

World Building & Film Part II

COMM 103F, Dr. Collins

Week Recap

- Turn to Style
 - Mise-en-scene
 - Cinematography
- Cinematic elements in relation to world-building
 - Cinematic Language
 - Cinematic Landscape
- Next Week → Stylizing Identity: Social Media, Celebrity Culture, & the Construction of the Self
 - **Tuesday 8/27 Guest Lecture by Alex Dubee (Scholar of Mediatization, Celebrity, and Popular Culture)**
- Reminder: Paper Proposals Due Today by 11:59pm to Canvas

Paper Proposal FAQs

- You can select a film from any genre including documentary, animation, and an episode of a broader series.
- You do not need to list outside sources for the PROPOSAL, but you will need to cite sources for the paper.
 - Google Scholar www.scholar.google.com
 - Purdue OWL https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html
 - UCSD Writing Support <https://commons.ucsd.edu/academic-support/writing/index.html>
- You need to briefly contextualize your three film concepts (additionally these concepts can change, you can use more than three in your final paper, but you must utilize at least three)

Paper Proposal Arguments

- Provide a clear thesis statement that can be supported with specific and sustained evidence
- The So What? Principle
- Examples
 - “*Star Wars* set a new standard in the world of special effects and film narrative while expressing American values of the 1970s towards war, Communism, and the new space frontier.”
 - “On the surface, [*Fatal Attraction*] can be seen as a moral parable, showing the consequences of marital infidelity...[however] the film is [also] an obvious criticism of feminism, showing the successful career woman who suffers because of being single, rather than finding freedom in it.”
 - “[*Boyz in the Hood*] exploits the prevailing challenges amongst lower class African American communities around drugs, racial inequality and police brutality. In the end, the film symbolizes three possible outcomes of an African American male: either death, prison, or a drastic reformation of character.”

World Shapers

- “Movies shape the way we see the world” (Barsam & Monahan, 2015, p. 2)
- But **HOW** does this take place?



World Building...

On-Screen (Cinematic Language)
and Off-Screen (Cinematic
Landscape)





Cinematic Language

“Composed not of words but of myriad of integrated techniques and concepts, [which] connects us to the story while deliberately concealing the means by which it does so” (Barsam & Monahan, 2015, p. 3).

Invisibility and Cinematic Language

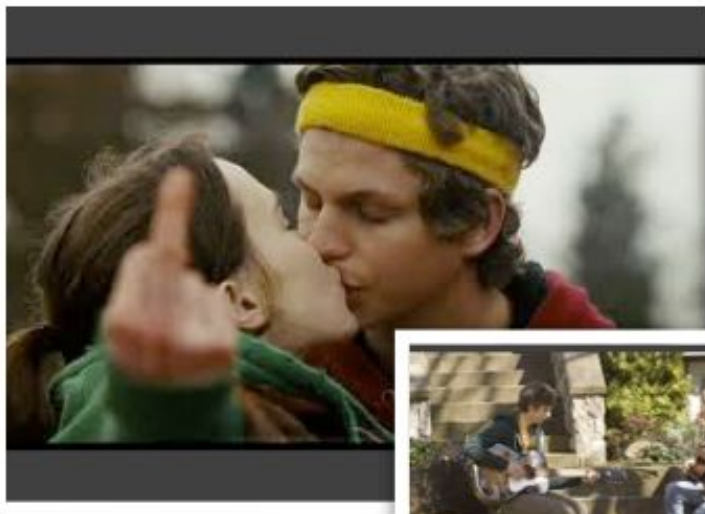
- Movies move too quickly to consciously consider everything
- Compare to books and even a visual medium like comics or graphic novels...
 - Example: fade-out / fade-in





Low-Angle Shot

- “Looking up” to characters to with figurative or literal power
- Various methods of narrative use...



Cultural Invisibility

- Filmmakers favor stories and themes that reinforce shared cultural beliefs
 - Even seemingly “controversial” or “provocative” films
 - Other examples?

Sociocultural Consequences

A still from the animated show 'SpongeBob SquarePants' showing the character SpongeBob SquarePants smiling broadly. He is yellow with large eyes and a wide mouth. The background is a simple blue sky with a white flower-like shape. The word 'IMAGINATION' is written in large, bold, cyan letters across the bottom of the image.

IMAGINATION

Cinematic Landscape

“Not a neutral place of entertainment or an objective documentation or mirror or the ‘real,’ but an ideologically charged cultural creation whereby meanings of place and society are made, legitimized, contested, and obscured” (Thompson, 1994, p. 47).

Aspects of the Cinematic Landscape

- Visual Construct that represents and structures our surroundings
 - Created by filmmaker, film medium, and film spectator
- Often blurs boundaries between real/imaginary and fact/fiction
 - Spectators do not think they are truly transcending physical space and objective time
- Dependent upon a viewer's "willing suspension of disbelief" (Boggs, 1978, p. 22).
- Performs vital 'cultural work'
 - Engaged in a form of play (or 'serious games' [Michael, 2005]), pleasure and power
 - Negotiating of mores, values, social structures, tastes (e.g. 'figured worlds' [Bartlett & Holland, 2002])
- Power of film → ability to (mis)represent; power of the spectator → to critically experience film

Making the Landscape

Discussion Questions:

- How long did it take to 'get into' the story?
- What did you imagine beyond what was shown?
- What techniques did the filmmakers use to elicit certain responses?
- How did your own viewing capacity contribute to your ability to experience the narrative?
- Did this animated short cause you to think about people, places, and/or issues *beyond* what was on-screen?



Key Takeaways

- Film shapes our worldviews in explicit, implicit, and often complicated manners
- Cinematic language, while often 'invisible,' is a key component of film's influential capacity
- Cinematic landscapes, like other 'places,' are socioculturally constructed yet can carry material 'real world' implications
- A power of spectatorship lies in an ability to critically experience film



- *Los Espookys* (2019 -)
- Comedy, Horror (HBO)
- 30 mins
- Season 1, Episode 1, “El Exorcismo”
- Written By: Fred Armisen (*SNL*, *Portlandia*), Ana Fabrega (*Boy Band*), Julio Torres (*SNL*)
- Directed By: Fernando Frias (*Rezeta*)
- Starring: Fred Armisen, Cassandra Ciangherotti (*Las Horas Contigo*), Ana Fabrega, Julio Torres, Bernardo Velasco (*Museo*)
- Budget: --
- Four friends start a new business based on their shared love of horror.

Questions to Consider...

- How do the filmmakers 'build a world' on-screen?
- What role do props, costumes, and make-up play in the episode's narrative?
- What is your opinion of the artistic choice to set the series in an unspecified Latin American location (e.g. country), and the juxtaposition of specificity and generality?
- What larger ideological meanings is the episode able to convey through its use of comedy and horror?
- How does the episode capitalize on the audience's 'suspension of disbelief'?
- Describe the cinematic landscape this episode evoked for you.