

THE XENOMORPH PROJECT:

Taxonomy of the Creature; Textuality of the Alien

by Adam Stangeby
990120560
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Instructor: Prof. Corinn Columpar

The Xenomorph Project is proposed in this paper as a two-pronged design. Firstly, the project is constructed through a syllabus as a graduate-level course, modelled after Corinn Columpar's *Touch of Evil Project*, currently being offered at the University of Toronto as a Masters course focused on critical and historical examination of the 'textuality' of Orson Welles's Touch of Evil (1958). Secondly, the *XP* (for, Xenomorph Project) encompasses a multimedia component - an hour-long documentary movie presented, edited and produced by the students of a graduate class enrolled in the course. 'Xenomorph' refers to the alien monster of David Giler and Walter Hill's successful movie franchise which *spawned* from Ridley Scott's Alien (1979). Alien has been succeeded by three official 'sequels', a hybridized spin-off with the *Predator* franchise (*AVP* series), a recent 'pre-quel', as well as, dozens of video games, comic book series, and more. The xenomorph is the unique feature of Giler and Hill's universe and the aim of the *XP* is to critically investigate the textuality of this ominous imaginary creature. The syllabus is designed with weekly units which incorporate a reading list that is diverse and expansive. I would suggest that this made the xenomorph an appealing potential textual object as there is no shortage of critically-engaged literature on the film series.¹ It was also difficult to deny that a film franchise boasting 'installments' from Ridley Scott, James Cameron, David Fincher and Jean-Pierre Jeunet demands an interrogation of that common feature which has drawn such talent to a brand which arguably stands apart from any one of them. In this respect, Lt. Ellen Ripley, the protagonist of the first four films in the franchise (always played by Sigourney Weaver), can be suggested as a metonym for 'humanity' while the xenomorph metonymizes 'otherness'. The *XP* interrogates this reading through a variety of film theories, including apparatus theory, feminist theory, psychoanalysis and postcolonial theory. Dialectic constitutes the relationship of the xenomorph and Ripley – they can be understood as each

other's antithesis. The goal of the *XP* is to remain open in the interpretation of the xenomorph's agency as a textual object. That is to say, the xenomorph should not be understood as simply serving Ripley's needs and desires, as this threatens to hermeneutically close the possible readings of the xenomorph's ontology. One of the aims of the *XP* is to interrogate whether there is a qualified difference between 'fan texts' and 'franchise texts'. I would suggest that the *XP* is concerned with the potential textual 'problem' that fan texts and franchise texts operate in opposition which in certain critical ways render franchise texts hermeneutically-closed. J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin's work on remediation becomes informative when examining the adaptation of the xenomorph into other media forms and hybrid forms (i.e. video games or the *AVP* spin-off franchise, respectively).² It may be worth adding that my personal stake in the *XP* relates to my passions as a screenwriter – I have written a 'pre-quel' to the Alien series. In this respect, the *XP* presents a personal ongoing project which can be aided through understanding the xenomorph as a textual object.

As a proposed graduate level course for a leading university in cinema studies, the *XP* is designed with two important assignments. The first assignment is a theoretically-engaged short paper where the student selects a film and theory studied during the course and uses them in conjunction with the goal of developing a thesis which critically evaluates the ontological, epistemological and aesthetic qualities of the xenomorph. This assignment aims to define a particular taxonomy of the creature, but also a textuality of the xenomorph as a media object. The second assignment is a documentary which could be distributed/exhibited online. Each student of the course would be assigned one of the twelve units of the syllabus as a topic for their contribution. They would be expected to organize relevant film clips, still images, interview footage, as well as, acting as interview subjects or voice-over commentators. The documentary

would unveil the work of the course – a thorough examination of the xenomorph as a textual object. If successful, the documentary would highlight the accomplishments of the course – the *XP* as tracing the taxonomy of the xenomorph and formulating the terms for the creature’s claim to being a textual object.

Syllabus

The syllabus has twelve units that seek to address theory, history, semiotics and hermeneutics of the xenomorph through close examination of the content of the Alien franchise. The methodology for research is modelled after Dr. Columpar’s *Textual Object* course. The *XP* is also guided by Michel Foucault’s theories of discourse, where the syllabus units hopefully bring information to a general discourse on the xenomorph as textual object while also revealing sites of emergence between hegemonic discursive formations and non-hegemonic ones.³ This is to say, that the literature on the xenomorph often positions the character of Lt. Ellen Ripley into a central figure with the xenomorph often constituted as a mere ‘effect’ for Ripley’s story and catalyst for her actions in the plot. Ripley, in these terms would represent a hegemonic discursive formation in the discourse of the ‘Alien’ franchise. One of the goals of the *XP* is to make sense of this Ripley-dominated discourse and to hopefully re-position the xenomorph in that discourse through a greater understanding of its textuality as a media object. The syllabus would also include two books and a course reader. David Thomson’s *The Alien Quartet* and Ximena Gallardo-C. and C. Jason Smith’s *Alien Woman – The Making of Lt. Ellen Ripley* are two of the only books devoted to the Alien franchise. Thomson’s text focuses on the economic and industrial explanations for the development of the franchise while Gallardo and Smith’s text

provides insightful textual analysis.⁴ The chapters of both books are discretely organized to address each of the first four movies which featured the xenomorph. These chapters would be distributed throughout the syllabus in a manner which brings important textual information to bear prior to relevant screenings and which allows for reflection on and integration of historical information after those screenings.

‘Week 1’ focuses on physiognomy to provide an introduction to the xenomorph.⁵ The first screening would be Ridley Scott’s *Alien* – it is both a logical starting point and also unveils the xenomorph in a calculated way cinematographically. The body and face of the xenomorph are a central focus for the camera in this first filmic installment of the Alien franchise. Bela Balazs’s *Visible Man* becomes a seminal text for examining physiognomy and the close-up in cinema. For Balazs, the close-up of the face is both an essential element of cinematic specificity as well as one of the basic components of cinematic language. Michel Chion’s *The Voice of Cinema* theoretically conceptualizes the relationship of cinematic sound to on- and offscreen bodies. Robert Spadoni’s “The Complexion of the Thing” in his book, *Uncanny Bodies* marries Balazs and Chion’s work on physiognomy and sound into the context of the horror genre. This unit would have some theoretical rigour, an examination of cinematic specificity and provide an entry point for distinguishing the xenomorph from its broader diegetic context.

‘Week 2’ focuses directly on ‘textuality’. “From Work to Text” and “The Death of the Author”, from Roland Barthes’s *The Rustle of Language*, provide a clear and concise definition of textuality and its essential relationship with hermeneutics.⁶ Umberto Eco’s *The Open Work* distinguishes ‘openness’ from ‘completeness’ in a text, and information from meaning in the semiotics of readership.⁷ In Roz Kaveny’s *From Alien to the Matrix*, the Alien films are referred to and explained as ‘thick’ texts - collective enterprises encompassing active two-way

communicative networks of authorship and readership.⁸ As an addendum, Edgar Allen Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" provides interesting arguments contra proponents of the intentional fallacy as well as challenges to the claims of 'openness' in written works. The screening for this week is the theatrical release of James Cameron's Aliens (1986). Aliens is a marked departure from the themes and interests of Scott's installment and provides great insight into the textual nature of both the Alien franchise and the xenomorph creature. In Aliens, Cameron has scripted a variety of new xenomorph sub-species, as well as an enigmatic and terrifying Alien Queen. As the taxonomy of the xenomorph expands, its textuality gapes.

'Week 3' takes up the topics of revision and semiotics and begin to refine issues of textual openness from the previous week.⁹ Christian Metz's "Trucage and the Film", distinguishes "visual" from "photographic" elements of the image-track of a film.¹⁰ Metz uses the concepts of denotation and connotation to distinguish trucage (or tricks in the image track) into further syntactic categories of imperceptible, invisible and visible. Michele Pierson in *Special Effects – Still in Search of Wonder*, suggests that Metz was unable to predict the change in cinematic language brought on by the digital age and explains the difference in analog and digital special effects to challenge Metz's semiotic categories of trucage. This week's screening is the director's cut of Aliens. The changes that Cameron made to this revised version of the film tend to foreground the use of traditional (analog) special effects. These changes become more relevant with Fincher's third installment of the series which introduces digital special effects to the Alien franchise. The xenomorph would undergo a kind of textual transformation when being rendered through digital technology. Additional readings for the week include Chapter 2 of Steven Shaviro's *Post-Cinematic Affect* which examines how semiotic codes can be transgressed in the process of revising meaning.¹¹ Julian Hanich's "Intimidating Imaginations – A

Phenomenology of Suggested Horror” in *Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thriller* presents the possibility of denying the corporeality of the xenomorph by understanding the creature’s absence as its ontology. This book chapter neatly consolidates discourse of the first three weeks with issues that will present themselves in the following weeks focused on theory.

‘Week 4’ focuses on apparatus theory and colour. In the second edition of *On Film*, Stephen Muhall writes a lengthy philosophical analysis of the first four films in the Alien franchise. Despite an auteurist impulse in explaining the films, Muhall focuses on how each director uses the apparatus to tell the story and affect the spectator.¹² In *Replications*, J.P. Telotte suggests that the camera of films that deal in techno-organic themes (arguably, the xenomorph is a techno-organic being) is itself a techno-organic apparatus. The apparatus in Alien films is similar to the Vertovian ‘kino-eye’, but represents through hybridity – the xenomorph and the human are represented equally by the apparatus. The screening for the week is David Fincher’s *Alien³* (1992). *Alien³* is particularly identifiable from predecessors through its conscious use of color. A duality of color is schematized and systematized throughout the film, which could arguably represent a division in the experience of the xenomorph to that of Ripley. In addition, the film uses lengthy chase sequences portrayed through the ‘warped’ point-of-view of the xenomorph.¹³ Valuable insights arise from excerpts of Rudolf Arnheim’s *Film as Art* on theorizing the nature of colour in film, as well as from Fredric Jameson’s *Signatures of the Visible* which theorizes colour in film as a “libidinal apparatus” (Jameson, 191).¹⁴

‘Week 5’ substitutes a screening with William Gibson’s¹⁵ screenplay for Alien 3 which proposes the exclusion of the Ripley character. Such an installment would certainly have shifted attention fully to the xenomorph, also challenging a plethora of literature that theorizes the relationship of the xenomorph and Ripley as mutually essential. As such, Gibson’s script is a

foremost challenge to feminist theory in addressing meaning-production in the Alien franchise. Chapter 3 “Getting Even” of Carol J. Clover’s *Men, Women and Chainsaws* addresses the dynamic of power, politics and rape in constructing the female of horror film. The essence of the chapter is to formulate the nature of confrontations which works well for understanding the relationship of the xenomorph and Ripley.¹⁶ Chapter 2 “Horror and the Archaic Mother” of Barbara Creed’s *The Monstrous-Feminine* employs psychoanalysis to frame the network of relationships which center on Ripley. Creed argues that the xenomorph comes to represent the mother’s missing phallus (Creed, 21). David Greven’s “Demeter and Persephone in Space” examines how the structure of the xenomorph’s society is a catalyst for transformation in Ripley’s character. A short excerpt, “Female Authorship” in Shohini Chaudhuri’s *Feminist Film Theorists* provides an opportunity to discuss how the xenomorph is constructed textually contingent on a female reader/author (holding to Barthesian and Ecoian concepts of textual openness). Lynda Bundtzen’s, “Monstrous Mothers”, theorizes the xenomorph as essentially biological and instinctual as opposed to the conscious, cultural Ripley who is empowered by choice. Feminist theory adeptly connects the ontology of the xenomorph with its epistemology as both an autonomous and dependant creature.¹⁷

‘Week 6’ features the screening of Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s *Alien Resurrection* (1997)¹⁸ and focuses on psychoanalysis, specifically exploring the ‘xenomorph as uncanny’ thesis. Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* provides rich textual consideration for the theory. Samsa’s ‘metamorphosis’ into an insect-creature is an examination of the inner-workings of self-alienation. The ‘xenomorph as uncanny’ is a proposition which wrestles with the representation of self-alienation through the exilic, yet imposing presence of the xenomorph. In *Alien Resurrection*, the xenomorph is finally embodied by Ripley as her DNA becomes hybridized

with that of the creature. It is a film rife with allusions to Kafka's novella. Excerpts from Otto Rank's *The Double* and Sigmund Freud's *The Uncanny* provide a proper formulation of the uncanny in its traditional theoretical context. Lengthier excerpts from Barbara Creed's *Phallic Panic* situate the concept of the uncanny within the horror genre.¹⁹ Jason Horsley's *The Secret Life of Movies* conceptualizes the xenomorph as representing schizophrenic impulses sooner than reifying 'otherness' as the uncanny self. A short excerpt from Carl Royer and Diana Royer in *The Spectacle of Isolation in Horror Films*, presents another alternative – the 'xenomorph as hybrid' which situates the uncanniness in nature as opposed to the self. Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek's discussion of 'lamella' as a 'pre-human subject', rounds-off a rich discourse on psychoanalysis and the 'xenomorph as uncanny' thesis.

'Week 7' addresses genre while the screening is *Alien Evolution* (2001), a high production-value documentary on the Alien Quadrilogy.²⁰ *Alien Evolution* serves as a blueprint for the *XP* documentary. The readings on genre include, Robin Wood's *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (horror film in the 1980s), Susan Sontag's "The Imagination of Disaster" (structure and theme in science fiction film), Daniel Dervin's "Primal Condition and Conventions" (science fiction's interest in 'otherness') and Barbara Creed's "Gynesis, Postmodernism and the Science Fiction Horror Film" which aptly examines the hybridized sub-genre to which the Alien franchise belongs. Additional readings include excerpts from Noel Carroll's *The Philosophy of Horror* and Jeffrey J. Cohen's *Monster Theory*. This reading list is a comprehensive survey of the generic features of horror, science fiction and monster movies and hopes to properly situate the xenomorph generically adding to an understanding of its taxonomy and textuality.

'Week 8' takes up adaptation, but also abjection. Marrying the two concerns will hopefully speak back to issues of 'bastardization' between fan texts and franchise texts.²¹ Judith

Butler's *Bodies That Matter* presents key understandings of abjection and materialism. Butler's concept of 'resemblance' provides insight for understanding the xenomorph as both an autonomous and contingent creature. Other readings focus on the Alien franchise being constructed through 'sequelisation'. Nicholas Rombes's "Before and After and Right Now" presents the film sequel as a form of Barthesian 'tmesis' – a mode of skimming and skipping within a text. In this respect, the xenomorph can be conceptualized as non-corporeal and fragmented. Carolyn Jess-Cooke's *Film Sequels*, categorizes and distinguishes sequels, remakes, serials and trilogies while also explaining why sequels should not be regarded as 'inferior' to the original text to which they refer.²² The screening for the week is Paul W.S. Anderson's Alien vs. Predator (2004) which is a complex adaptation of the xenomorph through its incorporation into another fictional 'monster' universe.

'Week 9' focuses on economics and the business of film. The reading list is bolstered by seminal essays in the field: John Sedgwick and Michael Pokorny's "The Characteristics of Film as a Commodity, Gerben Bakker's "Stars and Stories" (film as branded product), Thomas Schatz's "The New Hollywood", Pauline Kael's "Why are movies so bad?" and Justin Wyatt's "A Critical Redefinition" (high concept). Accompanying this heavy reading is an essay by Martin Flanagan entitled, "The *Alien* Series and Generic Hybridity" that addresses the particular economic and industrial developments in producing the Alien franchise and the xenomorph as a branded product. The screening for the week is Ridley Scott's Prometheus (2012) which serves as a fascinating example within the broader economic discourse of how the xenomorph was commodified by Giler and Hill.

'Week 10' addresses stardom and auteurism. The reading list is composed of excerpts and chapters from biographies of the Alien Quadrilogy's four directors. James Cameron is

profiled uniquely by Alexandra Keller (dynamics of nuclear families), Elizabeth Rosen (ambivalence to technology), Elisa Narminio and Matthew W. Kapell (Cameron as feminist auteur) and John James and Tom Ue (Cameron as postcolonial prophet). In Rebecca Keegan's *The Futurist*, James Cameron's construction of the xenomorph is traced through his breaking from Scott's story, developing and pitching a script with a new angle and uniquely designing the Alien Queen. James Swallow and Mark Browning separately document the unique and frustrating situation for David Fincher while working on Alien³. A Ridley Scott interview with James Delson in 1979, discusses at length the mechanical workings of the prosthetic xenomorph, the significance of the chest-burster birth stage of xenomorphs and the relationship of the xenomorphs to the actors on set.²³ Elizabeth Ezra, discusses Alien Resurrection as a transnational text given Jeunet's infusing of French feminist themes into the 'presence' of the xenomorph. The screening for the week is John Carpenter's Dark Star (1974) scripted by Dan O'Bannon who was the creator of the xenomorph and the screenwriter for Alien. Dark Star reveals much of O'Bannon's contribution to the story of Alien.

'Week 11' reintroduces theory through postcolonial theory's examination of the xenomorph as an exiled other representing non-Western race and culture. Excerpts from Hamid Naficy's *An Accented Cinema* provide a broader context for the xenomorph, while Gabor Gergely examines the exilic body as posthuman and the infected body as already dead in *Foreign Devils*. Adilifu Nama's *Black Space* examines postcolonial themes in the Alien Quadrilogy. Jean-Paul Sartre's "Colonialism is a System" and Julia Kristeva's "En-countering Monsters" provides insight on the reciprocity of brutality effects in colonial systems and the 'monsters' that are bred from brutality. Postcolonial theory positions the xenomorph as a familiar, but rejected 'other' – a relationship dictated by repulsion sooner than bizarre attraction (as is the case with the

uncanny). Postcolonial theory adds another textual dimension in theorizing the nature of the xenomorph. The screening for this week is James Cameron's Avatar (2009) for its obvious postcolonial themes, but also because it reunites James Cameron and Sigourney Weaver into the science fiction genre.

The final week focuses on remediation, best understood through the work of Bolter and Grusin. The media texts for this week would include Alien franchise video games²⁴ as well as Alien comic books published by Dark Horse comics.²⁵ Remediation in science fiction is theorized by Jerold J. Abrams (fusion of technology and organic matter) and Scott Bukatman in *Terminal Identity* who argues the 'readability' of the xenomorph as encrypted through technology's ambivalence toward human control of it. Teresa Rizzo in *Deleuze and Film* uses the Alien movies to discuss the ambivalence of perception through technological apparatuses. These themes of techno-organic fusion help to situate the transformation and transmission of the xenomorph through a network of media forms.

In brief summary, the preparation of a proposed syllabus for examining the textuality of the xenomorph reveals an expansive discourse on the Alien franchise and its key figure. The Alien franchise is ever-growing²⁶, lending strength to the thesis that the xenomorph is a rich textual object of media. After completion of the reading list and assignments, the goal would be to turn to Henry Jenkins's work on 'fan-text poaching' in order to distinguish the hermeneutical relationship between 'fan texts' and 'franchise texts'. The xenomorph can potentially be shown to have a varied textual quality (both open and closed) depending on the media and texts in which the xenomorph is represented and discussed. This claim could prove to be valuable to the general discourse on textuality, semiotics and hermeneutics.

¹ Which I intend to demonstrate in this paper through going over the contents of that reading list

² See J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin *Remediation – Understanding New Media* (1999)

³ See Michel Foucault *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972)

⁴ Admittedly, Ripley is the focus of *Alien Woman*, but the authors explain that the text is not theoretically-inclined and positions Ripley as a ‘pivot’ for understanding the content of the films, sooner than as a representative for demonstrating any particular theory.

⁵ This will also hopefully help to start the formation of a taxonomy for the xenomorph

⁶ In *The Role of the Reader*, Eco explains the semiotics of texts through examination of Charles Sanders Peirce’s work on signs. This chapter can also be added to the syllabus to help connect semiotics with hermeneutics.

⁷ Eco writes, “every reception of a work of art is both an interpretation and a performance of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself” (Eco, 4).

⁸ This understanding of ‘thick’ texts owes much to Barthes and Eco’s work – including Eco’s work on ‘aberrant decoding’

⁹ This ‘refinement’ has something to do with bringing semiotics and hermeneutics into closer discussion contact with specific theories.

¹⁰ For Metz, this division implies different operations in the intention of the filmmaker and thus different effects in the reception of the images by spectators. The spectator is affected by both “profilmic trucage” and “cinematographic trucage” (Metz, 155).

¹¹ The textual analysis of Grace Jones’s corporeality provides a compelling intersection between semiotics and physiognomy.

¹² A formulation of apparatus theory through Muhall’s textual analysis, ironically seems to be an effect more than an intention of the author

¹³ Unique lens filters are used to construct these pov sequences

¹⁴ Jameson’s theories can be put into conversation with those of Hanich in formulating the absence of the xenomorph as its ontology or at least one of its ontological properties.

¹⁵ The famed author of cyberpunk novel, *Neuromancer*.

¹⁶ Fincher’s installment also disturbingly includes a near-rape sequence.

¹⁷ Through feminist theory, the xenomorph is rigourously interrogated for what its nature allows it to do and how its nature allows it to act. In tying ontology and epistemology together, a broader sense of its textuality is formulated. The work in feminist theory on the xenomorph guides much of the other theoretical discourse on this creature.

¹⁸ Alien Resurrection is the four installment in the Alien franchise and completes the recognized Alien Quadrilogy

¹⁹ Creed devotes a sub-section of a chapter to discussion of the uncanny in Jeunet’s fourth installment of the Alien Quadrilogy.

²⁰ Alien Evolution also documents the proliferation of the franchise across media forms and its establishment of the xenomorph as a highly recognizable brand.

²¹ Examining a claim that fan texts find their inspiration, but not necessarily their purpose of being through franchise texts.

²² Jess-Cooke also introduces economic explanations for the developments of the Alien franchise which ties nicely with the topic of the following week.

²³ This recalls comments made recently by David Cronenberg regarding the value of prosthetic monsters on set (he was referring to the Burroughs-monster in Naked Lunch)

²⁴ The goal would be to play these games in a class setting.

²⁵ Also examining ‘the Brood’ of the Marvel Comic book universe - a clear homage, if not rip-off, of the Giler and Hill xenomorph – might be fruitful for discussions of textuality and remediation.

²⁶ Video games are produced each year for the major consoles. Prometheus 2 has been proposed for a 2015 release.

The Xenomorph Project

Course Schedule

Week 1... Physiognomy and Sound

Screening:

- *Alien* (Ridley Scott. USA, 1979) 117-mins.

Reading:

- Bela Balazs, "Visible Man", "Type and Physiognomy", "The Play of Facial Expressions" and "The Close-Up," in *Visible Man or the Culture of Film*, trans. Rodney Livingstone. ed. Erica Carter (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 9-15 & 27-45.
- Michel Chion, "Prologue - Raising The Voice" and "The Voice that Seeks a Body," in *The Voice in Cinema*, ed. & trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 1-13 & 125-151.
- Robert Spadoni, "The Complexion of the Thing," in *Uncanny Bodies - The Coming of Sound Film and the Origins of the Horror Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 19-25.
- Ximena Gallardo-C. and C. Jason Smith, *Alien Woman - The Making of Lt. Ellen Ripley* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 1-62.

Week 2... Textuality and Hermeneutics

Screening:

- "theatrical release" of *Aliens* (James Cameron. USA, 1986) 137-mins.

Reading:

- Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" and "From Work to Text," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1986), 49-64.
- Umberto Eco, "Peirce and the Semiotic Foundations of Openness - Signs as Texts and Texts as Signs," in *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 175-199.
- Umberto Eco, "The Poetics of the Open Work" and "Openness, Information, Communication," in *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 1-23 & 44-83.
- Roz Kaveney, "Waking into Dreams" and "A Franchise Case Study - *Alien* and its Sequels," in *From Alien to the Matrix - Reading*

Science Fiction Film (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 1-8 & 131-204.

- Edgar Allen Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," in *Philosophy of Style* (New York: Pageant Press, 1965), 67-82.

Week 3... Revision and Semiotics

Screening:

- "director's cut" of *Aliens* (James Cameron. USA, 1986) 154-mins (1992-release).

Reading:

- Christian Metz, "Trucage and the Film," in *The Language of Images*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 151-169.
- Michele Pierson, "The Wonder Years and Beyond - 1989-1995," in *Special Effects - Still in Search of Wonder* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 93-118.
- Steven Shaviro, "Corporate Cannibal," in *Post-Cinematic Affect* (Washington: O-Books, 2010), 11-34.
- Julian Hanich, "Intimidating Imaginations - A Phenomenology of Suggested Horror," in *Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thriller* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 108-126.
- Ximena Gallardo-C. and C. Jason Smith, *Alien Woman - The Making of Lt. Ellen Ripley* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 62-114.

Week 4... Apparatus Theory and Colour

Screening:

- *Alien*³ (David Fincher. USA, 1992) 114-mins.

Reading:

- Stephen Muhall, "Part I," in *On Film - 2nd Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1-125.
- J.P. Telotte, "Our Imagined Humanity," in *Replications - A Robotic History of the Science Fiction Film* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 29-53.
- Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 14-16 & 65-73 & 154-160.
- Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 191-200.
- Ximena Gallardo-C. and C. Jason Smith, *Alien Woman - The Making of Lt. Ellen Ripley* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 115-156.

Week 5.. Feminist Theory

Screening:

- No screening, instead reading the screenplay, *Alien III* by William Gibson.
Link: <http://home.online.no/~bhundlan/scripts/alien3/gibson.htm>

Reading:

- Carol J. Clover, "Getting Even," in *Men, Women, and Chainsaws - Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 114-165.
- Barbara Creed, "Horror and the Archaic Mother - *Alien*," in *The Monstrous-Feminine - Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 16-30.
- David Greven, "Demeter and Persephone in Space - Transformation, Femininity, and Myth in the *Alien* Films," in *Representations of Femininity in American Genre Cinema - The Woman's Film, Film Noir, and Modern Horror* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 117-139.
- Shohini Chaudhuri, "Female Authorship," in *Feminist Film Theorists - Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa De Lauretis, Barbara Creed* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 58-60.
- Lynda K. Bundtzen, "Monstrous Mothers - Medusa, Grendel, and now *Alien*," in *Film Quarterly* (Spring, 1987: vol.40, no.3), 11-17.

Suggested Readings:

- James H. Kavanagh, "Feminism, Humanism and Science in *Alien*," in *Alien Zone*, ed. Annette Kuhn (New York: Verso, 1990), 73-81.
- Judith Newton, "Feminism and Anxiety in *Alien*," in *Alien Zone*, ed. Annette Kuhn (New York: Verso, 1990), 82-90.

Week 6.. Psychoanalysis and The Uncanny

Screening:

- *Alien Resurrection* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet. USA, 1997)
109-mins.

Reading:

- Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* (New York: Aeonian Press, 1946).
- Otto Rank, *The Double - A Psychoanalytic Study*, trans. & ed. Harry Tucker Jr. (Chapel Hill NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 3-33 & 65-68.

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- Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 123-161.
 - Barbara Creed, "Film, Horror and the Primal Uncanny", "Film and the Uncanny Gaze" and "Alien Resurrection" in *Phallic Panic - Film, Horror and the Primal Uncanny* (Victoria, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 2005), 1-40 & 57-62.
 - Jason Horsely, "Aliens 'R' Us - Race Intimations of Metamorphosis" in *The Secret Life of Movies - Schizophrenic and Shamanic Journeys in American Cinema* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2009), 242-252.
 - Carl Royer and Diana Royer, *The Spectacle of Isolation in Horror Films - Dark Paradises* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 103-105.
 - Jacques Lacan, "Position of the Unconscious," in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alain Sheridan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1998), 196-206.
 - Slavoj Žižek, "Troubles with the Real - Lacan as a Viewer of Alien," accessed at <http://www.lacan.com/zizalien.htm>
 - Ximena Gallardo-C. and C. Jason Smith, *Alien Woman - The Making of Lt. Ellen Ripley* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 157-203.

Week 7... Genre and Hybridity

Screening:

- *Alien Evolution* (writer: Mark Kermode, director(s): Andrew Abbott & Russell Leven. UK, 2001) 75-mins.

Reading:

- Robin Wood, "Horror in the 80s," in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 189-201.
- Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster," in *The Science Fiction Film Reader*, ed. Gregg Rickman (New York: Proscenium Publishers, 2004), 98-113.
- Daniel Dervin, "Primal Conditions and Conventions - The Genre of Science Fiction," in *Alien Zone*, ed. Annette Kuhn (New York: Verso, 1990), 96-102.
- Barbara Creed, "Gynesis, Postmodernism and the Science Fiction Horror Film," in *Alien Zone*, ed. Annette Kuhn (New York: Verso, 1990), 128-141.
- Noel Carroll, "The Nature of Horror" and "Why Horror?" in *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 12-58 & 158-206.
- Jeffrey J. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory - Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey J. Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3-25.
- David Thomson, *The Alien Quartet* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998), 1-59.

Week 8... Adaptation and Abjection

Screening:

- *AVP: Alien vs. Predator* (Paul W.S. Anderson. USA, 2004) 101-mins.

Readings:

- Judith Butler, "Bodies That Matter," in *Bodies That Matter - On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 3-27.
- Nicholas Rombes, "Before and After and Right Now - Sequels in the Digital Era," in *Second Takes - Critical Approaches to the Film Sequel*, ed. Carolyn Jess-Cooke and Constantine Verevis (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 191-203.
- Carolyn Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels - Theory and Practice from Hollywood to Bollywood* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 1-51.
- David Thomson, *The Alien Quartet* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998), 63-102.

Week 9... Economics and the Business of Film

Screening:

- *Prometheus* (Ridley Scott. USA, 2012) 124-mins.

Reading:

- John Sedgwick and Michael Pokorny, "The Characteristics of Film as a Commodity," in *An Economic History of Film*, ed. John Sedgwick and Michael Pokorny (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6-23.
- Gerben Bakker, "Star and Stories - How Films Became Branded Products," in *An Economic History of Film*, ed. John Sedgwick and Michael Pokorny (New York: Routledge, 2005), 48-85.
- Thomas Schatz, "The New Hollywood," in *Hollywood - Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies vol.1*, ed. Thomas Schatz (New York: Routledge, 2004), 285-314.
- Pauline Kael, "Why are Movies so Bad? Or, the Numbers," in *Hollywood - Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies vol.4*, ed. Thomas Schatz (New York: Routledge, 2004), 267-279.
- Justin Wyatt, "A Critical Redefinition - The Concept of High Concept," in *Hollywood - Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural*

Studies vol.4, ed. Thomas Schatz (New York: Routledge, 2004), 367-380.

- Martin Flanagan, "The Alien Series and Generic Hybridity," in *Alien Identities - Exploring Difference in Film and Fiction*, ed. Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter, Heidi Kaye and Imelda Whelehan (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1999), 156-171.
- David Thomson, *The Alien Quartet* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998), 105-137.

Week 10... Stardom and Auteurism

Screening:

- *Dark Star* (John Carpenter. USA, 1974) 83-mins.

Reading:

- Alexandra Keller, *James Cameron* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 59-69 & 109-116.
- Elizabeth Rosen, "'You Have to Look with Better Eyes Than That' - A Filmmaker's Ambivalence to Technology," in *The Films of James Cameron - Critical Essays*, ed. Matthew Wilhelm Kapell and Stephen McVeigh (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2011), 109-123.
- Elisa Narminio and Matthew Wilhelm Kapell, "Between Aliens and Avatar - Mapping the Shifting Terrain of the Struggle for Women's Rights," in *The Films of James Cameron - Critical Essays*, ed. Matthew Wilhelm Kapell and Stephen McVeigh (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2011), 146-166.
- John James and Tom Ue, "'I see you' - Colonial Narratives and the Act of Seeing in Avatar," in *The Films of James Cameron - Critical Essays*, ed. Matthew Wilhelm Kapell and Stephen McVeigh (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2011), 186-199.
- Rebecca Keegan, "This Time It's War," in *The Futurist - The Life and Films of James Cameron* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009), 57-80.
- James Swallow, "Third in Line," in *Dark Eye - The Films of David Fincher* (London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2003), 34-61.
- Mark Browning, "Woman in Peril or Final Girl? - Alien³ and Panic Room," in *David Fincher - Films That Scar* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), 23-54.
- James Delson, "Alien From the Inside Out - Part II," in *Ridley Scott Interviews*, ed. Laurence F. Knapp and Andrea F. Kulas (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 11-31.
- Elizabeth Ezra, "Uncanny Resemblances - Alien Resurrection," in *Jean-Pierre Jeunet* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 66-84.
- David Thomson, *The Alien Quartet* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998), 141-174.

Week 11... Post-Colonial Theory and Exilic Bodies

Screening:

- *Avatar* (James Cameron. USA, 2009) 162-mins.

Reading:

- Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema - Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3-10 & 33-36 & 152-156 & 272-282.
- Gabor Gergely, *Foreign Devils - Exile and Host Nation in Hollywood's Golden Age* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 1-6 & 49-58 & 105-112.
- Adilifu Nama, *Black Space - Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 103-133.
- Szu-Chin Hestia Chen, *French Feminist Theory - Exemplified Through The Novels of Julia Kristeva - The Bridge From Psychoanalytic Theory to Literary Production* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 117-130.
- Jean Paul Sartre, "Colonialism is a System," in *Interventions* (2001: 3.1), 127-140.

Week 12... Remediation and Fan Texts

Screening:

- No screening, instead playing a variety of *Alien* franchise video games (in particular, online gameplay of *Aliens: Colonial Marines* for PS3/Xbox360)

Reading:

- Jerold J. Abrams, "The Dialectics of Enlightenment in *Metropolis*," in *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film*, ed. Steven M. Sanders (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 153-170.
- Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity - The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 243-249 & 259-266 & 325-327.
- Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus - Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 238-257.

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- Teresa Rizzo, "The Alien Series - Alien-becoming, human-becomings," in *Deleuze and Film - A Feminist Introduction* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 107-132.
 - Henry Jenkins III, *Textual Poachers - Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2013).