

Mission statement ECREA film studies section

Film is a case in point for the European audiovisual economies and an important marker of contemporary European media cultures. Film has always functioned as a key symbol for European cultural policy since the 1920s (cf. the Cinema Europe movement in the interbellum period and more recently, GATT and WTO). The reality of dispersed national film economies and the lack of circulation of European films coincide with a rich history of local, national and even European film cultures. This makes film culture within the current evolving European constellation a topic of great interest to researchers.

The film studies section of the ECREA aims at fostering this research. We believe that the first and in some ways most important mass medium of the last century - often forgotten or marginalised in debates on the classical mass media - deserves our full academic attention in a communications context. Ranging from early cinema experiences in European metropolis, to the contemporary blockbuster multiplexes, film has always been at the forefront of European popular culture. It reappears in different shapes and contexts through the last and the new century: DVD and internet, digital cameras and projection urge us to reconsider and renew the existing theories and research on film, cinema and the moving image. Moreover, historical debates on the role of film in society inspire contemporary media debates.

The film studies section adheres to the broader objectives of ECREA: stimulating research on European matters, bringing together scholars in the field from different European countries, providing a platform for interchange and comparative work, supporting the work of junior film scholars. The section takes a critical but constructive stance towards the European Union and the Council of Europe, institutions that both have important policies directed at film.

We approach the phenomenon of film in its broadest sense: film as content, as cultural artefact, as commercial product, as lived experience, as cultural and economic institution, as symbolic field of cultural production, as popular entertainment, as media technology, as ideological force, as storytelling, etc.

An important field of study is the tension/relation between national cinemas, the - highly problematic - concept 'European cinema' and Hollywood as the significant other, often within these same national film cultures. Europe is conceptualised in a broad sense here, as does ECREA as a whole. We want to discuss Europe as a cultural construct, inspiring discourses on European cinema. We leave the classical view of European cinema as the auteur canon, and extend it to the popular end with national genres for popular cinema. Film is also more than fiction. Non-fiction documentary equally deserves scholarly discussion.

On a methodological level, we strive towards openness and multilevel approaches on the study of historical and contemporary cinema: film text, context, production, representation and reception. We go beyond the traditional textual analysis of individual films. Cultural studies perspectives, historical approaches, political economy, textual analysis, audience research all find its place within the section.

Especially in the field of film studies, few European initiatives have been undertaken. Film scholars in Europe and film studies as a field have never been organised around European initiatives. Linguistic, cultural and academic barriers have so far limited the European

interchange of expertise and interests. Therefore we want to bring together media and film studies people from various backgrounds and institutional contexts.

We want to leave behind the institutional tensions between humanities and social sciences approaches, by stressing the richness of an interdisciplinary focus. This allows us to continue the fascinating and timely conversation between film studies, cultural studies, media studies and communication studies. Our aim is not to isolate film and cinema as an exception, but to contextualise it within the broader media landscape, without neglecting the specifics of the medium.

Possible topics dealt with in the film studies section cover the following areas: European film cultures, national film cultures, national cinema and Hollywood, cinema and everyday life, non-cinematic film experiences, exhibition practices, new media and film, Hollywood's mining of its own past and European archival initiatives...

Finally, we aim at enlarging the visibility for film studies in other communication studies organisations with whom ECREA has close ties such as International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), equally connecting with (inter)national film studies organisations such as Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) and the Network of European Cinema and Media Scholars (NECS).