Lecturer: PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt
Room and time: AR-K 307/1, Tuesdays 16-18
Course type: Proseminar
Modules: BA LCMS/ LKM: M 2.2 Medienanalyse, Berufskolleg M 1.3: Literatur und Kultur: Orientierung; Text im Kontext, Gymnasium M 2.2: Literatur und Kultur: Vertiefung / Text im Kontext
First session: April 13, 2010
Course description: The seminar tackles a difficult question: Can we speak of unique Canadian cinema with an identifiable structure and clearcut narrative techniques? Is there indeed, as George Melnyk puts it, “a distinct cinematic identity [in Canada], thematically and aesthetically”? Or can we actually find two Canadian cinemas – an English-Canadian one and a Québécois one which have developed out of different historical, social, and cultural contexts? Bruce Elder’s controversial essay on “The Cinema We Need” (1985) can be seen as a starting point in the debate on Canadian cinematic identity. Rejecting the attempts of independent Canadian filmmakers to establish a new narrative tradition in the national cinema, Elder calls for a revitalization of the documentary roots of Canadian film: “The cinema we need, the cinema that combats technocracy will, therefore, be non-narrative.”

The course wants to trace the ambivalent genealogy of Canadian cinema as a “cinema of otherness” from silent film (Ernest & Nell Shipman, Bruce Bairnsfather) and the first documentaries (John Greyson, Gordon Sparling) to cinéma vérité (Pierre Perrault, Wolf Koenig) and auteur cinema (David Cronenberg, Atom Egoyan, Patricia Rozema, Denys Arcand). Additional sessions will deal with the birth of the National Film Board of Canada (especially Norman McLaren’s experimental works), cinéma Québécoise (Claude Jutra, Michel Brault), indigenous cinema (Zacharias Kunuk), and recent animation movies (Chris Landreth). In how far do these developments represent or negotiate what can be called a ‘Canadian cultural imaginary’? For an introduction to the subject, see Christopher E. Gittings’ study Canadian National Cinema: Ideology, Difference, and Representation (2002).

Grading: For 5 or 7 CP: regular attendance, participation in discussions, 9 entries in the discussion forum (1/3), oral presentation as part of an expert group (1/3), final paper (4-6/10-12 pages) (1/3). For 2 CP: attendance, participation in discussions, 7 entries in the discussion forum (50%), oral presentation as part of an expert group (50%).

Deadline for Final Papers: Friday, August 31 (Tuesday), 2010. Note: There is no extension of this deadline. Please throw papers into my box (2nd floor of the AR-H building) or send them in postal form. Do not (!) send papers via email.

Syllabus:

13 April Introduction: The History of Canadian National Cinema
Basic texts (required):

20 April The First Steps – Immigration and Empire-Building
Main film (required):
Additional materials (optional):
- Carry On, Sergeant (dir. Bruce Bairnsfather, 1928).

27 April Canada ‘American Style’ – Film as a Colonizing Discourse
Main film (required):
Additional materials (optional):
- The Viking (dir. Varick Frissell & George Melford, 1931).

1 All texts for this course are available on the BSCW server. http://bscw.avmz.uni-siegen.de/
04 May  Becoming Independent – Canadian Experimental Films of the 1950s  
Main film (required):  
Additional material (optional):  

11 May  Film screening – The History of Canadian Film  
*Cinéma vérité – Defining the Moment* (dir. Peter Wintonick, 1999), or  

18 May  The Documentary Tradition - *Cinéma vérité and Cinéma direct*  
Main film (required):  
Additional materials (optional):  
  P. Perrault, “Film and Reality” (short essay from 1967).

25 May  Pentecost Holiday (Pfingsten)  
Relax and enjoy!

01 June  The Cinema of Youth – Coming-of-Age Stories and *Cinéma Québécoise*  
Main film (required):  
Additional materials (optional):  

08 June  Urban Dreams / Urban Nightmares – The Canadian City and Internal Conflict  
Main film (required):  
Additional materials (optional):  
  *Rhapsody in Two Languages* (dir. Gordon Sparling, 1934).  

15 June  Horror and Fantasy Film – Canadian Identity and ‘Survival’  
Main film (required):  
  *Cube* (dir. Vincenzo Natali, 1997).  
Additional materials (optional):  
  *eXistenZ* (dir. David Cronenberg, 1999).

22 June  Fictionalizing Crisis – Canada’s Cultural Traumata  
Main film (required):  
  *The Sweet Hereafter* (dir. Atom Egoyan, 1997).  
Additional materials (optional):  

29 June  Representing the First Nations – Indigenous Cinema and the Search for Origins  
Main film (required):  
Additional materials (optional):  

06 July  Screening Gender – Counter Culture and Queer Canadian Cinema  
Main film (required):  
Additional materials (optional):  

13 July  Truth and Mythology – Canadian Cinema as a ‘Cinema of Otherness’  
Main film (required):  
Additional materials (optional):  

20 July  Psychorealism – Canadian Animation Movies since 1995  
Main film (required):  
Additional materials (optional):  