THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Course Title: Research in Sound and Screen

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
PSMI105		2025-26

Course Title	Research in Sound and Screen
Course Contact	Dr. Jessica Argo

Credits	20
SCQF Level	11
When Taught	Semester 1

Associated Programmes	MDes Sound for the Moving Image
Lead School	School of Simulation and Visualisation
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	PACAAG April 2024

Course Introduction

The Research in Sound and Screen course introduces students to core research skills, spotlighting materials which are relevant to their subject domain, Sound for Moving Image. The core research skills taught include:

- research project proposal writing
- peer-directed presentation delivery (for formative feedback)
- protocols for ethical approval
- the students' identification of appropriate research methods to answer their own devised research questions.

The course prepares students to ethically plan an research project, as they deliver a proposal template similar to the one required for the self-directed masters project in semester three.

The course 'Research in Sound and Screen will break down the anatomy of the soundtrack - voice music, sound effects and ambiences - exploring these elements in relation to the visual mise-en-scene and editing, showing how screen media can tell a story, beyond relying on only the words that the characters speak.

Running through the course is a focus on theories of affect as we explore how visual media can move us both physically and emotionally, particularly with works exploring gender, spectatorship and psychoanalysis.

The students watch and analyse a series of feature-length films, or engage with other screen media, that demonstrate an exemplary technique or explore a complex critical theory, guided by the tutor's analysis questions. After this, the students conduct a contextual and critical analysis of an academic text about this work, and then in class they discuss the tutor's lecture video themes and share their own analysis. Students learn how to make their own works accessible for audiences with sensory impairments and navigate complex issues of representation in cinema throughout history, so they can implement principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in their research.

The assessment format allows students to choose between a text-only project (if a student has a particularly complex literature review in their research project proposal) or a shoot their own short film, accompanied by a shorter research project proposal (if a student wishes to apply the theories in their practice).

The broad aims of the course are to:
- Provide students with opportunities to critically develop disciplinary research methods;
- Enable students to autonomously design their own research project with a critical grounding in appropriate research methods for working with sound and moving image
- Provide students with a rigorous understanding of research ethics as relevant to their research and practice;
- Facilitate critical reflection on the relationships between forms of research and modes of practice in order to encourage robust and /or innovative applications of existing methods.

This course aims to inspire students' creativity in their own practice, and also encourages them to think critically about the construction of screen media, and how fiction can transmit a director or studio's ideology, potentially influencing audiences' behaviour and beliefs about society in the real world. Teaching about developments in audio-visual technology is also paramount, as we understand how the genre of a work can be affirmed by sophistication of distribution systems.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:
- Demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in research in sound and screen in the development of a research project proposal.
- Demonstrate an understanding of ethical practices in sound and screen research and/or creative practice
- Demonstrate an understanding of a range of relevant research methods, e.g. interviewing, surveys, critical analysis, critiquing existing films using established analytical lenses, for research in sound and screen.

Indicative Content

This course begins by explaining the building blocks of screen media, such as: the synchronisation of separate sound and image tracks; the construction of a narrative through devising of a story and plotting story events beyond chronological order; variations in editing from realist long takes in Classical Hollywood to rapid Soviet Montage; the building of mise-en-scene (from props, sets, make-up, costume, to facial expressions of actors). After these building blocks of screen media are understood, the students then learn about the more complex sociological theories such as gender, spectatorship and psychoanalysis. There is also fundamental teaching on communication in sound and screen, as well as ethics in creative disciplines.

These are the key lecture themes:
- Synchronization & Silent Cinema
- Narrative
- Mise-en-Scene
- Communicating about Screen and Sound (Presentation skills)
- Editing

- Authorship Race and Representation
- Genre (and relationship to technology)
- Gender, Spectatorship and Psychoanalysis
- What is Ethics? Ethics, research methods, and creative disciplines

Examples of student projects could be:
- a short self-shot film where a student with a research proposal exploring e.g. historical uses of rapid editing for propaganda.
- A text-only research project proposal with an extended literature review on a chosen subject, e.g. 1970s Slow Feminist Filmmaking

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

This course works on a flipped learning model – to allow all contact time on GSA campus to be discussion based, connected teaching.

There are several feature-films* each of which students should view before the live class discussions. Most films are available freely on the GSA streaming service, with any exception to this being offered as an in-class screening (for example, a film only available through GSA Library DVD collection, or a film shown in 5.1 surround sound, using GSA facilities).

Students should prepare in advance of each class, by completing a set of provided activities, such as:
1. Read one or two recommended readings provided and write a brief critical response (~100 words)
2. Watch a feature film (or video of other screen media work) and answer set questions
3. Watch pre-recorded lecture video and answer lecture questions online

Each Studio class will typically follow a format such as:
- Introduction to session, brief recap of key techniques, theories, societal impact, and audience reactions to this work.
- Break into discussion groups to discuss each other's answers to the questions on the work/readings/lectures.
- Each discussion group presents a summary of their discussion to the class in turn
- Free discussion and more prompts from lecturer

*Films are given content warnings as appropriate, and where a feature film contains challenging or sensitive topics or overwhelming genre forms, alternative relevant films are provided.

Indicative Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
22 Hours	200 Hours

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods

Formative feedback is focussed on peer & tutor reviewed presentations – to enhance accessibility, the option of sharing a pre-recorded presentation video is available.
Additional feedback will be available via seminars and class discussions.

Students will deliver short presentations midway through the course explaining their research proposals, referencing suitable academic sources and proposing a research question relevant to one of the lecture themes. Peer reviews and tutor feedback will be provided via a learning technology interface (e.g. Padlet). Where students are creating a short film as part of their project proposal, they will be able to show an early edit as part of their presentation.

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

Coursework weighting: 100%

All students submit a research project proposal (using a template provided) and fill in the basic GSA preliminary ethical approval form.

There are two options for assessment in this course.

Option 1
Some students may choose to complete a text-only submission – where they devise a research project proposal (total 1600 words) that contains a *1000 word* literature review, referencing at least two theories on the course. Whilst they do not shoot a film for this submission, the proposal will suggest methods and technical facilities they would use to execute a practice-based work informed by this literature review in the future (e.g. a Masters Project). For the text-only submission, the student will focus on critical analysis of existing cinema, with projections on how this will influence their own practice in future.

Option 2
Alternatively, some students will choose to complete a short audio-visual project (3 to 5 minutes duration), with an accompanying practice-based research proposal (total 1000 words) that contains a *400 word* literature review to contextualise this film referencing a range of theoretical approaches covered on the course (minimum two).

Reference list/bibliography is not included in the word count total. Quotations are included in the word count total.
Submissions will be assessed and moderated in line with the Code of Assessment. Written feedback will be given after summative assessment.
Reassessment opportunities where a student has not passed the course are outlined in the Code of Assessment.

	Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
Option 1	Research project proposal (1600 words)	100	12
Option 2	Short audio-visual project	50	12
	Short Research Project Proposal (1000 words)	50	12

Exchange/Study Abroad	
Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?	No
Are all the students on the course taught wholly by distance learning?	No
Does this course represent a work placement or a year of study abroad?	No
Is this course collaborative with any other institutions?	No
If yes, then please provide the names of the other teaching institutions	N/A

Reading and On-line Resources
See full list of readings on Resource Lists (with a selection of texts specifically chosen for each week of the course). Listed below are six of the representative texts for this course: Chion, M., 1994. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* New York: Columbia University Press Hayward, P. ed., 2009. *Terror Tracks: Music, Sound and Horror Cinema*. London: Equinox Publishing. Kerins, M., 2011. *Beyond Dolby (Stereo): Cinema in the Digital Sound Age*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Mamula, T., 2018. Denis Villeneuve, film theorist; or, cinema's arrival in a multilingual world in *Screen : the journal of the Society for Education in Film and Television* Volume: 59 Issue 4. ISSN: 0036-9543 Online ISSN: 1460-2474 Mulvey, L. 1975. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16, no.3: 6-18. Rogers, H. ed., 2015. Music and Sound in Documentary Film, Oxfordshire: Routledge.