

Recommended Watch List

Researching the cultural evolution of narratives means little without an appreciation of the stories behind the data. This list suggests a film to complement each lecture.

Lecture 3 – Romance

10 Things I Hate About You (1999)

Proof that a good story will survive and adapt to new environments, *10 Things* modernises Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and retells it in a 90s American high school. A breakthrough film for stars Julia Stiles, Heath Ledger, and Joseph Gordon-Levitt, the film plays with the stereotypical roles found in romance narratives over the last five-hundred years.

Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dO1SSyPFVs

Lecture 4 – Soap Opera

Clueless (1995)

Like fellow English class classic-turned 90s teen rom-com *10 Things*, *Clueless* shows that a good narrative can fit to a new environment. This time modernising Jane Austen's *Emma* to... a 90s American high school. Like its Regency period ancestor it satirises the complex social world of its characters and depicts issues around friendships, sexual relationships and social status.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RS0KyTZ3le4>

Lecture 5 – Fantasy

Tale of Tales (Il racconto dei racconti) (2015)

An international co-production based on the collections of tales by 17th century Neapolitan poet Giambattista Basile. His collections include some of the oldest recorded forms of many popular European fairy tales, including Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella. *Tale of Tales*, however, freely adapts some less well-recognised tales which feature several counterintuitive concepts, from a tree that spouts blood to a flea which grows gigantic and is not a tale for children.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3hVmpGzI7A>

Lecture 6 – Horror

***The Thing* (1982)**

A remake of 1951's *The Thing From Another World* (itself an adaptation of a novella), John Carpenter's *The Thing* provides plenty of content to evoke strong emotions. From disgust at its body-horror grotesques to the social tension of not knowing who is human and who is 'the Thing'. The film provoked negative reactions at release ("a wretched excess") but became a cult classic and spawned books, board games, video games, a prequel and a remake is to be released in 2020.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ftmr17M-a4>

Lecture 7 – Crime

***The Big Sleep* (1946)**

Adapted from the seminal hardboiled crime novel by Raymond Chandler, with a script co-written by Nobel Prize laureate William Faulkner, and starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, *The Big Sleep* has all the makings of a Film Noir classic. Combining multiple classic elements, including femme fatales, a steely detective, and interlocking mysteries not even Chandler could fully explain. It represents another step in the evolution of the detective story from Agatha Christie, not driven by clockwork puzzle parts but by characters, dialogue and atmosphere.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrANtnChgak>

Lecture 8 – Conspiracy Theory

***They Live* (1988)**

In *They Live*, pro-wrestler-turned-actor "Rowdy" Roddy Piper plays a working-class drifter who uncovers a global conspiracy involving a ruling elite of aliens using subliminal messages delivered through mass media, all thanks to a pair of special sunglasses. When Neo-Nazi conspiracy theorists attempted to co-opt the film as an anti-Semitic allegory, it's director John Carpenter issued a swift rebuttal – "THEY LIVE is about yuppies and unrestrained capitalism. It has nothing to do with Jewish control of the world."

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJC4R1uXDaE>

Lecture 9 – Fake News

Kate Plays Christine (2016)

“Talk show hostess dies after shooting self on TV” sounds like a Fake News headline, but it really occurred in 1974 when TV news reporter Christine Chubbuck committed suicide live on television, interpreted by some as a protest against “blood and guts” sensationalist news. The docudrama *Kate Plays Christine* follows actress Kate Lyn Sheil's preparation for playing the role of Chubbuck in a fictitious film, and deliberately blurs the line between what is fact and what is fake.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buzA1KREcwk>