle | The camera is not at the 'regular' eye level and looks slightly up at the subject or person. | |
| | High angle | An angle where the camera is placed slightly above the subject or person. | |
| | Canted | An angle that is at an 'odd' angle to the position of the viewer so that it make the object, subject or people look as if it is tilted. | |
| | Bird's Eye | Named as it represents the angle from which a bird would view the object or person, essentially, from a very high angle looking down on someone or something. | |
| | Worm's Eye | So-called as it matches the apparent perspective of a worm. Is essentially a 'very low' shot that looks up at someone or something. | |
| | Eye level | The conventional angle for a camera to be placed and describes the 'flat' angle that the camera show where the subject or person is centred in the shot, so that the eyes, or centre of the object match our level in the middle of the screen. | |

Activity 1.2: Put these 29 shots into the correct order using the tables at the bottom of the sheet.









| | |
|---|----|
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 |

| | |
|----|----|
| 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 |

| | |
|----|----|
| 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 |
| 29 | |

1.3 Correct Order

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>1</p> |  <p>2</p> |
|  <p>3</p> |  <p>4</p> |
|  <p>5</p> |  <p>6</p> |
|  <p>7</p> |  <p>8</p> |
|  <p>9</p> |  <p>10</p> |



11



12



13



14



15



16



17



18



19



20



21



22



23



24



25



26



27



28



29

Activity sheet 1.4



The Hollywood Studio System

Assembly Line Production Model

Film studios were very like industry **assembly lines** with strict divisions of labour and hierarchies of power. Directors, actors and technicians were all contracted to a studio for seven years. Actors could be loaned out to other studios. Stars were pivotal to the success of a studio and were important to the development of a studio's brand or marketing.

This assembly line approach meant that the films were often formulaic and belonged to distinctive **genres**, with their own stylistic conventions, developed during this time. The major studios also developed their own individual **house style** and specialisms.

The film industry replicated the craft production techniques of the theatre, which worked in small teams such as costume, hair, make-up, set design. But the demand for film was so great that it soon developed on an industrial scale.

Thomas H. Ince, producer, director and actor, is credited with creating the first **assembly line model** and developing systems to streamline production by ensuring the entire range of filmmaking activities could be integrated within one large space including sound stages, production offices, prop houses and sets. It also meant departments could work on more than one film at any one time.

The production process began with the script and locations, followed by sets and filming and finally processing, editing and sound. The product would move from department to department, just as if it were on an assembly line, with a clear division of labour.

The script would often be divided into blocks which could be filmed out of order so scenes set in a particular location or with a particular character could all be filmed at once and then edited together later. The same sets and props could also be used by different productions, streamlining production and increasing the number of films produced.

Genre Codes and Conventions

Genre films, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories and are useful for both producers and audiences. They enable producers to reduce the risks involved in filmmaking and reproduce formulas that work. Films can be produced quickly and audiences

can understand them just as quickly; popular examples include Horror, Comedy and Romance. There are also genre hybrids or sub-genres which combine genres such as action/ adventure or science fiction/fantasy films.

All genres have codes and conventions or rules by which they are governed:

- A genre film's narrative will most likely follow in an ordered sequence of events with repetitions and variations on a few basic plots;
- A genre film may deal with particular themes;
- A genre film may feature specific technical conventions;
- A genre film may include certain character types;
- A genre film may feature particular locations and more particularly use specific elements of mise-en-scène such as props, costumes; hair, make-up and body language;

- Directors and actors may be associated with a particular genre, which reinforces its appeal;
- The historical and social context may also be significant in understanding a particular genre.

Some genres may also share certain codes and conventions. Western and war films can share similar narrative structures and similar character types but the iconography is very different.

The Western was one of the most popular genres during Hollywood's Golden Age. It dealt with the conquest of the West and expansionism. The main protagonist is usually a cowboy, gunslinger or bounty hunter and conflicts arise through encountering outlaws or Native Americans. Desert landscapes; Stetsons and guns are clear characteristics of the genre. Duels or shootouts frequently occur at key turning points in the narrative.

Directors and Producers

In the studio era directors, writers and producers were employees who were under contract to a particular studio for up to seven years at a time. They had to work under the strict parameters of a studio's style and within the codes and conventions of the dominant film genres of the time. Scripts could be written collaboratively and therefore writers were sometimes not credited for work they had done. The volume of films produced meant that these three key creative roles were as much part of the assembly line model as any other crew member. Many films made during this time can therefore be seen to lack any sense of unique or individual style. Some directors, producers and writers struggled under this system and found it repressive while others, such as John Ford, flourished and helped to creatively define the emerging genres and their conventions. Others again, found strength from the creative relationships they established within the system, such as director Billy Wilder and writer I.A.L. Diamond, who collaborated on a number of films together.

Activity 1.4 Record your viewing experiences over the summer in the table below – try to make a note of your own response but also some kind of professional critical response to the film.

| Film Title | Director | Year of Release | Your response | Professional Critical response |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |