

Filming Aotearoa/New Zealand: National Cinema & Post-Coloniality

(LTCS 172GS)

“Filming Aotearoa/New Zealand” (LTCS 172GS) would focus on the history and development of New Zealand’s national film industry, with attention to indigenous Māori filmmaking. The course would pair work such as Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* and more mainstream New Zealand films like *The Piano* (Jane Campion), with post-colonial theory such as Partha Chatterjee’s *The Nation & Its Fragments* and excerpts from Māori filmmaker Barry Barclay’s *Our Own Image* (including his concept of a Fourth Cinema). Making distinct use of the city of Auckland and its position in the New Zealand film industry, we would plan to visit the Hobbiton, Auckland Film Studios, and explore filming locations that are sites of global productions such as *King Kong* and *Lord of the Rings*. Through reading theoretical texts, delving into the works of New Zealand filmmakers such as Campion and Taika Waititi, studio tours, and learning about New Zealand’s film history, this course would explore national film at the nexus national identity, colonization, indigenous filmmaking and activism, and globalization.

Course Goals:

- Develop critical and close reading analysis skills, especially in reference to questions of genre and genre conventions of the New Zealand and Māori national cinemas.
- Understand the historical, social, and political contexts for the emergence of differing genres and styles of filmmaking.
- Understand the concept of nation, its history, and critiques of national formation (especially as this concept relates to film and television production and reception)
- Read and apply film theory in appropriate and productive ways, including being able to understand and critique theories of nations and nationalism.

Class Meetings:

9am-11am, Mon-Wed in our classroom

Assignments:

Reading Annotations + Observations (5 total, 3% each = 20%): See prompt on Canvas.

Participation (20%): Students will be graded on how they participate in class (whether they are prepared, attentive, and engaged in the course discussions). Students will also bring daily discussion questions based on the reading and screenings. Participation also includes excursions and engagement on-site during field trips. We will develop a participation rubric together during the first few days of class and you will use this to assess your own participation.

Reflection Papers (2 total; 10% each = 20%, Graded Complete/Incomplete): Each week students will write short response papers that synthesize the week's screenings and readings. Individual prompts for these papers are on the course calendar below (Word count 400-500 words)

Final Paper (40%, Graded): Revise & Expand one of your earlier responses into a longer paper. The goal for this paper is to reflect on what you've learned over the course of the term and weave together readings, films, and excursions around a central theme. You will incorporate additional information from the course—1 additional reading, 1 additional screening, and 1 excursion—to reflect on a specific theme/idea/question that emerged for you during the course. The paper should have a clear and coherent thematic center (it could be an argument!) and synthesize the course material around that idea. You can also approach this as a more lengthy reflection about what you learned on a particular topic and how the course has shaped your understanding of that idea. I will be looking for a central theme, clear paragraph structure (AXES model), and revision from the previous draft. (Word count: 600-800 words).

Course Calendar

1. Course calendar subject to change. I will never add readings or screenings, but may swap things out as we go. Please make sure you refresh this doc before starting in on the weekly tasks.
2. We will likely go outside, take walks (possibly a hike) during this course. Dress accordingly! And, please pack snacks and lunch on Mon-Wed.
3. All the screenings in the course are available on course reserves, via Canvas. (Login with active directory info).
4. Readings are linked below as PDFs or html links.
5. *Please note that many of the films and TV shows we watch will contain violence and sex. We will also discuss some disturbing topics.*

Week 1: What is a nation? An Intro to New Zealand's National Cinema

Monday (July 3): IFSA Orientation, 9-11am

Read [History of New Zealand Filmmaking](#)

Tuesday (July 4): Read: [Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Intro](#) (Excerpt)

After class: Walk to Auckland Museum & Maori Cultural Performance (Optional) & Welcome Dinner!

Wednesday (July 5): Read: BRENDAN HOKOWHITU AND VIJAY DEVADAS [The Fourth Eye](#), "Introduction"

Reading Annotations + Observation #1 Due

Watch: pick Films from [here](#) and recommended: *Merata Mita* (Netflix)

Thursday (July 6): Weta Workshop Unleashed (Excursion)

Watch: *Heavenly Creatures* (1994)

(fyi HC discusses suicidal ideation and depicts homophobia)

Week 2: Māori Filmmaking

Monday (July 10) : Barry Barclay, “[An Open Letter to John Barnett](#)” & “[Theorizing Indigenous Media \(Chpt. 6 Fourth Eye\)](#)”

(Clips *Whale Rider* (2002))

Reading Annotations + Observation #2 Due (choose which reading you annotate)

Tuesday (July 11): Watch: *Once Were Warriors* (1994) OR [Merata](#) (2019)

*fyi this film is also really disturbing (sexual violence, suicide, police violence, etc.)

Wednesday (July 12): 9am Screen Auckland, Matt Horricks

Thursday (July 13): Free!

Friday (July 14): Rangitoto Island – Scenic Reserve (Excursion)

Reflection #1 by 11:59pm on Friday:

Part 1 (200-300 words): Use one of the readings from Week 1 or 2 to think through *Once Were Warriors*. What connections do you see between your chosen reading and the film? How does the reading help shape your understanding of the film?

Part 2 (200-300 words): Reflect on the Weta Workshop and/or Screen Auckland’s Guest Lecturer—what connections did you see between those experiences and the films and readings on the syllabus? Be specific in your response! (i.e. choose a reading or screening to focus on)

Part 3 (50-100 words): Reflect on your participation in this class. How did it go? And, what do you want to work on next week? What grade would you give yourself for participation this week? How did the week go for you in general—emotionally, physically, sleep-wise, budgeting, etc.?

Week 3: NZ Auteurs, Part I: Jane Campion

Monday (July 17): Richard Brody, “[Andrew Sarris & the A word](#)” & Recommended: Pauline Kael, “[Circles & Squares](#)”

Reading Annotations + Observation #3

Tuesday (July 18): *The Piano* (1993)

Recommended: [bell hooks on The Piano](#)

Wednesday (July 19): *Top of the Lake* (2013-2017), Pilot

Thursday (July 20): Day Off to Prep for Weekend Excursion!

Recommended: Watch: *Lord of the Rings* (2001)

Friday (July 21)-Sunday (July 23): Depart Auckland, travel to Hobbiton Movie Set (Tour), Polynesian Spa, and Mitai Māori Village

Week 4: NZ Auteurs, Part II: Taika Waititi

Monday (July 24) (start 10am): [Alistair Fox](#) “PARENTAL ABANDONMENT AND THE TRAUMA OF LOSS: BOY” (pp. 189-202) (course reserves)
Reading Annotations + Observation #4 Due

Tuesday (July 25): Watch: *Boy* (2010)

Wednesday (July 26): Watch: *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (2016)

10am Guest: Lanita Ririnui, Executive Director – Nga Aho Whakaari Māori in Screen

Thursday (July 27): Excursion to **Film Locations:** Visit to Waitakere Ranges and Karekare Beach (filming locations for *Hunt for Wilderpeople* and *The Piano*)

Response #2 by 11:59pm on Friday (July 28)

Part 1: (200-300 words): For this reflection, consider the theory of authorship and its potential limitations/critiques in reference to either *Campion* OR *Waititi*. What patterns did you notice in their work? It is part of a recognizable style? Can you connect either to some of the earlier frameworks and readings about nationalism? (If so, how?)

Part 2 (200-300 words): : How did visiting and learning about the filming locations shape your understanding of either *The Piano* OR *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*? OR Reflect on this week’s guest lecture—how did this lecture help shape your understanding of *Waititi’s* filmmaking and **Māori filmmaking in NZ?**

Part 3 (50-100 words): Reflect on your participation in this class. How did it go? And, what do you want to work on next week? What grade would you give yourself for participation this week?

Week 5: Diaspora & Global Film Production & Reception

Monday (July 31): [Sarina Pearson](#), “[Persistent Primitivisms](#)”

Reading Annotations + Observation #5 Due

Tuesday (Aug 1): Watch: *My Wedding and Other Secrets* → available on TVNZ (you have to create an account but it is free)

Recommended: <https://www.roseanneliang.com/banana-in-a-nutshell>

Guest: Dr Sarina Pearson, 11am

Wednesday (Aug 2): Class on Ferry to Waiheke Island (Meet at Ferry at 10am)

Recommended: *Creamerie*, Pilot (2022) on TVNZ

Thursday (August 3): Free Day! Skytower Dinner.

Friday (Aug 4): Synthesis Paper Due by 11:59pm

Revise & Expand one of your earlier responses into a longer paper. The goal for this paper is to reflect on what you've learned over the course of the term and weave together readings, films, and excursions around a central theme that has to do with the film course.

You will incorporate additional information from the course—1 additional reading, 1 additional screening, and 1 excursion—to reflect on a specific theme/idea/question that emerged for you during the course. The paper should have a clear and coherent thematic center (it could be an argument!) and synthesize the course material around that idea. You can also approach this as a more lengthy reflection about what you learned on a particular topic and how the course has shaped your understanding of that idea. I will be looking for a central theme, clear paragraph structure (AXES model), and revision from the previous draft. (Word count: 600-800 words).

Recommended Readings:

[“ASSERTING FEMINIST CLAIMS WITHIN MĀORI CULTURE: WHALE RIDER \(Nicki Caro, 2002\) \(pp. 148-160\)](#)