SCHOOL OF DIVINITY, HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

ACADEMIC SESSION 2015-2016

HI 4015: Visualising the Modern: Photography and Film in Scotland, 1840-1980

30 Credits: 11 Weeks

PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY:

The full set of school regulations and procedures is contained in the Undergraduate Student Handbook which is available online at your MyAberdeen page. Students are expected to familiarise themselves not only with the contents of this leaflet but also with the contents of the Handbook. Therefore, ignorance of the contents of the Handbook will not excuse the breach of any school regulation or procedure.

You must familiarise yourself with this important information at the earliest opportunity.

COURSE CO-ORDINATOR/COURSE TEAM
Professor Andrew Blaikie
Contacts: telephone 01224 272765 or email a.blaikie@abdn.ac.uk. Office hours are by prior appointment.

DISCIPLINE ADMINISTRATION:
Mrs Barbara McGillivray/Mrs Gillian Brown
50-52 College Bounds
Room CBLG01
01224 272199/272454
history-ug@abdn.ac.uk

TIMETABLE
Please refer to the online timetable on MyAberdeen.

Students can also view their university timetable at http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/timetables-550.php
COURSE DESCRIPTION
Photography and film are synonymous with industrial modernization, but how did these new forms of technology affect the ways in which the nation was understood? With a focus on sources and interpretation, this course examines how culture is produced in the dialogue between historical narrative and visual representation. Having considered the contribution of pre-existing forms such as painting in conveying a distinctive iconography, the analysis investigates the work of commercial photographers during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. This is followed by an exploration of the documentary, firstly via photojournalism, and secondly through film. Case studies then explore the complex role of visual material in ethnology and memory studies.

INTENDED AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES
This course explores the role of photography, film and other visual sources in representing modernization and attitudes towards it in one country. Its aims are to:
- explore the range and utility of visual sources for historical study;
- evaluate relations between modern historical processes, ideologies and images;
- enhance appreciation of Scottish history through the use and analysis of visual media;
- inculcate skills of discernment in evaluating the representativeness of photography and film as they apply to historical narrative;
- indicate key problems and debates surrounding the uses of imagery relating to history and social memory and to suggest frameworks for interpretation

Main Learning Outcomes
Students will be expected to:
- appreciate the value of visual sources in understanding modern history;
- interpret relationships between visual and written or spoken material in constructing historical narratives;
- apply their understanding to case studies, specifically within Scotland;
- identify and illustrate the main areas of debate articulated in the course, consistent with the material in the weekly reading lists

As with all Honours courses, we wish to encourage students to develop general, enduring skills. At the end of the course we expect students to be better able to:
- organise studies to make effective use of library and archive sources (including online) and - in this case - also the popular media;
- evaluate claims by judging the quality of evidence offered in support;
- express complex ideas in concise and intelligible form, both orally and in writing

Practical skills fostered by the course include the ability:
• to demonstrate a detailed appreciation of the recent historical scholarship in connection with a chosen essay topic;
• to give an oral presentation on a specific topic;
• to retain, recall and apply relevant information in examination conditions

This course should help to cement and refine important transferable skills including the ability:

• to listen carefully to others;
• to speak to a group and lead a discussion;
• to read attentively and effectively;
• to take effective notes;
• to organize your studies to make effective use of Library resources;
• to synthesise a range of information;
• to evaluate claims by judging the quality of evidence offered in support;
• to construct and present coherent arguments, expressing complex ideas concisely and intelligibly, both orally and in writing;
• to develop teamwork skills required for effective interaction in a seminar situation;
• to motivate oneself to work autonomously and to meet deadlines;
• to provide and receive academic criticism in a constructive fashion

You are encouraged to use the Internet but also to exercise discrimination with regard to the material available. The course will encourage the development of analytical skills by introducing you to the use, criticism and comparison of sources.

WEEKLY SEMINAR PROGRAMME

Each topic will be introduced by a lecture on the Monday, followed by discussion of relevant sources. On the Thursday, one or more students will make a presentation on a related question (see below), followed by guided discussion and questioning of selected themes and material. You should come to each seminar with sufficient notes to engage in group work and general discussion.

Week 1 (7)*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Imagery, modernity and the nation</th>
<th>Organize rota of student presentations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>How have the conditions of modernity determined the ways we see the nation?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Week 2:

| Mon | T | Symbolism before celluloid |
| Thurs | Q | What notions of Scottishness are reflected in |
art before 1840?

Week 3:
Mon T The rise of photography: travelogue and landscape
Thurs Q Explain the influence of commercial photographers on perceptions of the Scottish landscape

Week 4:
Mon T Reading week: no lecture/seminar
Thurs Q Reading week: no presentation/seminar

Week 5:
Mon T Ethnology and cultural myths
Thurs Q In what ways might ethnographic images be considered unrepresentative?

Week 6:
Mon T Photojournalism
Thurs Q Assess the contribution of Picture Post to Scottish social and cultural history

Week 7:
Mon T Documentary film: John Grierson and 1938
Thurs Q Discuss the contention that The Face of Scotland tells us more about the aims of documentary makers than it does about the nation

Week 8:
Mon T Films of Scotland after 1955
Thurs Q How does the output of Films of Scotland indicate a commitment to modernism and modernity?

Week 9:
Mon T Case studies (islands)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Q</th>
<th>By evaluating a range of sources show how the imagery of Scottish islands areas may be contestable</th>
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</table>

**Week 10:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Case studies (cities)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>How has visual imagery contributed to remembering the Scottish industrial city?</td>
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</table>

**Week 11:**
<table>
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<th>Mon</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>Contexts, connections, possibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Course overview</td>
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**Week 12:**
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Mon</th>
<th></th>
<th>Revision week</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

* For University week numbering and dates students can view the University Calendar at [https://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/week-numbers-634.php](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/week-numbers-634.php)

**READING LIST AND SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Each topic has several readings and accompanying sources. **You will be expected to read two or more of these items before each class.** The select bibliography (below) provides points of departure for further reading on the topics covered in the course. The footnotes and bibliographies in these books and articles are two sources of further reading; the search-features of the library catalogue, browsing the open shelves, and consulting the course co-ordinator are other ways forward. Meanwhile, since this is a course concerning visual materials, you are also asked to consult electronically accessible sources of images and to navigate these sites. You are encouraged to demonstrate initiative in developing this ability.

**General texts**

There is no one text covering all the themes and topics in this course, but the following provide good methodological and interpretative guidance:


You will find these overviews helpful in getting a sense of some of the Scottish material being covered:

Hardy, Forsyth (1990), *Scotland in Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.


And perspectives on the historical and cultural context from:


**General image sources**

Documentary film: Scottish Screen Archive, [http://ssa.nls.uk](http://ssa.nls.uk)

Photographs and film: SCRAM, [http://www.scran.ac.uk](http://www.scran.ac.uk)

For specific weeks and topics, see:

**Imagery, modernity and the nation**

**Basic concepts**

Modernity:


For an explanation of modernization, see:

https://www.artsy.net/gene/modern-photography
is interesting on modernism in photography

The modern nation:


**Image sources**

UK National Archives

http://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/

http://www.flickr.com/photos/nationalarchives/collections/

Scotland

http://ssa.nls.uk

http://www.scran.ac.uk

Anthropology

https://www.therai.org.uk/the-rai-photographic-library

**Symbolism before celluloid**


**Image sources**


Hill and Adamson Collection

https://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/a/artist/robert-adamson

http://photographyhistory.blogspot.co.uk/2008/01/david-octavius-hill.html

**The rise of photography: travelogue and landscape**


[or any work by Poucher]


Image sources (There are several ways to interrogate each collection. Try these links to begin with, then modify or refine your searches within the site.)

George Washington Wilson Archive

[http://digitool.abdn.ac.uk/R/44YA31L17QD9KQGUQE3A7MYSGHMEXF5SH9S5M4ASG6T6VRVX1-00309?func=collections&collection_id=1055](http://digitool.abdn.ac.uk/R/44YA31L17QD9KQGUQE3A7MYSGHMEXF5SH9S5M4ASG6T6VRVX1-00309?func=collections&collection_id=1055)

James Valentine & Co.


Robert M. Adam

Rephotography

http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/landscapes/what_are_rephotographs.shtml

Ethnology and cultural myths


Kidd, Dorothy (1992), *To See Oursels: Rural Scotland in Old Photographs*, Glasgow: NMS.

http://www.ed.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.75020!/fileManager/IanMacKenzie.pdf


Image sources

RCAHMS
Photojournalism: *Picture Post*

Hall, Stuart (2003 [1972]), ‘The social eye of *Picture Post*’, in Glenn Jordan et al., *Down the Bay: Picture Post, Humanist Photography and Images of 1950s Cardiff*. Cardiff; Butetown History and Arts Centre, pp. 67-72.


Image sources

Search these:

*Picture Post* University Library has an incomplete hard-copy collection.

[www.gettyimages.co.uk](http://www.gettyimages.co.uk)

For example:


[http://www.scran.ac.uk](http://www.scran.ac.uk)
Documentary film: John Grierson and 1938


Butt, Richard, ‘The Films of Scotland Documentaries’
[http://sites.scran.ac.uk/films_of_scotland/](http://sites.scran.ac.uk/films_of_scotland/)


Hardy, Forsyth (ed.) (1979), *Grierson on Documentary*. London: Faber and Faber [Contains many important writings by Grierson, such as ‘First Principles of Documentary’].

Hardy, Forsyth (1990), *Scotland in Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.


**Image sources**

[http://ssa.nls.uk/biography.cfm?bid=10037](http://ssa.nls.uk/biography.cfm?bid=10037) [Films of Scotland, full-length videos available, including *Face of Scotland*, *Scotland for Fitness*, *Sport in Scotland*, *The Children’s Story*, *Dundee, Wealth of a Nation*, *Sea Food*, *They Made the Land*]

[http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/results.php?offset=1&no_results=16&scache=2kce37w34i&searchdb=scran&sortby=&sortorder=ASC&field=&searchterm=] [Comprehensive coverage]

*Films of Scotland* after 1955

Butt, Richard, ‘The Films of Scotland Documentaries’
http://sites.scran.ac.uk/films_of_scotland/


Image sources
http://ssa.nls.uk/biography.cfm?bid=10037 [Films of Scotland, full-length videos available]

http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/results.php?offset=1&no_results=16&scache=2kce37w34i&searchdb=scran&sortby=&sortorder=ASC&field=&searchterm = [Comprehensive coverage]

http://ssa.nls.uk/biography.cfm?bid=10037 [Scottish Screen Archive - Films of Scotland, many full-length videos available]

NB see http://scotlandonscreen.org.uk/database/browse.php for a large viewable database of clips from Scottish documentary films in general

Case studies (islands)


Image sources

Comainn Eachdraidh (Lewis):
- Comann Eachdraidh an Taobh Siar
- Comann Eachdraidh Bharabhais agus Bhrù
- Comann Eachdraidh Bhearnaraigh
- Comann Eachdraidh Bheinn nam Faodhla
- Comann Eachdraidh na Pairc
- Comann Eachdraidh Nis
- Comann Eachdraidh Tholastaidh Bho Thuath
- Stornoway Historical Society

http://www.ceuig.co.uk/
http://www.barraheritage.com/

Orkney Library Photographic Archive

http://www.orkneylibrary.org.uk/html/photoarchive.htm

Shetland Museum

http://www.shetland-museum.org.uk/photoLibrary/

Film

Powell, Michael (1990), *The edge of the world [videorecording]*.

Small Islands Film Festival

http://eileananbeaga.wordpress.com/small-islands-film-trust/

Case studies (cities)


**Image sources**


Spender, Humphrey (1939), ‘Glasgow’, *Picture Post*, 1 April, pp. 43-51.

Springburn Virtual Museum

[http://gdl.cdlr.strath.ac.uk/springburn/springindexcommunity.html](http://gdl.cdlr.strath.ac.uk/springburn/springindexcommunity.html)

Glasgow Digital Library

[http://gdl.cdlr.strath.ac.uk](http://gdl.cdlr.strath.ac.uk)

Edinburgh


**Film**
Several films on Scotland’s cities and towns in the Films of Scotland collection – see http://ssa.nls.uk/biography.cfm?bid=10037

Contexts and connections


Countess of Aberdeen (1893), Through Canada with a Kodak https://archive.org/details/throughcanadawit00aberrich


Martin-Jones, David (2009), Scotland: Global Cinema: Genres, Modes and Identities (EUP, 2009).


**ASSESSMENT**

One three-hour written examination (100%).

*Click to view the University Level Descriptors (ANNEX A).*  
*Click to view the University Assessment Scale Band Descriptors (ANNEX B).*

**PLEASE NOTE:** In order to pass a course on the first attempt, a student must attain a Common Grading Scale (CGS) mark of at least E3 on each element of course assessment. Failure to do so will result in a grade of no greater than CGS E1 for the course as a whole.

**EXAMINATION**

Since this is a new course, there are no past examination papers. However, a mock paper will be provided and discussed. The structure of the paper will be as for other Special Subject options.