

## FILM 481 Special Topic: 3D Cinema



**Trimester 1 2014**

3 March to 2 July 2014

**30 Points**

The Creature From the Black Lagoon (1954) Directed by Jack Arnold

### IMPORTANT DATES

Teaching dates: 3 March to 6 June 2014

Easter/Mid-Trimester break: 18 April to 4 May 2014

Last assessment item due: 6 June 2014

Withdrawal Dates: Refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds). If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats).

### CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

**Lectures:** Mondays 12.00-15.50 85 Fairlie Tce Room 108

### NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

#### Course Coordinator:

Dr Miriam Ross

Email: [Miriam.Ross@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Miriam.Ross@vuw.ac.nz)

Phone: (04) 463 9655

Room: 103, 85 Fairlie Tce

Office Hours: Wed 9-11

## COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you are not going to use the Victoria email address set up for you, we strongly encourage you to set a forward from the Victoria email system to the email address you do use. Please check Blackboard regularly as additional information will be provided there.

## PRESCRIPTION

This course explores 3D cinema's unique aesthetic qualities. It examines the way 3D cinema combines 2D cinema's traditional visual and narrative techniques with enhanced depth planes in order to create a new visual field. 3D cinema will be examined through consideration of its aesthetic, technical, historical and cultural contexts.

## COURSE CONTENT

This course uncovers 3D cinema's unique aesthetic qualities through examination of its historic and cultural manifestations. We will examine films each week in order to test out contemporary theories and ideas on how 3D cinema operates. We will also use hands-on sessions with 3D cameras and creative exercises in order to fully understand how 3D visuality operates. Taking into consideration that 3D cinema does not operate outside of the parameters set by traditional cinema we will see how theories on cinema such as The Cinema of Attractions, Haptic Cinema, Realism and Deep Focus can be applied to 3D cinema.

## COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES (CLOS)

Students who pass this course will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of the major theoretical paradigms, existing scholarly literature and debates surrounding 3D cinema.
2. Differentiate between the aesthetic norms of 2D and 3D cinema.
3. Demonstrate textual analysis skills specific to 3D cinema, including the acquisition of appropriate formal terminology.
4. Conduct independent scholarly research in the field of 3D cinema.
5. Present persuasive, rigorous, research-based arguments about 3D cinema in written and oral form.

## TEACHING FORMAT

FILM 481 will be taught through a combination of screenings and interactive seminars. For most weeks, a 3D film will be screened at the beginning of the class and will be followed by seminar discussion that analyses the film as well as explores critical concepts about 3D cinema. **Students are required to seek out an article on 3D cinema that is relevant to the weekly topic and: copy a quotes from the article; post the quote on Blackboard; and formulate four questions raised by the quote for class discussion.** The only exceptions are Week 2 when the class will be devoted to experimenting with a 3D camera rig and Week 12

when there will be no Monday class. Instead, we will meet at a separate time where we will film one of the short scripts devised for Assignment 3. In Week 6 we will go to see a 3D film at either Readings Titan X screen or The Embassy's Dolby Atmos screen. A suitable screening will be decided on in advance during class.

### MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

- Submit the essays and assignments, on or by the specified dates (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of work)
- Attend 10 classes

### WORKLOAD

The expected workload for a 30 point course is 300 hours over the trimester. In addition to spending around 48 hours attending classes, you should spend approximately 52 hours on reading, and preparing for classes. The remaining 200 hours should be spent preparing for and working on assignments (for example, an assignment worth 25% should take a minimum of 50 hours). The exact times spend on such activities will vary depending on your personal needs. Preparation for assignments should take place a number of weeks in advance of the due dates.

### ASSESSMENT

Assessment items and workload per item		%	CLO(s)	Due date
1	Close Analysis Essay (1500-2000 words)	25%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	3pm, 4 April
2	Research Proposal (1000 words)	15%	1, 2, 4, 5	3pm, 17 April
3	Annotated Script (1 minute length)	20%	2, 3, 5	3pm, 9 May
4	Independent Research Essay (4000 words)	40%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	3pm, 6 June

#### Assignment One: Close Analysis Essay: Week 5

Choose a five to ten minute sequence from a 2D film and explain how you would convert the sequence into 3D. Refer to scholarly work on 3D cinema to contextualise the changes you would make and how these would have an impact upon an audience.

#### Assessment Criteria:

- Fulfilling the set task in a clear, direct, relevant and complete manner
- Clear evidence of engagement with the ideas and materials discussed in class

- The originality and quality of your findings. This will include your ability to conduct independent research from reputable academic sources.
- Coherency, structure and fluency in your essay
- Understanding and correct application of terms and concepts
- Accurate and complete referencing of all sources, including a bibliography

### **Assignment Two: Research Proposal: Week 7**

This assignment will allow you to develop a research proposal for your final research project. You will choose one of the topics covered in the course that relates to 3D cinema and create

1. A research question
2. A brief overview of the project
3. The methodology you will use
4. An initial bibliography with a minimum of 10 sources

#### Assessment Criteria:

- Fulfilling the set task in a clear, direct, relevant and complete manner
- Clear evidence of engagement with the ideas and materials discussed in class
- The originality and quality of your findings. This will include your ability to conduct independent research from reputable academic sources
- Coherency, structure and fluency in your proposal
- Understanding and correct application of terms and concepts
- Accurate and complete referencing of all sources, including a bibliography

### **Assignment Three: Annotated Script: Week 8**

Create a one-minute script for a short 3D film. Using Word's comments function, annotate your reasons for the visual choices to be made in the script. Further parameters for the script will be provided in class.

#### Assessment Criteria:

- Fulfilling the set task in a clear, direct, relevant and complete manner
- Clear evidence of engagement with the ideas and materials discussed in class
- Creativity within the script
- Coherency, structure and argumentation for your comments
- Quality and fluency of your expression
- Understanding and correct application of terms and concepts

### **Assignment Four: Research Essay: Week 12**

This assignment will improve your knowledge of the conceptual arguments surrounding 3D cinema. It will enable you to develop your skills at independent research. It will also enhance your written skills. You will conduct independent research into your chosen topic, develop a critical position on the topic, and construct a persuasive argument in essay form to communicate your findings.

Assessment Criteria:

- Fulfilling the set task in a clear, direct, relevant and complete manner
- Clear evidence of engagement with the ideas and materials discussed in class
- The originality and quality of your findings. This will include your ability to conduct independent research from reputable academic sources, synthesise research materials, engage in textual analysis, and develop and express your ideas
- Coherency, structure and argumentation of your essay
- Quality and fluency of your expression
- Understanding and correct application of terms and concepts
- Accurate and complete referencing of all sources, including a bibliography and filmography

**Please note:** Marks for Honours level assignments and final course grades are not finalised until feedback from the external examiner has been considered. Honours grades gained in individual courses remain provisional until the overall final classification made by the Honours programme examination committee.

#### SUBMISSION AND RETURN OF WORK

Work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by Turnitin the online plagiarism prevention tool.

Electronic assignments should be submitted as an MS Word file to Miriam.Ross@vuw.ac.nz. Once graded, these will be returned to you in class.

#### EXTENSIONS AND PENALTIES

##### Extensions

In exceptional and unforeseen circumstances an extension may be granted. If you require an extension, you must complete an extension request form (available on your course Blackboard site) prior to the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's certificate) where appropriate. Tutors cannot grant extensions. **No assignment without an extension will be accepted after Wednesday 25 June 2014. The Course Coordinator will not give an extension beyond Wednesday 2 July 2014.**

##### Penalties

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2.5 percent deduction from your total mark per work day. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

## RECOMMENDED READING

See the readings provided on page 9.

## CLASS REPRESENTATIVE

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course. Students may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:

## STUDENT FEEDBACK

Enhancements made to this course, based on the feedback of previous students, will be covered during the course.

Student feedback on University courses may be found at

[www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback\\_display.php](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php).

In week six or seven of the trimester your class representative will be invited to a meeting with the Programme staff. In week five your class representative will ask the class for any feedback on this course to discuss at this meeting.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism)
- Aegrotats: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats)
- Academic Progress: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress) (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates)
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: [www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin)
- Grades: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades)
- Resolving academic issues: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Special passes: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute:  
[www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy)
- Student support: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support)

- Students with disabilities: [www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/disability](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability)
- Student Charter: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter)
- Student Contract: [www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract)
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library/resources/subjectcontacts.html>
- Turnitin: [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin)
- University structure: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure)
- VUWSA: [www.vuwsa.org.nz](http://www.vuwsa.org.nz)
- School website: [www.victoria.ac.nz/seftms](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/seftms)

**COURSE PROGRAMME**

Week 1	3 March	Introduction	
Week 2	10 March	3D Production	
Week 3	17 March	Hyper-haptic	
Week 4	24 March	Cinema of Attractions	
Week 5	31 March	New Realisms	<b>Assignment Due</b>
Week 6	7 April	Depth and Emergence Construction	<b>Trip to 3D Cinema Screening</b>
Week 7	14 April	Arresting Forms	<b>Assignment Due</b>
<b>Mid Trimester Break:</b> Friday 18 April to Sunday 4 May 2014			
Week 8	5 May	Bodies in Motion	<b>Assignment Due</b>
Week 9	12 May	CGI Animation	
Week 10	19 May	Non-entertainment 3D	
Week 11	26 May	3D Scripts	
Week 12	2 June	3D Shooting	<b>No Monday Class</b> <b>Assignment Due</b>



For further articles on 3D: [http://www.stereoscopicmedia.org/?page\\_id=274](http://www.stereoscopicmedia.org/?page_id=274)

### Week 1: Introduction

Film: *House of Wax*, 1953 (88min)

Readings:

Kerbel, Michael (1980) '3-D or not 3-D' in *Film Comment*, 16:6, pp.11-20

### Week 2: 3D Production

This week gives us the opportunity to experiment with the Film Programme's 3D equipment. We will build the 3D mirror rig and equip it with two interlinked cameras that will then feed to a 3D monitor. We will then work on finding suitable convergence points and interaxial distances for different shot types. In this way, we will have the opportunity to learn, first hand, how 3D visuality operates.

Film: N/A

Readings:

Block, Bruce and Philip McNally (2013) 'Chapter One: The Basics' in Bruce Block and Philip McNally, *3D Storytelling: How Stereoscopic 3D Works and How to Use It*, Focal Press

Zone, Ray () 'Introduction' in *Ray Zone, 3-DIY: Stereoscopic Moviemaking on an Indie Budget*, pp.ix-xxix

### Week 3: Hyper-haptic

This week provides the framework for understanding 3D cinema's unique visual regime. It is concerned with the potential for embodied and tactile engagement in the spectatorship of 3D cinema. Taking forward Laura Marks' account of intercultural cinema that invites haptic and sensory viewing relationships between audience and film, this week examines how 3D films' stereoscopic affect moves the haptic quality found in many 2D moving images into a realm of hyper-haptic visuality. The distinct optical illusions created by negative parallax (the pop-out effect) and positive parallax (the receding depth effect) provide qualities of to-be-touchedness that suggest the possibility of tactile exploration. They heighten the embodied relations produced in traditional cinematic experiences by concentrating spectator attention on where their viewing bodies are placed in relation to the depth planes presented in 3D films. At the same time, although the excessive sensory overload provided by 3D cinema's multiple depth planes gives the haptic experience a hyper-haptic quality, it is always clear that the film object only appears to exist in front of or behind the traditional screen plane. These qualities invite a tangible engagement as viewers oscillate through belief and disbelief in the optical illusion.

Film: *Avatar*, 2009 (162min)/ *Dial M for Murder*, 1954 (105min)

Readings:

Ross, Miriam (2012) 'The 3-D aesthetic: Avatar and hyperhaptic visuality' in *Screen* 53:4, pp.381-397

Marks, Laura (2000) 'The Memory of Touch' in Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp.127-193

#### Week 4: Cinema of Attractions

This week, particular attention is paid to the way in which 3D cinema's hyper-haptic visuality is utilised in order to develop presentational modes that address the audience directly. Discussion will explore how 3D cinema has engaged audiences in playful visual moments that function in a similar way to the cinema of attractions that Tom Gunning identifies in early cinema. In the same way that early cinema often favoured moments of display and spectacle (the attraction) over narrative development, much 3D cinema revels in its ability to show audiences visual tricks that cannot otherwise be seen. Although this aspect of 3D cinema is most often derided by critics as a 'gimmick,' and cited as one of the reasons 3D cinema has failed to maintain a continuous presence, this week will nuance these approaches by examining the pleasurable relationships produced by 3D cinema's presentational mode. Cognisant of the feature-length duration of 3D films, attention will be paid to the way they negotiate the need for narrative structures within overt use of visual spectacle.

Film: *Hugo*, 2011 (126min)/ *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, 1954 (79min)

Readings:

Gunning, Tom (1990) 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde' in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.) *Early Cinema: Space-frame-narrative*, London: BFI Publishing, pp.57-62

Moulten Carter (2013) 'The Future is a Fairground: Attraction and Absorption in 3D Cinema' in *CineAction*, 89, pp.4-13

#### Week 5: New Realisms

Although the previous week was concerned with 3D cinema's presentational modes and, by extension, 3D cinema's display of its optical illusion, we will look at one of the other major paradigms by which 3D cinema is discussed: realism. Popular discourse surrounding 3D cinema has long focused on stereoscopy's ability to simulate multiple depth planes in ways that traditional cinema cannot. The stereoscopic layers of depth are purported to better replicate 'real world' visual fields and it is often suggested the screen gives way to a window-like view onto a pre-determined visual world. This week will take into account historical desires for cinema technologies that can represent realism modes. This week will look at 3D documentary in order to explore how it uses stereoscopic techniques in order to portray its subject matter in ways that 2D cinema could not. The extent to which its presentation of content is visibly mediated by stereoscopic filming techniques provides a platform to discuss the possibilities and limits that 3D cinema's hyper-haptic visuality has for engendering new realism modes.

Film: *TT3D: Closer to the Edge*, 2011 (104min) / *Arabia 3D*, 2011 (40min)

Readings:

Willemsen, Paul (1972) 'On Realism in the Cinema' in *Screen*, 13:1, pp.37-43

Koszarski, Richard (2000) 'A Lion in Your Lap – A Lover in Your Arms: Arch Oboler and "Bwana Devil"' in *Film History* 12:1, pp.17-28

#### Week 6: Depth and Emergence Construction

This week the emphasis is on the way depth is constructed in positive and negative parallax, with specific consideration to how these constructions interact with depth cues available in all cinema. While the extra depth provided by stereoscopic effects delivers a seemingly enhanced level of realism, there are qualities to the construction of depth that remind viewers of the optical illusion inherent in their constitution. Films

will be examined for their use of parallax placement in the construction of depth in specific objects and landscapes. The use of stereoscopic techniques can be seen to alternate between tendencies to produce deep focus (referencing a style that was popular in the 1940s) and pull focus so that only limited planes are in focus at any one time (a style popular in contemporary Hollywood). This week examines how these stylistic tendencies are developed and, consequently, how they engender and shift the embodied relationships produced between viewer and film.

Film: *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, 2010 (90min)/ *Resident Evil: Afterlife*, 2010 (97min)

Readings:

Klinger, Barbara (2012) 'Cave of Forgotten Dream: Mediation on 3D' in *Film Quarterly*, 65:3, pp.38-43

Patrick L. Ogle, 'Technological and aesthetic influences upon the development of deep focus cinematography in the United States', *Screen*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1972), pp. 45-72

### **Week 7: Arresting Forms**

This week analyses the use of objects, material and cinematic techniques that, when executed in stereoscopic form, revert the realism modes created by deep focus filming. This week discusses spectacular moments that are overtly presentational, call attention to themselves and interact with viewers in a manner that prioritizes the visual experience over narrative cognition. In the first instance the use of liquid and debris (exploding materials, embers, sparks, dust clouds, bubbles, jetsam) creates, thick, palpable screen spaces where the boundaries between the film's objects and the viewers' bodies are unclear. In a similar way, extreme close-ups draw attention to the touchable nature of objects that are not fully present while the use of subtitles and slow motion enhance the artificial construction of screen space to an extent not found in traditional cinema. By looking at these artefacts, this week will highlight the way the embodied, sensory relationships discussed in previous weeks are constituted as having tangible, tactile manifestations at the same time that the artifice of the films' illusions is apparent.

Film: *Dredd*, 2012 (95min)/*Life of Pi*, 2012 (127min)

Readings:

Paul, William (1993) 'The Aesthetics of Emergence' in *Film History*, 5:3, pp.321-355

Convergence Article

Ross, Miriam (2013) 'Stereoscopic visuality: Where is the screen, where is the film?' in *Convergence*, 19:4, pp.406-414

### **Mid-Trimester Break:**

### **Week 8: Bodies in Motion**

The sensory relationships discussed in the prior weeks will be focused on the articulation of human bodies in space this week. In this chapter, attention is paid to the way stereoscopic effects change the dynamics of bodily movement in 3D cinema. In the first instance, the boundaries between viewers and screen bodies are broken down through the seeming placement of human body parts in the auditorium space. In the

second instance, the intense contouring of human physiques in stereoscopic depth engages viewer's kinaesthetic behaviour as their own bodies follow the movement produced by the characters in their screen space. This work follows on from Jennifer Barker's discussion of the way certain films are able to elicit musculature reactions from audience members and, this week, the processes by which stereoscopic effects heighten this process in relation to moving bodies are explored. Attention is paid to the way stereoscopic filming processes are able to offer close-ups on bodily movement in a way not possible in live dance performance as well as depth configurations not available to 2D cinema's filmed dance.

Film: *Pina*, 2011 (103min)/ *Step Up 3D*, 2010 (107min)

Readings:

Ross, Miriam (2011) 'Spectacular Dimensions: 3D Dance Films' in *Sense of Cinema* 61. Available online at <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2011/feature-articles/spectacular-dimensions-3d-dance-films/>.

Barker, Jennifer M. (2009) 'Introduction' in Jennifer Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p.1-22

### Week 9: CGI Animation

This week examines how the various tendencies and techniques contributing to 3D cinema's unique visual regime are developed in computer-generated imagery as opposed to live-action footage. We will consider the way the presence and non-presence of 3D cinema's optical illusion is realized in distinct ways. On the one hand, the claims for realism in 3D cinema are problematized by 3D animations due to their lack of an indexical relationship with a prior visual world. On the other hand, tangible and tactile relationships are maintained which suggest viewers are able to invest in the presence of the film even when its visual style is particularly artificial.

Film: *Wreck it Ralph*, 2012 (108min)/*Puss in Boots*, 2011 (90min)

Readings:

Power, Pat (2009) 'Animated Expressions: Expressive Style in 3D Computer Computer Graphic Narrative Animation' in *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 4:2 , pp.107-129

Madžoski, Vesna (2011) 'Avatar Cat People: The Others in 3D', *Cinemascope: independent film journal*, 7:15 <http://www.cinemascope.it/Issue%2015/PDF/madzoski.pdf>

### Week1 10: Non-entertainment 3D

With the resurgence of 3D films in the twenty-first century, much attention has been paid to stereoscopy's commercial potential in cinema, television and gaming. Less well documented is stereoscopy's proliferation in educational and institutional contexts such as school classrooms, medical teaching centers, and military training facilities. Within these contexts there is often a tension as to whether stereoscopic imaging devices are invisible tools that provided an objective view of external phenomena or mediating tools that study the very process of visual knowledge. Although discussions of stereoscopic images' 'life-like' qualities and enhanced levels of detail suggest the former conceptualization has taken precedence, the potential for stereoscopic media to highlight its production processes and produce heightened engagement does not fully foreclose the former. This week will look at the various uses of non-entertainment 3D while also considering the visual concerns it shares with the entertainment contexts examined in the previous weeks.

Film: *WWII 3D*, 2011

Readings:

Gurevitch, Leon and Miriam Ross (2013) 'Stereoscopic Media: Scholarship Beyond Booms and Bust' in *Public*, 47, pp.72-82

Bak, Meredith A. (2012) 'Democracy and discipline: Object lessons and the stereoscope in American education, 1870–1920' in *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 10:2

### **Week 11: 3D Scripts**

This week will work as a recap of the main themes and topics that have been discussed in class. There will be time to work on the final research essay and we will also choose which script will be shot in the following week.

Film: TBA

### **Week 12: 3D Shooting**

There will no Monday class this week. Instead we will come together at an assigned time to shoot the chosen one-minute 3D script.