Narrative Complexity in Contemporary Cinema

Semester 4

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Course hours: By appointment

The course examines the multiple interpretations of contemporary films, which are characterized by complex narratives. These narratives often involve complex plots that are not linear (e.g., Memento), as well as those that are fragmented (e.g., Existential) and those that are non-linear (e.g., Zola literature). This phenomenon is called narrative complexity, which is a characteristic feature of modern cinema. The course explores this complexity in various film genres, such as puzzle films (e.g., Run Lola Run) and those that are based on the principle of multiple endings (e.g., SubStance 31.1). The course aims to analyze the cognitive processes of the audience, who are encouraged to engage in circular thinking and optional thinking, which are phenomena that have been proposed to explain the possibilities of their influences and other thoughts.

Literature:


Course Description: Many contemporary popular films evidence a narrative complexity that meaningfully diverges from the linear plotline that leads to a closure answering all issues raised in the movie. These films offer labyrinth structures (e.g. eXistenZ), forking path structures (e.g. Sliding Doors), illogical structures (e.g. Mulholland Drive), incompatible structures (e.g. Pulp Fiction), misleading structures (e.g. The Sixth Sense), complex time structures (e.g. Inception) or reversed time structures (e.g. Memento). This contemporary narrative complexity has been termed modular (Cameron), puzzle (Buckland), mind game (Elsaesser), complex (Simons), multi-draft (Brannigan), forking path (Bordwell) or data-based narratives (Kinder). In the seminar we will analyze these peculiar structures in key films, decipher the cognitive processes encouraged in viewers (loopy thinking or optional thinking) and consider suggested contextual reasons for this development (e.g. the digital revolution, postmodernism and globalization).