

HL 3002 FILM, POLITICS, ETHICS

Module lecturer: Professor C. J. W.-L. Wee

Semester I, 2025–2026 – August 2025

Tuesdays, 0930-1230 hours, HSS Seminar Room 6

The 1960's *counterculture* refers to an anti-establishment cultural phenomenon that developed first in Great Britain and the USA, spreading throughout much of the Western world to the mid-1970s – with London, New York City and San Francisco being hotbeds of early activity – and to other locales such as Japan. There is a link between *more developed societies* and the desire to challenge its very successes. The aggregate movement gained momentum as the Civil Rights Movement grew in the US and the movement expanded with the military intervention in Vietnam. This movement often was not political in conventional party politics. As the 1960s progressed, social tensions developed concerning other issues and tended to flow among youth and young adults and affected much of US and other societies. This module explores the following concerns: (1) cultural dissent from established values, including pacifist, anti-war attitudes; (2) race; (3) sexual liberation (women's roles, sexuality, sexual and gender identity); (4) hedonism, 'pop' consumption and psychoactive drugs. The issues can and do overlap in the module's films.

This module is *not* about the counterculture per se but introduces students to the impact of the socio-cultural changes of the 1960s on cinematic production in the USA, Britain and Japan.

- (1) The 'ethics' in this module relates to the moral, social and political principles that govern a person's behaviour and how older social norms become challenged in the process. The counterculture was instrumental in providing era-relevant content and for the film industry.
- (2) **Some of the films in HL3002 are *experimental and difficult*.** They are *Performance*, *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* and *Funeral Parade of the Roses*. In Japan, although not an organised movement, the so-called New Wave filmmakers were linked by their rejection of classical cinematic form. Many engaged with the social and political upheavals of the era, undertaking radical experiments with editing, visual style and narrative. This module deals with such developments, mainly with the Japanese avant-garde films. Japan is included so that students will *not* take Anglo-American norms as universal.

Central skills for the module:

1. Developing close-reading skills for the films
2. Students are expected to engage with *both* the content *and* the forms that the films take.

Note: While the secondary readings suggested are for students' discretionary use, note that *historical context* is vital for understanding the films.

Core material:

Required films/texts to be acquired/purchased by students. **Plan in advance for yourself, especially if you do *not* wish to watch them at the libraries.** The Japanese films are harder to find *illegally* though they are available for purchase. DVDs will be available in the Chinese Library AV reserves for 4-hour slots):

US films:

- Mike Nichols (dir.), *The Graduate* (1967) – PS3573.E195G733 1999
- Arthur Penn (dir.), *Alice's Restaurant* (1969) – PN1995.9 W61398
- John Schlesinger (dir.), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) – PN1995.9 P76M629
- Stanley Kramer (dir.), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) – PN1995.9.M3G936

British films:

- John Schlesinger (dir.), *Darling* (1965) – PN1995.9 D221

- Lewis Gilbert (dir.), *Alfie* (1966) – PN1995.9.M27A387
- Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg (dirs.), *Performance* (1968, released 1970) – PN1995.9 G3P438 2007

Japanese films:

- ŌSHIMA Nagisa (dir.), *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* (*Shinjuku Dorobō Nikki*, 1968) – HV6665.J3S556
- MATSUMOTO Toshio (dir.), *Funeral Parade of Roses* (*Bara no Sōretsu*, 1969) – PN1995.9 T69F981

Readings:

Core Readings

- Russell Duncan. 'The Summer of Love and Protest: Transatlantic Counterculture in the 1960s.' In *The Transatlantic Sixties: Europe and the United States in the Counterculture Decade*, ed. Grzegorz Kość, Clara Juncker, Sharon Monteith and Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013. E846.T772.
- Selection from John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts. 'Subcultures, Cultures and Class.' In *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, 2nd edn, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, pp.3-4, 45-59 (Intro. & sections on 'Rise of the Counter-Cultures' and 'The Social Reaction to Youth'; but can focus on pp.45-56 in particular). HQ799.G7R433.

Introduction to British film:

- Online: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-16%2B-source-guides-1960s-british-cinema-2000.pdf>
- Online: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/lists/10-great-films-set-swinging-60s>
- Robert Murphy. *Sixties British Cinema*. London: BFI [British Film Institute], 1992. PN1993.5.G7M978

Introduction to US film:

- Barry Keith Grant (ed.). *American Cinema of the 1960s: Themes and Variations*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008; relevant parts.

Introduction to the Japanese avant garde:

- OGURA Eiji. 'Japan's 1968: A Collective Reaction to Rapid Economic Growth in an Age of Turmoil', trans. Kyoko Selden. *The Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 13, issue 12, no. 1 (2015). <https://apjjf.org/2015/13/11/Oguma-Eiji/4300.html> **
- Taro Nettleton. 'Shinjuku as Site: *Funeral Parade of Roses* and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*.' *Screen* 55, no. 1 (2014): 5–28. Obtain from e-journals section of NTU library. **
- UCHINO Tadashi, 'Misperforming and the Everyday: *Shinjuku Dorobō Nikki* (*Shinjuku Thief's Diary*)', conference paper, 2009. **
- Yuriko FURUHATA. *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-Garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013; relevant parts.
- Stephen Barber. 'Tokyo 1969: Revolutionary Image Thieves in a Disintegrating City.' *Senses of Cinema* no. 69 (2013) (Essay on both Ōshima and Matsumoto): <http://sensesofcinema.com/2013/feature-articles/tokyo-1969-revolutionary-image-thieves-in-a-disintegrating-city/>

KEY: ** Required reading for the relevant class.

Note: Search online for reviews of the films; there will be many.

Weekly Schedule:

	Topic
Week 1 12 August	Introduction The 1960s, the counterculture, film
Week 2 19 August	<i>Material for discussion:</i> Duncan, 'The Summer of Love', and Clarke et al., 'Subcultures, Culture and Class'. The social context of and the issues in the 1960s. <u>NOTE:</u> These are background readings and will illuminate <i>some</i> of what transpires to varying degrees with the films. <i>Do not</i> assume that each film deals with <i>all</i> that raised in this session. It is important to learn to use background/contextual sensibly, especially for when you write longer essays (e.g., the FYP): the authors are <i>not</i> trying to 'illustrate' the films.
Week 3 26 August	Penn (dir.), <i>Alice's Restaurant</i> (1969) Mainstream America and the counter-culture
Week 4 2 Sept	Nichols (dir.), <i>The Graduate</i> (1967) Love and bourgeois/establishment values
Week 5 9 Sept	Schlesinger (dir.), <i>Midnight Cowboy</i> (1969) Love, gender identity and alternative friendship among the underclass in the metropolitan centre
Week 6 16 Sept	Kramer (dir.), <i>Guess Who's Coming to Dinner</i> (1967) Love and inter-racial relationships – and the blind spots of liberalism and tolerant people
Week 7 23 Sept	Schlesinger (dir.), <i>Darling</i> (1965) Swinging London and the opportunities for a young woman
30 Sept	RECESS WEEK
Week 8 7 Oct	Gilbert (dir.), <i>Alfie</i> (1966) Swinging London and the dark side of male promiscuity
Week 9 14 Oct	Cammell and Roeg (dirs.), <i>Performance</i> (1968, released 1970) Pop culture and crime
Friday, 17 October	Suggested essay topics on US and British film to be released.

	Some suggestions may be made for the Japanese films – <i>only</i> if students feel adventurous as <i>no</i> advanced support for the Japanese films is possible. You may simply use the Japanese questions to aid your exam preparation.
Week 10 21 Oct	<p><i>Required reading:</i> 1) essential background to politics in the films, Ogura, ‘Japan’s 1968’; 2) Uchino, ‘Performing’ (for <i>Diary</i>); Nettleton, ‘Shinjuku as Site’ (for <i>Diary</i> and <i>Funeral Parade</i>)</p> <p>Ōshima (dir.), <i>Diary of a Shinjuku Thief</i> (<i>Shinjuku Dorobō Nikki</i>, 1968)</p> <p>Sexual freedom and revolution</p>
Week 11 28 Oct	<p>Ōshima, cont’d.</p> <p>Matsumoto (dir.), <i>Funeral Parade of Roses</i> (<i>Bara no Sōretsu</i>, 1969)</p> <p>Gender, alternative identity and patriarchy</p>
Friday, 31 October	<p>ESSAY DUE</p> <p>Both hard and soft copies – by 4pm</p>
Week 12 4 Nov	Matsumoto, cont’d
Week 13 11 Nov	Overview

Method of instruction and small-group seating requirement:

1. Three-hour seminar with one break
2. Seminars will generally, with some exceptions, follow this format: (1) student presentation and Q&A immediately; (2) general discussion of the material; (3) break of about 15 minutes; and (4) small-group discussion.
3. Students will be required to sit in *discussion small groups of about 5 students* for the semester. A list will be confirmed by the second week, once class registration stabilises. Learning to have strong conversations with people you know less well is a vital life-long skill that will enter the working and practical world.

Mode of Assessment:

Group presentation; final assignment; and final examination.

Breakdown:

- Essay assignment: US and British Films (1,500 to max.1,800-word essay) 35%*
- In-class, group presentation at start of class 15%**
- Final examination 50%***

Key:

* *Word limit:* Inclusive of notes and references. *Adhere to word limit. Penalties will incur otherwise.*

** *Presentation format:* a maximum of twenty-five (25) mins. **Penalties will incur thereafter.** Offer a pared-down overview of the material: (1) *central* ideas/themes, to help focus the discussion; and (2) your critical responses to the film/readings.

Note: Groups must meet lecturer for a short meeting (20 mins.) to discuss their proposed outline of presentation material.

*** *Exam format*: Three (3) questions to be answered. Section A: Two (2) questions from a section on US and British films. Material used for essays can be repeated. Expect comparative questions and single text questions. Section B: One (1) question dealing with Japanese film. Expect comparative and single questions. General: There will be some choice in both sections. Films used for one question *cannot* be repeated in another question.

Contact Policy

- My email is cjwlwee@ntu.edu.sg
- In many ways, the question after class meetings is efficient, I find.
- Consultations, by appointment, will last between 15 to 20 minutes. Do note that individual tutorials should not be expected: that is unfair to other students. Come in with a specific topic.
- No email should be sent after 5.30pm on weekdays and none on weekends. In general, expecting rapid responses from any lecturer in NTU is unrealistic – speak to me after class for that.

Plagiarism Policy

Both faculty and students in NTU are responsible for upholding the values of academic integrity in all academic undertakings. You must understand that all graded and non-graded work throughout the semester is original and is created without assistance from others except where explicitly allowed by the module lecturer. **Serious penalties will result for breach of academic integrity.**

- A guide to academic integrity can be found here:
<http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/ForEveryone/pages/aguidetoacademicintegrity.aspx>
- The full academic integrity policy can be found here:
<http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/ForEveryone/Pages/NTUAcademicIntegrityPolicy.aspx>
- **Generative AI Policy**: Generative AI, such as ChatGPT, *cannot* be used for any of your assignments. Such usage impairs the ability to construct large arguments. That skill is essential to develop independent critical thinking.

The assumption is that you have read and understood the responsibilities of a student in a serious course of university study.

Suggested Secondary Reading:

(Explore and supplement the readings offered with your own selection. You are not confined to this short list, nor are you required to read everything on this list. There is a fair amount of good material that can be found online – but Wiki is not acceptable.)

General introduction to the 1960s:

Lytle, Mark H. *America's Uncivil Wars: The Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006 – E839.L996 (HSS Library).

Miles, Barry. *In the Sixties*. London: Rocket 88 Books, 2017 – DA589.4 M643 (HSS Library).

British and US film readings:

Cowie, Peter. *Revolution! The Explosion of World Cinema in the Sixties*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2004 – PN1993.5 A1C874r (WKWSC Library).

Japanese film readings:

David Desser. *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema: Introduction to Japanese New Wave Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988 – PN1995.3 J3D475 (ADM Library).