

Instructor: Matt Teichman

Office: 617V Cathedral

Office Hours: W 4:50-5:50 and by appt.

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Required texts:

Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *Two Novels: Jealousy and In the Labyrinth*. Available at the bookstore.

Perec, Georges. *Things/A Man Asleep*. Available at the bookstore.

Duras, Marguerite. *India Song*. Available at the bookstore.

Optional texts:

Perec, Georges. *Ellis Island*. Will be available on electronic reserve in Hillman Library.

Course Description:

This course will focus on the relation between the twin media of film and literature—what distinguishes them, what they share, in what contexts they become intertwined, and in what contexts they become disjunct. Literature, as we know, is nearly always made out of words and often made out of sentences, whereas films are made out of shots, scenes, sequences, sound effects, music, camera movements, mise-en-scene, performance, and so on; representationally they imply things like color, shape, form, and volume. How are film and literature limited by the constraints on them as media? Do changes in literary convention give rise to changes in cinematic convention? Are language and image in some sense dependent upon one another, or can each mode of thought subsist on its own?

These are the larger questions that will be of interest to us. However, in practice we will be addressing them through the study of a specific literary movement that had its peak in France from the late 50s through the early 60s, and which called itself the New Novel. The New Novel is of particular interest because it represents one of the only moments in film history when cinema and literature were firmly connected; when literary authors were also directing feature films. It constitutes a radical break from the literature that came before—an attempt to articulate new forms of storytelling. Contextualizing the films of these authors in relation to their fiction may give us a means of approaching some of the issues that we face today as a culture, as Western literacy becomes less sentential and increasingly audiovisual. How might we characterize the relation between reading and seeing?

Work for the course includes weekly papers (2-3 pages), weekly in-class essays (3-5 pages), weekly viewings, weekly readings, and participation in class discussions. A more detailed account of the work requirements for the course can be found in the Course Policies handout.

We will be screening the following films in class:

- *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1955)
- *Hiroshima, mon amour* (Alain Resnais and Marguerite Duras, 1959)
- *Last Year at Marienbad* (Alain Resnais and Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1961)
- *Trans-Europ-Express* (Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1966)
- *India Song* (Marguerite Duras, 1975)
- *A Man Asleep* (Georges Perec and Bernard Queysanne, 1974)
- *Stories of Ellis Island* (Georges Perec and Robert Bober, 1980)

READING AND VIEWING SCHEDULE

	Monday	Wednesday
Week of 6/26	View: <i>Night and Fog</i>	View: <i>Hiroshima, mon amour</i>
Week of 7/3	Read: “In the Labyrinth”	View: <i>Last Year at Marienbad</i>
Week of 7/10	Read: “Jealousy”	View: <i>Trans-Europ-Express</i>
Week of 7/17	Read: “India Song”	View: <i>India Song</i>
Week of 7/24	Read: “A Man Asleep”	View: <i>A Man Asleep</i>
Week of 7/31	Read: “Things” OR “Ellis Island”	View: <i>Stories of Ellis Island</i>

GUIDE TO WEEKLY PAPERS:

- Weekly papers are due every Monday beginning on 7/3, and each paper is to discuss the novel due that week.
- For each paper, select a passage from the book (anywhere from one to six sentences long) that you find crucial in some way. It can be a passage that you think is essential for understanding the book, or (if you find the book difficult) it can be a passage that exemplifies what makes the book difficult to understand.
- Next, discuss the style of the passage. For example, how does the author form sentences, structure paragraphs, choose words? Would you characterize the language as formal or colloquial? Pithy or verbose? Strained and serious or tongue-in-cheek? Does it vary—are different parts of the book written differently? Etc.
- Finally, offer an explanation as to why you suppose the author writes in this style. What is the book trying to do, and how does its having been executed in this way help the book achieve its goals?
- A paper for this course should be between two and three pages long (not counting the passage you cite), in Times 12 font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. I will not accept assignments less than two pages long, and it will take me longer than usual to grade assignments that exceed three pages in length.
- Your lowest grade on a weekly paper will be dropped.

GUIDE TO IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:

- Every Wednesday you will be given 45 minutes to write a short essay on the film just screened.
- The topic will vary from week to week and will be announced after the film has ended. However, somewhat like the weekly papers, in-class writing assignments will generally involve discussing a specific scene or sequence from the film (of your choice) and analyzing its style.
- Be as specific as you possibly can in discussing the scene in question—not only the narrative action that takes place, but how the scene is executed (edited, shot, staged, acted, etc.). It may be necessary for you to take notes on the film in order to achieve this level of descriptive detail.
- An in-class assignment should be between three and five handwritten pages long, double-spaced, on college-ruled paper. Please write legibly.
- *There will be no makeup in-class assignments.* If you miss one you will receive a “0” grade on it. However, your lowest grade on an in-class assignment will be dropped.