HOW iREAD THE EYE-BOOKS:
FILM ADAPTATIONS OF WORLD LITERATURE

FALL 2014

Lecture, discussion, film screenings: Monday, 13:35-16:25 pm
Location: McCain Arts 1102
E-mail: yleving@dal.ca, Drop Box: 106.
Office Hours: Monday, 12-1 pm, and by appointment.
McCain, Room 3016, Tel.: 494-3473,
http://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/russian-studies.html

Grace Kelly and James Stewart in Rear Window (1954) directed by Alfred Hitchcock,
based on Cornell Woolrich’s 1942 short story “It Had to Be Murder”

The course outline:

We treat an adaptation “as an intertext designed to be looked through, like a window on
the source text” (T. Leitch). How many windows are out there and what patterns can we
discern through a glass, darkly? Increasingly in contemporary media practice, texts are
deployed across a range of different platforms, often simultaneously. From analyzing the
art of comic strips and e-books designed for iPads and Android mobile devices, in this
course we will be both reading and watching the adaptations of world literary classics and
popular contemporary works. We will examine how Hollywood attempts to turn
supposedly ‘unfilmable’ short stories and novels into blockbusters, while a special
attention in this class will be devoted to a case study of the Russian literary masterpiece,
Leo Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina, and its several adaptations to the screen.
Learning objectives for the course:

During the semester, students will learn to appreciate both the text and its visual renderings using theoretical frameworks of adaptation, textual fidelity, heteroglossia, remediation, rewiring, transmedia, and videogames, as well as will have an opportunity to practice their skills in the art of filmmaking and constructing an iBook. We will also be doing some “close readings” of the primary texts and attempting to “translate” or “adapt” them to a new medium using fundamental montage editing strategies.

Full versions of films will be screened once a week, in addition to a lecture, discussion, and viewing of additional short clips. You will even direct a very short film of your own (“The Visual Adaptation Project”)! Every week you will be asked to prepare a short creative assignment on the subject of our upcoming lesson.

Required literature:

1) These essential books should be purchased through the Dal bookstore:

- Stephanie Harrison, Ed. Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen (Three Rivers Press, 2005)
- Leo Tolstoy, Anna Karenina (The Maude Translation: A Norton Critical Edition)
- Linda C. Cahir, Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches (McFarland, 2006)

2) Academic articles and other reading materials = Assigned below in the syllabus [marked with an asterisk *] they will be provided by an instructor as electronic documents.

Recommended readings:

ATTENDANCE AND GRADING POLICIES

1) **In-class written visual analysis**: 5%  [September 22]
2) **Quiz on terms**: 5% (Glossary is found in: Cahir, *Literature into Film*, pp. 281-296). [October 6]
3) **Midterm exam**: 15% (Short essay -- thematic questions -- and a visual analysis) [October 27]
4) **In-class written visual adaptation of a short episode**: 5% (up to one page, will be excerpted from any fictional work that you have read in this class). [November 17]
5) **Think Tank tasks**: 10% (Due every Thursday by noon; printed out, in my mailbox at McCain ground floor, or in the Department of Russian Studies, 3rd floor)
6) **Visual Adaptation Project**: 15%  
7) **Student Presentations**: 15%. In the second half of the semester you will be required to give a brief presentation, with a visual, on a text/film of your choice. The assignment will be discussed in class.
8) **Final research project**: 20%.

A final exam will not be conducted: instead, a final research paper (15 pages + bibliography) seeking comparative analysis of films and books, incorporating material from course readings, will be required.

This will be due on the last day of our course. If you require use of multimedia, make sure you add a USB memory stick to your paper (don’t worry, it will be returned to you after I upload your stuff).

9) **Attendance and Participation**: 10%.

If you want to keep up with the material, you need to do the readings and be able to identify and understand the key arguments of the essays. To this end, you will be asked to participate in the discussion of the readings and I will call upon you to answer or ask questions as I lecture.

Attendance will be taken at every class meeting, and you will be marked absent if you are late. To attend classes, be awake, to participate, to absolutely not talk on your phone or read the paper and solve crossword puzzles during class — all these

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1 The **Visual Adaptation Project** is your chance to showcase your creative powers. I’ll ask you to make a video clip, adapting either an existing literary piece or the one that you have composed yourself (this can be a poem, a song, or a short story) to the MOVING IMAGES. The script/storyboard (due earlier in the course) will be later shot as a short color or b/w film using MiniDV, compact digital camera, or even a cell phone. **Duration**: Minimum 1 minute and max. 5 minutes [the length requirement is strict: anything shorter or longer will be marked as a failure]. **Purpose**: To learn appreciate the visual style and concepts of cinematic adaptation. **Audience**: Upload your clip on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) – we (and the rest of the world) will watch the video in class! Bring a USB memory stick at the time of your presentation – it will be returned to you later.
are crucial requirements for your participation in class.

DO NOT WALK OUT OF THE CLASSROOM DURING THE LECTURE.
SINCE THIS IS A LONG, THREE-HOUR CLASS I WILL ALLOW A 5-MINUTE BREAK BEFORE OR AFTER THE SCREENING OF THE MOVIE.

You should attend all classes and screenings. Your overall grade will drop by half a letter grade if you have more than 1 unexcused absence. (An excused absence is when you submit a written excuse such as a doctor’s report or a letter about a family emergency. An unexcused absence is when you just decide to not show up). It is your responsibility to make up any (excused or unexcused) classes missed. Absence is not an excuse for ignorance about the material covered on that day. The in-class writing assignments cannot be made up later, so attendance is critical to keep up with that area of your grade.

**THREE KEYS TO YOUR SUCCESS IN THIS COURSE:**

- **Attendance and attentive watching**
- **Regular reading**
- **Participation in Think Tank tasks**

*Follow these symbols for easier navigation below*

**SCHEDULE**

**Topic I:** WHAT IS A FILM ADAPTATION?: ORIGINALITY, DERIVATION, AND ISSUES OF FIDELITY

September 8: “In the beginning God created…”: From Genesis to Comics

*Introduction*
Re-creating the Bible’s vision of human and divine history for modern audiences

*SCREENING: Excerpts*
Documentary take: National Geographic *The Truth Behind The Ark* (http://vplay.ro/watch/bx622m7d/)
Adapting for kids: Stories from the Bible – The Creation (cartoon)
Illustrating the Bible: The Bible Illustrations from Albrecht Dürer and Gustav Dore to R. Crumb’s comics, *The Book of Genesis Illustrated*.

Excerpts from the Hebrew Bible, original text.

Assignment # 1 for next class, due by Thursday
Open the Bible [Old Testament]; choose any plot – the episode might be very short (as most of the stories in the Book of Books are narrated in a condensed, economic style) – and exercise a one-page remake: re-write any selected scene into modernity (i.e. Cain and Abel live in Manhattan, New York; one day brothers quarrel over Caramel Macchiato in Starbucks; what happens next?…), ensuring that you retain the original characters and, desirably, the story’s morale.

■ IMPORTANT: Here and elsewhere by a page I mean *one typed page*; font: *Times New Roman*; size: 12; single-spaced]

**Topic II:** INTERPRETATION AS ADAPTATION:
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF READING AND WATCHING

**September 15: Violence and Psychological Thriller on screen**

**SCREENING:** Robert Siodmak’s *The Killers* (1946, 102 min.), Andrei Tarkovsky’s short film (1956, 19 min.), and the crime film directed by Don Siegel (1964, 94 min.).

Ernest Hemingway’s *The Killers* (1927), in *Adaptations*, pp. 421-429.
Think over the questions on: p. 17, 43, and, in particular, a question on p. 223.

Assignment # 2 for next class
■ Write a short story in which you are dreaming of: (1) an escape; (2) pursuit of someone/something. [Note: choose one subject; one page].
September 22: Adapting Detective Story

**SCREENING:** *Rear Window* (1954), 112 min.

Think over the questions on: p. 60, 64.

Assignment # 3 for next class
Research the following three topics:
- What is *suspense*?
- Detective as a genre in cinema
- A brief history of detective story in literature
After doing this, write a **one-page** short detective story which starts in Halifax, N.S., and ends up in Tokyo, Japan. Try to adhere to conventions of this particular genre.

❗️ Today: **IN-CLASS VISUAL ANALYSIS**

* * * Visual Adaptation Project – *Your script/storyboard is due today!*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storyboard

**Topic III:** MEDIA AND TEXT:
TELEVISION, STAGE, RADIO, COMIC BOOKS, AND DESIGN

September 29: Mythopoetic Appeal of Larger-than-life Figures:
The Holmes Franchise

**SCREENING:** *Sherlock* ("A Study in Pink", Ep. 1, season 1. UK, 2010)

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. “A Study in Scarlet” (1886)
[We will discuss the Guy Ritchie film franchise, starring Robert Downey Jr and Jude Law; the modern re-imagining of the Holmes-Watson partnership in the BBC’s Sherlock, as well as compare them with the Russian popular 1980s version.]

-- Cahir, Literature into Film, Chapter 3, pp. 72-96.

Think over the questions on: p. 81, 85. Apply them to Doyle’s “A Study in Scarlet” (or any other short story by this author)

Assignment # 4 for next class

Today you have a short study in visual aesthetics:

Choose one of the following five genres, then take ONE shot and be ready to explain in class the rationale of the final product as well as the technique you have used in order to achieve your objective:

1) Composition
2) Reportage (French, from reporter to report: the act or process of reporting news; writing intended to give an account of observed or documented events)
3) Portrait
4) Landscape
5) Selfie

NOTE: send your picture in JPEG format to my email at least 24 hours before this class along with a short explanation. The photograph will be projected on a big screen.

October 6. Reflections and Stopping the Gaze: On Photography and Static Pictures as a form of Adapting

Today: Quiz on terms: 5 % [Glossary is found in: Cahir, Literature into Film, pp. 281-296]. 15 minutes in the beginning of class. You will be quizzed on 10 random terms in total.

SCREENING: Blow-Up (Dir. M. Antonioni, 1966), 111 min.


Cahir, Literature into Film, Chapter 4, pp. 97-143.

Think over the question on: p. 125-26. For discussion select at least two [film/theatrical/illustrative] adaptations of any work that you are familiar with.
Assignment # 5 for next class [October 20]

Turn to Cahir’s Literature into Film, Ch. 2, p. 54.

Answer in writing (one page) the question dealing with Molly Bloom in Ulysses, however, you should substitute Molly with Anna, and Ulysses with Anna Karenina. Just choose the most appropriate, in your opinion, excerpt and provide me its exact whereabouts (the page number from the Norton edition we use in class).

**Topic IV: LITERARY ADAPTATIONS: READINGS AND SCREENINGS OF THE SELECTED INTERNATIONAL MASTERPIECES**

October 13, 2014.

Thanksgiving Day – University closed

Advice: Reading Anna Karenina as much as possible – it is entertaining but long.

October 20: Anna Karenina: How Do they Kill Her? Takes 1 & 2

**SCREENING: Anna Karenina** (versions starring Greta Garbo [1935, 95 min.] and Vivien Leigh [1948, 139 min.])

Leo Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina
Cahir, Literature into Film, Chapter 5, pp. 144-185.

Assignment # 6 for next class

Visualize the last minutes of Anna Karenina’s life as a comic strip (I won’t judge your sketches from the artistic standpoint, but you are encouraged to employ your inventiveness and creative spirit in drawing them).

IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF “The Visual Adaptation Project” – 1
October 27: MIDTERM EXAMINATION

**Note:** Midterm will take half of the allocated class time. In the other half we will continue with IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF “The Visual Adaptation Project” – 2

November 3. Anna Karenina: How Do they Kill Her? Take 3

**SCREENING:** *Anna Karenina* (Kira Knightly, 2012), 129 min.

**READ ME!**

Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*

Assignment # 7 for next class [17 November]

We will talk about an iBook and apps phenomena. Bring up your favorite app/iBook (Android or Apple-based) and describe it in class [we will project the app on a large screen using an iPad or tablet]. Explain its functionality, what do you like in it and what could be improved. General questions to address: How do images, stories, or sounds emphasize, more than traditional films or videos, a unique interactivity between them and the viewer? How does that help explain their aims and goals? How is the technology of the particular media is part of its message?

* IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF “The Visual Adaptation Project” – 3

November 10. Study Day, no classes

**READ ME!**

Your final essay is looming. At this point I highly recommend reading “RESEARCHING MOVIES,” a *chapter from Timothy Corrigan’s* A Short Guide to Writing about Film [*PDF file to be supplied]*.

-- Cahir, Literature into Film, Chapter 7, pp. 235-261.

**Topic V:** FROM BOOK TO AN iBOOK: A WORKSHOP IN CREATING, FILMING AND CONSTRUCTING LITERARY HYBRIDS
November 17: Dreams Recycled


Arthur Schnitzler’s “Traumnovelle” / “Dream Story” (1926) [*PDF file to be supplied].

-- Kurt Taroff, “‘No dream is ever just a dream’: Stanley Kubrick’s *Eyes Wide Shut* as monofilm,” *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*. Volume 4, Issue 2. August 2011. [*PDF file to be supplied].

-- Cahir, *Literature into Film*, Chapter 6, pp.186-227 [stop before “the Sentinel” discussion].

Think over the question on: p. 225 in relation to Schnitzler’s “Dream Story” and Nicole Kidman’s heroine in Kubrick’s adaptation.

TODAY: An in-class written visual adaptation of a short episode from text (5 %; the text and specific excerpt won’t be announced prior to this date)

Assignment # 8 for next class

Compare A. C. Clarke’s short story “The Sentinel” (*Adaptations*, pp. 104-111) with the screenplay titled “2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY” by Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clark. Write one page summary of your impressions about the way the story has been adapted to the screen. [*The screenplay will be supplied as an e-doc].

November 24: Adapting Sci-Fi

**SCREENING:** *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), 160 min.


-- Cahir, *Literature into Film*, Chapter 6, pp. 228-234.

Think over the question on: p. 230.

*Note: I am off for a conference in the USA, but we will hold the screening and film reports will be due as usual.*

December 1: Conclusion.

STUDENT FINAL PRESENTATIONS for the Fall semester
P.S. And what to expect in the second half of this course?

*James Bond, Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close, Fight Club, Shakespeare’s King Lear and Hamlet, Kurosawa’s Rashomon, Dostoevsky’s Idiot and Boris Pasternak’s Doctor Zhivago*, and, naturally, more bloody reports from the crime scenes by international directors-serial killers of Anna Karenina.

**Important Things to Note:**

(a) Papers should be turned in on time. Grades will be affected by late submission.

(b) A *Warning Regarding Plagiarism*: Dalhousie University subscribes to Turnitin.com, a computer-based service which checks for originality in submitted papers. Any paper submitted by a student at Dalhousie University may be checked for originality to confirm that the student has not plagiarized from other sources. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offense which may lead to loss of credit, suspension or expulsion from the university, or even the revocation of a degree. It is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived. At Dalhousie there are University Regulations which deal with plagiarism and, prior to submitting any paper in a course, students should read the Policy on Intellectual Honesty contained in the Calendar or on the On-line Dalhousie website. The senate has affirmed the right of any instructor to require that student papers be submitted in both written and computer-readable format, and to submit any paper to a check such as that performed by Turnitin.com. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand. Copies of student papers checked by this process will be retained by Turnitin.com.

(Memo from Vice President Academic and Provost, August 7, 2002).

(c) Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests and exams should make their request to the Office of Student Accessibility & Accommodation (OSAA) prior to or at the outset of each academic term (with the exception of X/Y courses). Please see [www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca](http://www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca) for more information and to obtain the Request for Accommodation – Form A.

A note taker may be required to assist a classmate. There is an honorarium of $75/course/term. If you are interested, please contact OSAA at 494-2836 for more information.

Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom so that students who require their usage will be able to participate in the class.

(Memo from Office of Student Accessibility & Accommodation, Updated July 2011).

(d) The *Writing Centre* is here to help you:

Learning to write well contributes to good marks, completion of degrees and, later, success in the workplace. Now is the time to improve your writing skills. You can visit the Writing Centre for assistance with your assignments. Staff and tutors help you to understand writing expectations and disciplinary conventions. The service is available six days a week. (See our website for hours of operation at the various Writing Centre sites.) To book an appointment call...
On watching a film & discussing it:

Watching a film to critically analyze it is a different process than watching it in a cinema theater, so here are some ways in which you can train yourself to view a film. These are general guidelines; adapt it to suit your viewing, reading, and analytic skills and interests.

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS:

1. It is absolutely crucial to take notes when you watch a film. Do not make the mistake of transcribing the whole film; you'll miss the film that way! But jot down that which strikes you, that which you may want to think about later—an image, a sound, a reference to a scene or sequence, a character's role in a specific scene etc.
2. We'll be watching the film in the dark, so you may either bring a small flashlight or get used to reading your scribbles in the dark...
3. It is always good to know the characters names in a film. If you can't catch it or remember it from the screening, look it up on the web (e.g. on <imdb.com>)
4. Write down your thoughts on the film briefly, immediately after you see it. That way your ideas remain fresh and return when you need them to.
5. I will set the films up briefly, but also think of the film when you do the next week's theme. Look for parts of the reading that resonate in a direct or indirect way with any aspect of the film you have seen. Write down specific page numbers and mark relevant sections to talk about in class.

SOME WAYS OF DIRECTING YOUR ATTENTION:

Like a written sentence that is composed of words, put together grammatically to mean something, a film sequence has its syntax. To convey meaning, instead of nouns, verbs, adjectives and pronouns, it uses a combination of the following elements, and you need to develop a sensitivity to them all, as they work individually and in conjunction with each other:

How are the images composed? Do they have a realism, an abstract quality, a surrealism? How are these effects created and to what end? Are the image-compositions largely symmetrical or asymmetrical? What is the mise-en-scene of the image (i.e. how is the action staged, with elements like lighting, costuming, acting)? How is the image presented—from what point-of-view? When are high-angled shots or low-angled shots used? Is there a preponderance of close-ups or medium-shots or long-shots? Does this have any impact on your viewing of the film, on the points of identification you may find or don't find as a viewer? What are the conjunctions or connections between the images? The images are most likely to produce, in their sequencing, a certain narrative or some form of synthesis. Consider how the images are sequenced to produce this narrative. How are connections and associations between images created? What juxtapositions are created by the edits? What is the temporal connection between the images (does it move forwards in time, backward, in a circular manner)? How is temporality constructed?

What is the story these series of images tell you? What is (are) the theme (themes) of the film? Does every sequence and image of the film contribute to the theme or does it complicate the theme? Does the film have a singular narrator or multiple narrators? Is the film aligned to any one narrator? Or is the film's perspective alienated from all the characters in the film? Is anyone given omniscience? Can you relate it to any genre?