



## The Media Studies Conference 2006

### Teacher-led Sessions

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#### 1. Approaches to teaching *All About My Mother* (Pedro Almodovar, 1999)

**Vivienne Clark**

*bfi Associate Tutor; Freelance Writer/Editor; Teacher Trainer and Media Education Consultant, Kent; Principal Examiner, OCR*

**Particularly relevant to:** WJEC Film FS5: World Cinema; FS4: Auteur Research Project; OCR Unit 2734: Critical Research Study

**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

The Almodovar DVD Collection offers a good opportunity to consider his films for A Level film teaching. The workshop will provide an introduction to exploring Almodovar's 1999 film, *All About My Mother*, with reference to analysis of some key scenes from the film. We will also look very briefly at the broader career of Almodovar, both as a director and, more recently, as a producer.

I will aim to consider the following: analysis of messages and values/representation; consideration of issues and debates related to a study of World cinema; suggestions for approaches to a study of Almodovar as an auteur, with brief reference to other films, and guidance on availability of further resources. It would be profitable for discussion if delegates attending could familiarise themselves with the film.

## 2. **Approaching World Cinema as a Research Topic** **Kate Gamm**

*Lecturer, Film Studies, East Surrey College, Redhill*

**Particularly relevant to:** OCR Unit 2734: Critical Research Study; WJEC Film FS4: Auteur Research Project; WJEC Film FS5: World Cinema.

**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

The session will suggest ways to encourage students to undertake research around aspects of World Cinema that broaden their perspectives on this interesting and challenging area.

Relevant case studies will be considered, which can be used with students as a starting point for further development, including:

- how to engage students in a topic that may be unfamiliar to them;
- examples of contemporary national cinemas that provide an interesting basis for research;
- ways in which students can be encouraged to define a national cinema in the context of 'World Cinema';
- the extent to which such films differ - or complement - examples from US and UK cinema;
- the key concepts that students will need to enhance their research and inform their exam answers;
- institutional issues that can be addressed as the basis of an understanding of national cinemas, e.g., a study of film distribution might address why some films reach an audience beyond their country of origin, not least in the UK;
- representation and how and why films reflect a culture at a particular time. Students can approach World Cinema through the work of a specific auteur and considering their role in reflecting their own culture, possibly at a time of social and political change;
- World Cinema as 'Art Cinema' - what are the 'alternative' characteristics of these films that separate them from the mainstream?

Kate Gamm is the author of *Teaching World Cinema* (bfi, 2004)

## 3. **Teaching New Media Technology** **Matthew Hall**

*Head of Film & Media Studies, Seven Kings High School, Ilford*

**Particularly relevant to:** Audiences and Institutions Independent Research Study – New Media Technology.

**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

Advances in technology in recent years have had a tremendous impact on all areas of the media, from cinema to newspapers. Digital technology has revolutionised the way films, TV shows, music and radio are produced; the internet has challenged existing models of how media texts are distributed; and new formats like DVD and MP3 have profoundly altered the ways in which audiences can access their chosen media, as well as their actual

experience. But to what extent are these grand statements accurate? Digital technology has been heralded as creating a media revolution - some, especially younger audiences, embrace the opportunities (some to be left disappointed by the actual capabilities of their new gadgets), while other audiences react negatively, preferring the older, more familiar technologies and the experiences they provide.

New media technology, and the issues surrounding it, can often be very intimidating for teachers. They may feel that they are not on the 'cutting edge' enough to talk with authority about this area; or they are baffled by the technical knowledge that they think they must possess to teach about technological impact. The purpose of this session is to equip teachers with information about the latest trends and debates in new media technology, and to give them ideas for guiding their students in investigating the issues. We will not be looking, in technical detail, at how the technology actually works, but rather discussing what the future holds for different media forms. We will be looking at the advantages, limitations and problems new technology can create for media institutions; at how these impact on audiences; and the extent to which digital technology is blurring the line between producer and audience, to perhaps offer users creative opportunities that haven't existed before. We will look at strategies for introducing key issues to students, and for guiding their independent research into how technology has affected media production and distribution, as well as the audience's access and experience. Little or no technical experience is needed, and though the session would be ideal for teachers new to this topic, we will also discuss the latest developments, which should be of interest to those who already have experience of teaching in this area. Those attending will be provided with worksheets and handouts suitable for use with students, as well as ideas for ensuring students' work is critically rigorous in its appraisal of the benefits and limitations new media technology has to offer.

Matthew Hall is the author of *Teaching Men and Film* (bfi, 2005)

#### 4. **Crime Film: Institution, Ideology & Auteur**

**Mark Hansard**

*Head of Media & Film Studies, Eastbury Comprehensive School, Barking*

**Particularly relevant to:** WJEC Media: ME6: Text and Context; WJEC Film: FS1: Making Meaning 1; FS4: Making Meaning 2; FS6: Critical Studies. OCR: 2730: Foundation Production; 2734: Critical Research; 2735: Media Issues and Debates. AQA: MED 2: Textual Topics in Contemporary; MED 3: Practical Production; MED 4: Texts and Contexts; MED 6: Comparative Critical.

**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

This session will use genre to explore three of the key concepts. The session will begin with a brief discussion of generic categorisation and the merits and pitfalls of undertaking such a task. Using bite size clips as part of a pedagogical approach the films under scrutiny will be *Public Enemy* and *Scarface* for institution. *Brighton Rock*, *The Blue Lamp*, *Get Carter*, *The Long Good Friday*, *Lock Stock ...* and *Layer Cake* for ideology; and finally focusing on the works of Martin Scorsese to examine the often discussed ( and equally confusing for students) auteur theory.

The section on institution will focus on the earliest days of the crime film genre, looking in particular at the beginnings of the Hollywood studio system and how it was, whilst clearly dominant, not the only way to get films produced. Ideology will tackle British texts and will investigate how dominant ideologies, particularly those of institutions in the 1940s and 1950s were both implicit and explicit in the texts. The British texts from the 70s, 80s, 90s and 00s will focus on the representation of place in crime films. The last section on Scorsese will briefly examine the auteur theory and assess his contribution to the genre. Films beyond the narrow generic description of 'crime' will be touched on.

The session will also offer useful resources and some practical suggestions for using crime films across Key Stages 4 and 5 but the focus will remain, on A Level teaching.

## 5. **A Comparative Approach to New Wave Cinema** **Steve Masters**

*Teacher, English & Film Studies, Newcastle Royal Grammar School,  
Newcastle upon Tyne*

**Particularly relevant to:** WJEC Film FS5: World Cinema  
**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

This workshop will look at the ways in which the two focus films in the FS5 New Wave option – *A Bout de Souffle* and *Chungking Express* - can be effectively compared and contrasted, and how such an approach can both illuminate the two particular films and address the broader question of what actually constitutes a new wave movement.

An overview comparison will focus on: setting and location; the relationship with Hollywood and American culture; social and political background; narrative and ambiguity; characters and actors; cinematic innovation; auteur cinema. By tapping into students' own observations and connecting them with additional contextual material particular themes can be drawn out allowing teachers to anticipate a number of possible examination topics and develop them within a holistic framework. This provides students with a richer learning experience and sets them up to write more knowledgeably about their subject. The workshop will cover the following:

- Developing close analysis of particular scenes. Using a tabulated comments sheet, students can complete detailed scene analysis so creating greater opportunities for student-initiated response, as opposed to teacher-led work. The response sheet asks students to record their thoughts in terms of editing, cinematography, sound and *mise en scène*. By focusing on key scenes such as Michel and Patricia on the Champs Elysee in *A Bout de souffle* or the reflective moment between Tony Leung's cop and Faye at the food bar in *Chungking Express*, students can observe for themselves what is new and innovative about the film-making techniques, as well as reflect upon their thematic value.
- A focus on the director-cinematographer relationship will encourage students to engage more with films and their meaning. As well as the directors I will also show clips of both cinematographers (Raoul Coutard and Chris Doyle) discussing their work and ask students to make

connections (for instance, their non film-specific backgrounds, their unorthodox methods etc).

- Pursuing a detailed commentary methodology. One of the most exciting developments in Film Studies in recent years has been the advent of the DVD audio commentary, which can be used to encourage students to undertake independent research in support of what they observe during the film's screening. They can also prepare their own, written 'detailed commentary' to accompany the film.

A comparative approach provides the platform for a thorough examination of new wave aesthetics and contexts and suggestions for support materials and resource will be made.

## 6. Teaching Advertising: Industry and Analysis

### **Rob Miller**

*Curriculum Manager: Media, Palmer's College, Essex*

**Particularly relevant to:** All Specifications

**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

This session will combine an industry approach to teaching Advertising with an audio-visual semiotic analysis of key texts, looking at Advertising as a form of mass communication. Useful contacts, links and research sources will be utilised to develop a focused approach to what can be a considerable area of study. Suggestions will be made as to what works/ doesn't work in the classroom illustrated with examples of contemporary advertising campaigns. Approaches to teaching Advertising and New Technology will also be suggested incorporating the Internet, Digital Media and Direct Marketing. A scheme of work will be available which explores the subject from both an institutional and theoretical perspective.

Advertising underpins most media forms and as such, is an industry that is ideologically, culturally, financially and politically powerful. This forms a significant rationale for the session which will look at how advertising can be studied in terms of textual analysis, audiences, institution and key areas of representation.

Key advertising agencies such as BBH, Wieden and Kennedy and DLKW will be offered as case studies, and how to make the most of key contacts within these organisations. Texts used during the session will include the Honda 'Power of Dreams' television advertising campaign; the Capital Radio 'Johnny Vaughan Breakfast Show' advertising campaign; Barnardos Print and Billboard advertising through the years, and banned advertising as a generic area of study. The session will also look at the changing role of the ASA. Issues of regulation will be illustrated with the now historical United Colours of Benneton campaign and more contemporary examples including a 50 Cent Film Poster; X Box television advertising, Marmite 'The Blob' TV advert; Wrigley's Excite Chewing Gum; and the infamous 'Sophie Dahl' Yves Saint Laurent Billboard Poster. Recent complaints to the ASA about the sound levels of advertising compared the the sound levels of the preceding programmes will also be touched upon as it relates to the concept of multichannel television, scheduling and target audiences.

Resources, contacts, links, key texts and activities will be provided. The format of the session will involve an illustrated exposition of key areas, using relevant stimulus material and hopefully will be interactive and discursive.

## 7. Practical Approaches to Practical Production

### **Daniel Moan**

*Teacher, Media and Film Studies, Hornsey School for Girls, London*

**Particularly relevant to:** AQA MED3: Practical Production; OCR 2730: Foundation Production; OCR 2733: Advanced Production; WJEC Media ME3: Making Media Texts; WJEC Film FS4: Making Meaning 2

**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

This session will deal with the challenges arising from planning practical productions within a very busy Media Studies curriculum and will be useful for teachers new to Media and Film Studies, as well as experienced teachers looking for new and innovative ways to manage and deliver media production work. It will:

- introduce different curriculum models and plans that incorporate practical production into the exam units and look at possible crossovers between exam teaching and practical productions that will helpfully fuse theory and exam preparation with the demands of media production;
- suggest ways of structuring and delivering practical components and units, which give students clear guidelines on how to use their time and resources efficiently and enable them to meet deadlines;
- offer a detailed SoW for teaching practical production which can be adapted to exam specifications. It will cover the teaching of the codes and conventions of a particular genre; ways to structure the students written responses; how to execute some of the technical challenges of media production as well as developing the evaluative skills they will need for their final written report;
- address the issue of what technical equipment (software and hardware) is required;
- include an outline of codes and conventions from possible practical productions which can be used as starting points for your planning. This will help increase the range of practical production opportunities you can give your students;
- outline a range of Practical Production Pitfalls and productions that always fail to enable students to achieve their full potential as well as productions that do not fit in with certain specification requirements;
- offer a range of practical lesson plans to help introduce some of the technical vocabulary and techniques used in the industry under the key conceptual areas of *mise en scène*, cinematography, editing and sound. This will enable students to use a wide range of media terminology as well as help structure their production planning.

Accompanying documentation will include curriculum plans, a scheme of work on a particular practical production; worksheets on production vocabulary and techniques, exemplar written work and a synopsis of all the possible practical productions that can be done with AQA, OCR and WJEC specifications.

## 8. Introduction to Teaching about Magazines

**Sean Offord**

*Senior Tutor, East Norfolk Sixth Form College, Norfolk*

**Particularly relevant to:** OCR Unit 2730: Foundation Production (pages from a new teen magazine); OCR Unit 2731: Textual Analysis (Consumerism and Lifestyle Magazines); OCR Unit 2735: Issues and Debates (The Magazine Industry). WJEC MED1: Modern Media Forms; WJEC MED3: Making Media Texts; WJEC MED5: Changing Media Industries;

**Suitable for:** New teachers.

Magazines are good to teach: they have more student appeal than newspapers and they raise a number of issues (to do with, for example, representation; the relationship between text, industry, advertising and audiences; and media 'effects') which students either have some views on already, or find relatively easy to begin to grasp. Magazines should, in theory, be an ideal focus and catalyst for exploring some important, 'politicising' media concepts with your students.

But teaching about magazines has its pitfalls. It can all too easily fall into a rather unstructured series of textual analyses informed by a vaguely feminist critique of gender representations. And when students are presented in class with a big pile of the latest magazines, it can be difficult to tear them away from the horoscopes, sex advice and true-life stories to get them thinking critically about the texts they are avidly consuming. It's a weird and vaguely shameful feeling to be asking your students to STOP READING the texts you want them to study!

I have taught about magazines at both AS and A2 and although keen to tap in to all that student enthusiasm for the texts, initially felt dissatisfied with my teaching. I've learnt the hard way to avoid the pitfalls, and to develop a coherent approach, which I'll try to share in this session.

I will focus on gendered 'lifestyle' magazines, and will examine how you can develop an analysis of them which links the texts with a number of important institutional issues, and how you can use them as a focus for exploring the relationships between media texts and the cultures which produce them, and to tackle the debates about 'media effects'. We'll look at the various theoretical positions on representations of gender and I'll explain how we get our students to use textual analysis to test out these positions, in order to arrive at their own conclusions about whether, for example, women's magazines are reactionary catalogues of gender insecurity designed to deliver women into the clutches of the body-product industry, or empowering affirmations of modern womanhood, or instead unsteady texts determined by often contradictory forces. I'll also discuss practical coursework and look at the key conventions students need to be aware of to produce successful designs for the Foundation Production.

## 9. **Playing for Today: Approaching Television Drama** **Jeremy Points**

*Subject Officer, Film and Media, WJEC, Cardiff*

**Particularly relevant to:** AQA MED2: Film and Broadcast Fiction: CCEA GCE Moving Image Arts: Unit 1 (where any text can be studied); OCR: Unit 2734: Critical Research Topic (from January 2007); WJEC Media ME6: Crime Drama part of Set Genre.

**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

You've probably noticed: something is happening to Television Drama. More and varied dramas are being commissioned for the terrestrial channels and they've got more risky. (Think of the pitch for *Life on Mars*, *Shameless* or *Lost*). And like the recently regenerated *Dr Who*, even the single play is due to make a return. Apart from that, it's being used to attract audiences to multichannel viewing; it's luring them to interact with it on broadcasters' websites; and it's part of the mobile phone video streaming experiments.

TV Drama features on all specifications in different contexts but is in many ways a broad and daunting genre to teach. I'm going to attempt to explore a variety of teaching and research approaches through contemporary British and American television drama. But I also want to reconsider, through television drama, some of the familiar media concepts. I want to ask questions about the most important aspects of genre, narrative and representation for students to study; and how best to approach audiences and production contexts. I hope this will make the session relevant to whatever Specification you and your students are following.

Jeremy Points is the author of *Teaching TV Drama* (*bfi*, 2006 forthcoming)

## 10. **Teaching Short Film** **Symon Quay**

*Course Leader, PGCE Media Studies, Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London*

**Particularly relevant to:** All Specifications that employ textual analysis of film and practical work in their assessment

**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

There are a number of good reasons for studying short film, beyond the assessment requirements of various examinations. Not least is the fact that our students' experiences of cinema is likely to be quite narrow: they are unlikely to have seen a wide range of the short films that are now available to teachers, either from 'conventional' sources such as television broadcasts, or through the new media that are emerging at the start of the twenty-first century, such as web-cinemas. Furthermore, short films use the same modes of communication as their longer-length counterparts and provide similar opportunities for textual analysis.

As practical work has developed in examination specifications, so has the need for an approach that integrates theoretical ideas with opportunities for

their creative application. Short film is ideal as a means for exploring the relationships between the 'processes' and the 'products' of film-making.

Studying the history of short film is, of course, investigating the development of the medium itself. Understanding the place of short film within 'the business', allows students to go some way towards understanding the ways in which the industry operates as a whole. The relationship between short films and feature films is a multi-dimensional and complex one. Where the feature-length movie has tended to dominate the marketplace and critical appreciation, the short film has been seen as the agent of change and experimentation.

Studying short film is a way in to exploring the state of the global industry of film production and national cinemas. Patterns of ownership and finance in different countries can be compared with types of production and cultural, ideological and economic perspectives. If Hollywood has been identified as the institution par excellence for the manufacture and distribution of the mainstream feature length film, then how have other countries countered this in the production of short films with different intentions and under differing circumstances?

In the time-pressured environments of contemporary classrooms, using short films allows students to see entire texts rather than the extracts of fuller-length texts that teachers have become accustomed to using in their various learning contexts. This session will explore how short films might be most successfully employed in the classroom. Teachers will view a number of short films and apply a variety of analytical approaches to their study. The session will also consider how students might begin to approach the practical production of their own short films.

Symon Quay is the author of *Teaching Short Film* (bfi, 2006 forthcoming)

## 11. Planning a Film Studies A Level Course

### **Allan Rowe**

*Lecturer, Film and Media Studies, Chelmsford College, Essex*

**Particularly relevant to:** WJEC Film Studies

**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

Although the A level course is clearly divided into two parts an AS year followed by an A2 year, it is better to plan for both years from the beginning. The first year of the course tends to work from the students own knowledge specifically of British and Hollywood mainstream films and the context in which they are produced, distributed and exhibited. In the second year they will be involved in seeing films beyond many students immediate film viewing experience - world cinema and subtitled films. In order to avoid this being a significant break there may be a need to explore films, which will develop the students' experience during the initial year.

Students will develop skills across the two years. The expectation will be that students will engage increasingly independent and analytical activities, for instance, in the auteur research project. The course will need to develop students learning skills in the first year and the significant shift from GCSE.

As a modular course, centres have the opportunity to enter students for individual modules in January as well as the summer. Course work although only submitted in May can be organised by the centre. Consideration will be given to the organisation of the individual years and the advantages and disadvantages for interim assessment.

Courses are designed on the basis of the knowledge and experience of the teacher and yet there is considerable space, and indeed encouragement, for the students to draw on their own interests when deciding on assessment, especially in course work. There will be discussion on the pros and cons of a student centred approach.

I will draw from my experience in teaching this specification in different institutions, as well as that of question setting, moderating and marking scripts at AS and A2. It is anticipated that other experienced teachers will be willing to share their own experience of planning and teaching this subject.

## 12. Introducing Film Language

**David Wharton**

*Subject co-ordinator: Film Studies, Gateway Sixth Form College, Leicester*

**Particularly relevant to:** WJEC Film Studies and all Media Studies Specifications

**Suitable for:** New teachers.

The set of conventions we call 'film language' is a critical element of Film Studies and Media Studies too, since much of its vocabulary is relevant not only to film but also to video and TV. Sometimes, it is suggested (by people who have never taught these subjects) that students have strong 'visual literacy'; in other words, that the concepts of film language are easier to teach than those of, say, English Literature. This would be true if we were simply teaching students to appreciate the moving image. Our task, however, is not to teach appreciation but critical analysis, and it is not always easy for students to make the leap from pleasure to dissection. The list of concepts is long, and it can be difficult for the teacher to know how to organise them or indeed where to start.

This workshop is designed primarily for those teachers who are new to delivering Film and Media, or whose academic background is not in moving image. We will look at a range of ways into introducing and developing students' understanding of film language. There will also be some exploration of strategies for building up students' written analysis skills, in preparation for tasks such as the OCR Media Studies Action Movie extract analysis or the WJEC Film Studies 'Micro'.

I will be using some classroom-friendly examples to explore basic and more advanced concepts, as well as providing useful accompanying resources. The workshop will cover various aspects of film language: the shot: *mise en scène* and framing; camera movement: pans, tilts, rolls and tracks and the edit: cuts and other transitions, ellipsis.

I will also be looking at the relationship between the nuts and bolts of moving image communication and the large-scale aspects of film language. In other

words, what do shots, movements and edits have to do with 'macro' elements such as narrative, theme, ideology, character and genre?

David Wharton is the co-author of *Teaching Analysis of Film Language* (bfi, 2005).

### 13. **Ideology Through Genre in Film or How to Unpick Messages and Values and Study Genre at the Same Time**

**Ray Wilkinson**

*Head, Media and Film Studies, St Edmund's Catholic School, Dover*

**Particularly relevant to:** WJEC Film FS1: Making Meaning 1; FS3: Messages and Values – British and Irish Cinema; OCR Unit 2735: Media Issues and Debates; AQA MED4: Texts and Contexts; BTEC Higher National Diploma, (Moving Image) Unit 1: Contextual Studies

**Suitable for:** New and experienced teachers.

As Media and Film Studies teachers we are occasionally challenged to justify the relevance of what we do and how we do it. Apart from the more obvious skills of analysis, research, communication, creativity and technology, I believe that these subjects can provide an excellent vehicle for enabling our students to develop a deeper understanding of the societal constructs within which they must operate. The ability can only be strengthened by an increased awareness of the ideologies that shape our personal attitudes and beliefs. By undertaking a study of these ideologies within film, students will be able to recognise the subtle ways in which their own value systems may be influenced, reinforced or challenged. This recognition should enable the students to appreciate the crucial concept that we are as much constructed from 'out there' as the conflation of our parents' genes. This in turn allows for an ideological re-ordering based on an increased awareness and appreciation of our world both historical and current.

Ideology is often a sticking point for students. Like representation, it is not always easy to recognise the values and messages percolating through contemporary media texts. By using film genres popular in a period beyond the students' experiences, the ideological strands presented become more readily observable. In the same ways that past cultural and artistic modes are more noticeable than current fashions, so, too, do society's attitudes and values become more apparent when viewed in an historic perspective.

The workshop will be a mixture of discussion, presentation, and screenings. The film clips will be chosen from several genres including British New Wave and Film Noir. Initial emphasis will be on the societal and historical context of the films leading to the identification of factors that represent the values and messages of not only the films themselves but also, importantly, the society and period within which the films were made.

The case studies offered will enable delegates to apply similar strategies within their teaching using films and genres of their preference that they feel will engage and motivate their students.