7AAEM651: Medicine on Screen: Doctors and Medical Care in Films from the 1920s to the Present

Course tutors: Dr Michael Clark (Centre for the Humanities and Health, King’s College) Mr Brian Glasser (UCL Medical School)
Credit Value: 20 credits
Teaching Arrangements: 1 x 4-hour Seminar and Screening each week in Semester 2
Assessment: 1 x 4000-word Essay

""" INDICATIVE SESSIONS """

Week 1 - Introduction to Medical Movies (1): Thematic, Historical and Disciplinary Perspectives
In addition housekeeping, timetabling and other practical information, the first two sessions provide students with a broad overview of the course’s content and structure, together with some basic conceptual and practical tools and relevant theoretical and disciplinary perspectives for use throughout the module.

1. Exploring course participants’ existing knowledge of film, their expectations of the course and their particular research interests. [BG]

2. An introduction to some of the principal underlying themes of the module, e.g.
   - The importance of medicine as a cinematic metaphor for the wider social and moral health or sickness of society;
   - Cinematic representations of medical practice and medical research as proxies for society’s overall attitude towards science and technology and their relation to human values;
   - The historic role of inspirational narratives of medical progress in providing lay audiences with social and cultural reassurance in times of depression, austerity and insecurity. [MJC]

2. A brief historical overview of changing representations of medical care and the medical profession in English-language cinema from c. 1930 to the present. [BG]

3. Screening: Trust Me - I’m A Doctor (UK, 2008)

4. An introduction to the study of medical movies in the broader context of the Medical Humanities, especially their shared interests in narrative and visuality. [MJC]
Bibliography:
- Michael Shortland, Medicine and Film (1989), Introduction
- Peter E. Dans, Doctors in the Movies (2000), Introduction
- Pam Cook, The Cinema Book (2008), 222-3
- Susan Hayward, Key Concepts in Cinema Studies (1996), 307-313
- Louis Giannetti, Understanding Movies (2010)
- Brian Glasser, Medicinema: Doctors in Films (2010), Ch. 5, ‘Visuality: Mapping the Overlap’
- Richard Howells & Joaquim Negreiros, Visual Culture (2011), Ch. 9, ‘Film’

Week 2 – Introduction to Medical Movies (2): Film Analysis, Film Narrative and Film Theory - Some Essential Tools for the Course
This session will provide some essential analytical tools and theoretical frameworks for understanding how doctors and medicine are portrayed in the movies and what their presence signifies:

1. A short introduction to **film analysis** [BG]:
   - The language of film – shots, cuts, editing, montage, mise-en-scène, etc. [clips to illustrate]
   - Practical exercise: filmic textual analysis **NB course participants to bring in laptops**
   - Narration and narrative - how scenes and film narratives are constructed; the effects on audiences of different styles of film-making [clips to illustrate]

2. An introduction to the notion of **film genre** in relation to medical movies [MJC]:
   - What is ‘genre’, and to what extent can medical movies be regarded as a genre?
   - Film images, subjective representations and the construction of genres and stereotypes
   - Medical drama and melodrama
   - Some differences between medical fiction films and TV medical and hospital ‘continuing dramas’

3. An introduction to **recurrent narratives** in medical movies [MJC]:
   - Death and Resurrection/Medical nemesis and rebirth
   - ‘Wounded Healer’ narratives
   - Illness narratives
   - Conflicts between the demands of medical science and healing sick individuals

4. **Screening:** Dear Diary (Italy, 1995) - (extract)

**Bibliography**
- Robert Edgar Hunt, John Marland & Steven Rawle, The Language of Film (2010), Chs. 2, 5, 6
- Rick Altman, Film/Genre (1999)
- Warren Buckland, Teach Yourself Film Studies (2008 edn.), Chs. 1, 2, 4
- James Monaco, How to Read a Film: Movies, Media and Beyond (2009 revd. edn.)

Week 3 - Exemplary Narratives? The Image of Doctors, Medicine and Medical Research in the 1930s ‘Golden Age’ of Hollywood [BG]

**Purpose of the Session:** Critically to examine the portrayal of medicine and medical research in major Hollywood movies of the 1930s, with particular reference to the medical ‘biopics’ of the late ’30s. To what extent can these be regarded as ‘exemplary narratives’, and were alternative views of contemporary medical practice also available in English-language cinema at the time?

**Screening:** A Man To Remember (U.S., 1938)

**Supplementary viewing:** Arrowsmith (U.S., 1931), Dr Ehrlich’s Magic Bullet (US, 1940), Dr Monica / Mary Stevens M.D. (U.S., 1933/4), The Great Moment (U.S., 1944), The Life of Louis Pasteur (U.S., 1936), Men in White (U.S., 1934).

- Bruce Babington, ‘To catch a star on your fingertips: diagnosing the medical biopic from The Story of Louis Pasteur to Freud’, in Graeme Harper & Andrew Moor, eds., Signs of Life: Medicine and Cinema (2005), 120-131

Week 4 – Learning to Talk the Talk (and Walk the Walk): Medical Education and Apprenticeship on Film [MJc]

Purpose of the Session: 1.) To consider the role-modelling processes embedded in medical apprenticeship and to examine some of the ways in which medical education has been portrayed in film;
   2.) To compare film narratives of medical education and apprenticeship with the bildungsroman genre (novels of character formation and development) in literature

Screening: Doctor in the House (U.K., 1954)


- Peter E. Dans, Doctors in the Movies (2000), 8-15
- Richard Gordon, Doctor in the House (1952; first p/b edn. 1961)

Week 5 – Face/off: tampering with identity [BG]

Purpose of Session: To examine some of the ways in which cinema has represented the face in relation to the construction of identity; and surgical adjustment thereof.

Screening: Les Yeux sans Visage (France, 1960)
Clips from La Chambre des Officiers (France, 2003), Les Yeux sans Visage (France, 1960), A Woman’s Face (U.S., 1941)

Supplementary viewing: The Face of Another (Japan, 1966), The Skin I Live In (Spain, 2011)


Week 6 – Reading Week

Screening (optional): Medical movies by auteurs: A Matter of Life and Death (U.K., 1946)

Week 7 - Discussion of Student Essay Proposals

Screening (optional): Medical movies by auteurs: Red Beard (Japan, 1965)

Week 8 – “The reel truth (and nothing but): non-fictional films, documentaries and health” [BG]

Guest speaker: Mark Kidel (director of ‘A Hospital Remembers’)

Purpose of Session: To provide a brief introduction to non-fictional and documentary genres in cinema. To consider the non-fictional and documentary cinematic representation of medicine and health. What differences - and similarities - are there between these genres and fiction films in relation to health-related subjects? In particular, are documentaries more ‘real’? If not, what kinds of mediation do they deploy?

Screening: A Hospital Remembers (France, 1999)
Clips from Sicko (U.S., 2003), Titicut Follies (U.S., 1967)


Bibliography: Tim Boon, Films of fact’ (2009, Wallflower Press),
- Brian Glasser, ‘Real lives I: A series of awakenings’, in Glasser, Medicinema (2010), 82-91
- Oliver Sacks, Awakenings (1991 Penguin p/b edn.)
Week 9 – Medicine and Unreason: Representations of Mental Illness, Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis in Fiction Films [MJC]

**Guest speaker:** Dr. Peter Byrne, U.C.L. Medical School

**Purpose of Session:** To examine changes in the ways in which mental illness, psychiatry and psychoanalysis have been portrayed in mainstream cinema since 1945 and to discuss some of the more sensitive issues raised by the portrayal of mental illness and psychiatric practice in contemporary cinema. To what extent have fiction films contributed to popular misconceptions about mental illness and to the continued stigmatization of people living with mental illness?

**Screening:** *The Snake Pit* (U.S., 1948)


Week 10 – East Meets West: Modern Medicine in New Asian Cinema [MJC]

**Purpose of Session:** To highlight some of the distinctive characteristics of the representation of modern ‘Western’ medicine in recent Asian cinema, especially the cinematic use of medicine to expose the underlying tensions and contradictions of societies undergoing rapid socio-economic modernization.

**Screening:** *Push! Push!* (S. Korea, 1996)

**Supplementary viewing:** *Dear Doctor* (Japan, 2009), *Munna Bhai M.B.B.S.* (India, 2003), * Syndromes and a Century* (Thailand, 2006)

Week 11 (28 Mar) – The Last Lesson: Death [BG]

**Purpose of Session:** To reflect upon the representations of death and dying in the cinema, with reference to limitations of medicine and the difficult choices confronting physicians in circumstances where the results of medical intervention are, at best, ambiguous and where persistence with ‘curative’ treatment may be at the expense of the patient’s dignity, well-being and quality of life.

**Screenings:** *Dark Victory* (U.S., 1940)

Clips from *The Firemen’s Ball* (Czechoslovakia, 1967), *The Flower of my Secret* (Spain, 1995)


- Bernard F Dick *Dark Victory* (1981, University of Wisconsin Press)
Select bibliography

Further Secondary Reading
- David Bordwell, Narration in the Fiction Film (London: Routledge, 1985)
- Lisa Cartwright, Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine’s Visual Culture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995)
- Pam Cook, The Cinema Book (London: British Film Institute, 2008)
- Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, ‘Rituals, conventions, archetypes and formulas: movie genres’ in The Film Experience (Boston, Mass.: Bedford/St Martin’s, 2004) 288-324
- Peter E. Dans, Doctors in the Movies (Bloomington, Indiana: Medi-Ed Press, 2000)
- Mary Anne Doane, The Desire to Desire: The Woman’s Film of the 1940s (Theories of Representation and Difference) (London: Macmillan, 1988), section on films with medical themes
- Christopher Frayling, Mad, Bad and Dangerous? The Scientist and the Cinema (London: Reaktion Books, 2005)
- Louis Giannetti, Understanding Movies (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2007)
- Brian Glasser, Medicinema: Doctors in Film (Oxford & New York: Radcliffe, 2010)
- Andrew Klevan Film Performance: from Achievement to Appreciation (London: Wallflower Press, 2005)
- Nickianne Moody & Julia Hallam (eds), Medical Fictions (1998) (Liverpool: Liverpool John Moores University)
- James Monaco, How to Read a Film: Movies, Media and Beyond (2009 rev’d. edn.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Ann Piaietta & Jean Kauppila, Health Professionals on Screen (London: Scarecrow Press, 1999)
- Aylish Wood, Technoscience in Contemporary Film (Manchester: Manchester University