

On Page and Screen: Adaptations of Literature in Recent Film

Course description and outline lesson plans, as requested in contract

Overview

Advertising blurb

Literature has long provided an inspiration for filmmakers. This course provides an opportunity to discuss some recent releases alongside the written works that inspired them. What is the difference between telling a story on the page rather than on the screen? What ways of understanding the world does each make possible? To what extent are film and literature competing modes of storytelling, and how might they complement one another?

Each week, we'll focus on a film and the book on which it is based. Covering memoir, political thriller, science fiction, biopic and horror, the films and books we discuss have been selected for their generic diversity.

Participants are recommended to see the films and encouraged to read the books, though short excerpts from the books will be provided for discussion in the class. The film/book for the first week is *Mickey 17*.

Additional information

My pedagogical style is that of the structured conversation. Classes will combine mini lectures/outlines of key issues and insights, with time for participant discussion (built both round invitations to contribute general reactions and responses to the films/books, and round specific questions relating to the issues broached by the course).

PowerPoint slides will be used to help structure each class, as well as to highlight key information, perspectives and questions. Clips from the films (and related films / material) and passages from the books will be used to help participants explore issues in more detail.

Week-by-week lesson outline

Emphases flagged up below may change slightly as the course adapts to the interests of participants.

Session 1 (9 May) – Clones: *Mickey 17*

Supporting book: Edward Ashton, *Mickey 17*

Indicative list of issues covered:

- Introduction to the course
 - Adaptation: key issues and insights
 - Guiding questions for the course
 - Themes running through the films/books discussed on the course
- Clones: other depictions of clones and doppelgangers in literature and film
- Clones in *Mickey 17* / *Mickey 17*: individuality and identity (what makes you you?)
- Aliens: the 'creepers' – representing otherness in literature and film
- Space exploration and exploitation – going out into the universe in the book and film

Session 2 (16 May) – Selfhood, Addiction and the Natural World: *The Outrun*

Supporting book: Amy Liptrot, *The Outrun*

Indicative list of issues covered:

- Memoir: putting the self on page and screen - from first person to third person
- Addiction
- Environments in the book/film: London and Orkney
- Nature writing and nature on screen: finding a human place in the natural world
- Nature in culture – folktales and 'selkies' (seal/human figures) in the book and film

[No session 23 May]

Session 3 (30 May) – Transformations and Beastly Tales: *Nightbitch*

Supporting book: Rachel Yoder, *Nightbitch*

Indicative list of issues covered:

- Human/animal transformations in mythology and culture: werewolves and the ‘nightbitch’ (comparison to the ‘selkie’ in *The Outrun*)
- Magical realism: using the fantastical to explore the familiar/domestic
- Motherhood on screen/in literature
- Selfhood in the figure of ‘The Mother’
- Contemporary body horror (comparison to *The Substance*)

Session 4 (6 June) – Politics and the Self: *Conclave*

Supporting book: Robert Harris, *Conclave*

Indicative list of issues covered:

- The political thriller on page and screen
- The aesthetics of the Vatican: design decisions in translating novel to film
- The mundane and the divine: the material and the spiritual in book and film
- Inside/outside the Vatican – (dis)connection to/from the ‘real’ world
- Faith, power and morality in the figure of Thomas Lawrence

Session 5 (13 June) – Mythology and Messiahs: *Dune: Part 2*

Supporting book: Frank Herbert, *Dune*

Indicative list of issues covered:

- Science fiction: traditions on page and screen
- The desert planet (1): drought and the environment
- The desert planet (2): the desert as wilderness and retreat
- Spice, addiction and economy in *Dune*
- The heroic messiah: fulfilling/resisting destiny; power in *Dune/Dune 2*

Session 6 (20 June) – Mythology and Celebrity: *A Complete Unknown*

Supporting book: Elijah Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric*

Indicative list of issues covered:

- The biopic on screen and cultural history on the page: representing Dylan and the Newport Folk Festival
- American culture and the cult of the outsider
- 1960s contexts: music and the counterculture
- The individual and the ‘movement’: Bob Dylan
- Reproducing/interrogating a mythologised moment: unpicking the history