

Module code: MOD000337	Version: 4 Date Amended: 20/Jan/2025
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1. Module Title
Independent Cinema: US and Beyond

2a. Module Leader
Neil Henderson

2b. School
Cambridge School of the Creative Industries

2c. Faculty
Faculty of Arts, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences

3a. Level
5

3b. Module Type
Standard (fine graded)

4a. Credits
15

4b. Study Hours
150

5. Restrictions			
Type	Module Code	Module Name	Condition
Pre-requisites:	None		
Co-requisites:	None		
Exclusions:	None		
Courses to which this module is restricted:	None		

LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

6a. Module Description

This module allows for critical study of cinema cultures and contexts, with a particular focus on the development, features and impact of independent cinema in the US and beyond. Alongside a close study of a number of key films, you will consider areas such as the financing and promotion of independent film-making. You will investigate how and why certain directors choose to work outside the protective infrastructures and high budgets provided by a studio system.

You will look at how, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, US-based film-makers such as John Sayles, Jim Jarmusch, Joel Coen, Shirley Clarke, Barbara Loden and others drew on cinematic influences from around the world and developed their own brand of auteur film-making. An address is then made to the influence of this seminal period of independent cinema on later international film-makers, such as Quentin Tarantino, Gregg Araki, Vincent Gallo and Lukas Moodysson. The development and importance of Awards ceremonies and Film Festivals, both mainstream and fringe, is critically explored and you will be required to present your research on specific events in seminars.

Attention is drawn to the way in which such events provide showcasing opportunities for 'peripheral' cinema, allowing independent filmmakers to benefit from many of the promotional and distribution possibilities of globalization.

You will critically examine the role of independent distribution companies. Industry guest speakers and visits to venues and events will encourage further discussion on the status and characteristics of independent filmmaking. The module emphasizes the professional and vocational contexts and practices of a range of film and cinematic industries and agents and thus affords opportunities for you to develop employability skills and understandings.

6b. Outline Content

- Definition, development, features and impact of independent cinema;
- Close study of aesthetic innovations (narrative, genre, cinematography and sound) of seminal independent films and film-makers;
- Critical exploration of issues such as shaping and articulation of issues of cultural identity in independent cinema;
- Consideration of industrial strategies: finance, distribution and promotion in particular;
- Critical discussion of awards ceremonies and film festivals, and presentation of research on specific events and organizations in seminars;
- Preparation of critical essay;
- Oral seminar presentation.

6c. Key Texts/Literature

The reading list to support this module is available at: <https://readinglists.aru.ac.uk/>

6d. Specialist Learning Resources

Seminar rooms with DVD/VCR screening facilities.

7. Learning Outcomes (threshold standards)		
No.	Type	On successful completion of this module the student will be expected to be able to:
1	Knowledge and Understanding	Engage critically, through reading, writing, viewing and discussion, in appropriate debates on the development and features of independent cinema;
2	Knowledge and Understanding	Demonstrate critical understanding of the role played by production, distribution and marketing in the development of independent cinema;
3	Knowledge and Understanding	Critically evaluate a range of independent films and film-makers, with an address to the range of influences from diverse cinematic cultures;
4	Knowledge and Understanding	Distinguish and evaluate the relationships between awards ceremonies, film festivals, and independent cinema.

8a. Module Occurrence to which this MDF Refers				
Year	Occurrence	Period	Location	Mode of Delivery
2026/7	ZZF	Template For Face To Face Learning Delivery		Face to Face

8b. Learning Activities for the above Module Occurrence			
Learning Activities	Hours	Learning Outcomes	Details of Duration, frequency and other comments
Lectures	0	None	None
Other teacher managed learning	24	1-4	2 hour seminar each week
Student managed learning	126	1-4	Hours of independent viewing, research and preparation of assignments
TOTAL:	150		

9. Assessment for the above Module Occurrence					
Assessment No.	Assessment Method	Learning Outcomes	Weighting (%)	Fine Grade or Pass/Fail	Qualifying Mark (%)
010	Coursework	1-4	80 (%)	Fine Grade	30 (%)
Critical Essay: 2500 words End of semester submission					
Assessment No.	Assessment Method	Learning Outcomes	Weighting (%)	Fine Grade or Pass/Fail	Qualifying Mark (%)
011	Practical	1-3	20 (%)	Fine Grade	30 (%)
Seminar Presentation: 10 minutes Weeks 9 and 10					

In order to pass this module, students are required to achieve an overall mark of 40% (for modules at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6) or 50% (for modules at level 7*).

In addition, students are required to:

- (a) achieve the qualifying mark for each element of fine graded assessment as specified above
- (b) pass any pass/fail elements

[* the pass mark of 50% applies for all module occurrences from the academic year 2024/25 – see Section 3a of this MDF to check the level of the module and Section 8a of this MDF to check the academic year]