

JOINT SEMINAR IN FILM STUDIES

Concordia University / École Nationale Supérieure Louis-Lumière

In the context of the Memorandum of Understanding between Concordia University in Montréal and the École Nationale Supérieure Louis-Lumière in Saint-Denis, we are hosting this year an online Seminar that will meet once per month, on Fridays, from October 2023 to May 2024.

The Seminar will be held in English and is an occasion for doctoral students, faculty members and other researchers to meet and exchange ideas on current research endeavors. This year, the Seminar will be offered as an open topic forum hosted by Élise Domenach (ENS Louis-Lumière) and Martin Lefebvre (Concordia U.).

We see the seminar as an opportunity to foster discussion and exchange across different research cultures in Europe and North America, and as a meeting place for PhD students, post-docs as well as more advanced scholars and faculty members interested in current developments in the field. It will also be open to methodologies that associate theoretical research to creative processes, across the field of film studies.

Online, on Fridays 3:30pm to 5:30pm Paris time / 9:30am to 11:30am Montreal time.
Zoom links for each talk below.

Program for 2023-24 :

October 13th - Martin Lefebvre: The Aesthetic Foundation of Interpretation

<https://concordia-ca.zoom.us/j/86716594898>

The question of interpreting works of art raises several philosophical problems. First and foremost, that of the epistemic status of the interpretation: what is its purpose? What does it produce? What assurance does it offer? Can its results be verified or refuted? In what way might an interpretation be validated? And finally, if we agree that a work of art can be interpreted in different ways, does this mean that every interpretation is equal?

My task here is not to provide answers to each of these questions. Rather, I will draw on a conceptual framework, that of the semiotics of the American philosopher Charles S. Peirce, as a way of initiating a discussion capable, in my view, of providing adequate responses to these questions, beyond the various masks beneath which interpretations can present themselves to us and the various forms of knowledge they can bring into play: historical, philological, sociological, psychoanalytic, etc. I will thus present below a conception

of the interpretation of a work of the imagination, such as a fiction film, as the semiotic elucidation of an object – an elucidation whose aim is, in the first place, *affective*. And here is how we may speak of an *aesthetic* conception of interpretation.

Martin Lefebvre is the Chair of the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema. He is also Concordia University Chair in Film Studies and Professor. Since 1996 he has served as editor of *Recherches sémiotiques/Semiotic Inquiry*, the journal of the Canadian Semiotic Association. He has published widely on various topics in film theory, photography, semiotics and philosophy. Most recently he co-edited a book on special effects in cinema (with Marc Furstenau): *Special Effects on the Screen: Faking the View from Méliès to Motion Capture* (Amsterdam University Press, 2022).

November 10th – Zoë Anne Laks: A Theory of Ecological Empathy: On Representing Bodies, Networks, and Life in Climate Crisis

<https://concordia-ca.zoom.us/j/87520462005>

In this discussion, I will offer an overview of my dissertation research, specifically from my first chapter. I locate my project within the recent turn toward environmentalism in popular consciousness and media, as well as in academia with the rise of posthumanist and ecocritical scholarship. My research explores how we use empathy to think ecologically through popular twenty-first century media representations in North America.

For this talk, I will focus on how we use empathy to understand and connect with ecological networks, despite the commonplace assumption that empathy only functions when relating to individuals on a one-to-one basis. Throughout my discussion I will tease out the consequences of using empathy to connect with and place ourselves within a network. I plan to use wide-ranging media examples to demonstrate how this idea unfolds, from the TV series *Wild Canada* (Jeff Turner and Sue Turner 2014), the documentary film *Fantastic Fungi* (Louie Schwartzberg 2019), the indie video game *Everything* (David O'Reilly 2017), and the critically acclaimed film *Tree of Life* (Terrence Malick 2011). My overarching goal will be to present a theory of how “eco-empathy” is used as a form of somatic perspective-taking across these case studies and I will offer a brief overview of relevant ecocritical and empathy literature to situate this research.

Zoë Anne Laks is a doctoral student at Concordia University whose research has been funded by SSHRC and FRQSC. She is currently completing her dissertation project on ecology and empathy in film and new media. She has worked as editor-in-chief with peer-reviewed journals *Cinephile* and *Synoptique*, and she has published articles with *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, *The Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, *Cinemas*, and *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*.

January 12th - Charlie Hewison: Sensory Ethnography and Noisy Ecology`

<https://concordia-ca.zoom.us/j/85936927520>

I propose to explore the use of noise — both visual and auditory — in film, audio and photographic works as related to the work of the Sensory Ethnography Lab. Following information theory, I define noise as the persistent intervention of the environment into our sensory experience. The works of the Sensory Ethnography Lab, especially that of Lucien Castaing-Taylor, Verena Paravel and Ernst Karel, which seek to investigate and represent sensory experience, give much place to noise as that which escapes discursive explanation. I will thus use them as an example of ways in which noise in art can be utilized as an ecocritical tool, and as a new approach to exploring our non-discursive relationships to the environment which surrounds us.

Charlie Hewison is a researcher and lecturer in film studies at Université Paris Nanterre and Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle. His research interests include contemporary experimental photochemical film practices, ecocriticism and new materialism. He recently co-edited *Ecocritiques. Cinéma, audiovisuel, arts* (Paris, Hermann, 2023), and co-organized the international conference *Cinematerialisms: New Materialist Approaches to the Audiovisual*. Charlie is also a member of the Light Cone selection committee, and programs experimental films, music and art in Paris with the association he co-founded with Line Gigs, Détail.

Feb 2nd – Aline Wiame et Sophie Lécole-Solnychkine : Imaging (Against) the End: How Pictures Can Reinforce or Counteract the Collapse of Our Worlds

<https://concordia-ca.zoom.us/j/89174810426>

In this joint session, we will inquire into the various ways cinema figures the end of the world (be it through global nuclear annihilation in American cinema of the 1950s or through climate anxiety in contemporary [post]apocalyptic fictions), wagering that questioning the bewildering effects of apocalyptic pictures through the singular lens of the aesthetics of cinema allows for a more nuanced and (re)generative account of what pictures can do and which affects they can produce. We will focus both on the transhistorical character of the end of the world in cinematographic iconology and on the aesthetic questions it raises about the very essence of the medium, eventually arguing for a typology of images according to their abilities to knit together or else destroy worlds.

Sophie Lécole Solnychkine is Associate Professor with HDR in Aesthetics at the Université de Toulouse – Jean Jaurès. She teaches philosophy of art, general aesthetics and aesthetics of cinema. She is also Head of the Département d'arts plastiques et de design. Her two last published books are *Æsthetica antarctica. The Thing de John Carpenter* (Rouge Profond, 2019), and *Dans la boue des images* (Mimesis, 2023).

Aline Wiame is Associate Professor of Arts and Philosophy at the Université Toulouse – Jean Jaurès and a member of the Institut Universitaire de France. Her main research areas are contemporary French philosophy, American pragmatism, and ecological humanities. She has published one monograph in French (*Scènes de la défiguration*, Les Presses du réel, 2016) and numerous articles in French and English. Her new monograph, *Revenir d'entre les morts*.

Deleuze et la croyance en ce monde au cinéma et dans les séries, is forthcoming in 2024 at Les Presses du réel.

March 22nd – Théo Guidarelli : Editing the utopian “cristal of time” in Robin Campillo’s *120 BPM*

<https://concordia-ca.zoom.us/j/82153910294>

Focusing on editing, this lecture will analyze how Robin Campillo’s *120BPM* immortalizes in its own way the Marcusean utopia of a society freed from erotic repression. Blurring the chronological approach and the limits between individual and collective moments, the editing style creates among the Act-Up community a sense of “kinstillation”, a constellation of beings animated by a sense of mutual reciprocity and relatedness, to face up the evidence of death during the disastrous AIDS-era.

Théo Guidarelli is a PhD student at the Sorbonne-Nouvelle University. He is working on contemporary French queer cinema under the direction of Laurent Jullier and Nick Rees-Roberts.

May 3rd - Natacha Pfeiffer : On the Edge of Pictures. A Philosophy of the Moving Frame

<https://concordia-ca.zoom.us/j/85011440779>

Going beyond the parameters of the classical pictorial dispositive while operating a shift from painting to Hollywood silent cinema, I aim in this paper to tackle the concept of the frame. To this end, an analysis of films by Victor Sjöström, Buster Keaton, D. W. Griffith, Cecil B. DeMille, and Frank Borzage will help me question both images and their creation. Investigating the notions of “origin” and “repetition” as embodied by the classical frame, I seek ultimately to build a theory of the temporality of images.

Natacha Pfeiffer holds a PhD in philosophy from Saint-Louis University in Brussels, and is currently a lecturer in aesthetics and contemporary philosophy at the Université libre de Bruxelles and the École de recherche graphique. She is the author of *Au bord des images. Pour une philosophie du cadre* (Paris, Mimesis, 2023).

