Glossary of Key Cinematic Terms

Academy Awards: see Katz

Acting (in cinema): see Katz

Actual sound: Sound recording made on location to add authenticity to the sound track. Usually the sound recordist will ask everybody to remain absolutely quiet for a short time while the recording is made.

Adaptation: The use of literary material (novels, short stories, etc) in the making of a film. The adaptation process involves obtaining the rights to the material from its owners, and hiring someone to write the screenplay.

Ambient light: Existing or natural light that surrounds a subject.

Anamorphic lens: see Katz

Animation: see Katz

Answer print: see Katz

Art director: see Katz

Artifact music: Appropriate music that accompanies a source seen or suggested in the film. (E.g. a radio in a scene may be accompanied on the sound-track by appropriate music to suggest that that is the music the subject in the scene is listening to.)

Aspect ratio: see Katz

Assistant cameraman: see Katz

Assistant director: see Katz

Assistant producer: see Katz

Associative editing: The splicing together of shots of similar events. Also called relational editing. Example: scenes of people being killed inter-cut with scenes of animals being slaughtered.

Auteur (theory of): see Katz

Background noise: see Katz

Back lighting: see Katz

Back projection: see Katz

Best boy: The person who assists the gaffer.

Billing: see Katz

Blaxploitation films: see Katz

Blue screen process: see Katz

Boom: see Katz

Boom shot: see Katz

B grade film: Films of a general poor quality made quickly and cheaply. In the past when double features were common at film theatres these films were used as fillers for the second half of the double bill.

Bridging shot: A shot used to bridge a sudden transition in time, place, etc.

Casting director: see Katz

Character actor: see "character role" in Katz

Cineaste: see Katz

Cinema: see Katz

Cinematographer: see director of photography

Cinematography: film photography.

Cinéma vérité: see Katz.

Clapper board: see "clapsticks" in Katz

Close shot: see Katz

Close-up: see Katz

Composer: composes the original music that is to accompany the film; works closely with the director.

Continuity: see Katz

Continuity clerk: see Katz

Continuity title: see Katz

Costume house: A business company that specializes in costumes for films. The usually practice is that a

filmmaker will rent, rather than buy, whatever costume is needed for the film from the large stock of costumes kept by the costume house.

Credits: It is not uncommon to see audiences in film theatres immediately get up and leave upon the conclusion of the image part of the film, instead of staying a little longer in their seats and read the on-screen film credits: that is, the listing of the personnel who were responsible for making the film (as well as names of all the members of the film cast). Why is it so important to stay and read the credits? Because not doing so is like reading a book without wishing to know who the author is; or listening to music without being concerned about who made the music, or appreciating a painting without bothering to find out who the painter is. There is, here, the following assertion being made: that the viewer/listener has an ethical responsibility, in terms of decency and courtesy, to know the name of the artist behind the art (even if only for a brief moment) that he/she is enjoying. (How would you feel if you were the artist and everyone enjoyed your art: whatever it may be, music, films, paintings, etc.: but refused to acknowledge your existence.) It is absolute arrogance, based on crass ignorance, to refuse to know the artist behind the art.

Now, talking specifically about films, there is no single person who wears the hat of the "filmmaker," but rather there are many persons who wear that hat. In other words: today, more than ever before, all feature films are truly the product of a joint effort involving scores of people (besides the actors); more than any other art medium the film is the physical incarnation of a massive collaborative effort. (Even films produced by independent film-makers are rarely immune from this fact.) In light of the foregoing you must know the film credits of films (not documentaries) screened in this class. However, in order to make this requirement less onerous, you must know only the names of the people who traditionally receive, what I call, principal credits (see below). I also want you to pay close attention to the placement of the principal credits in the film, because even that is an artistic decision. For example, some filmmakers will place the principal credits at the very beginning of the film before any image has been projected, while others will start rolling the principal credits simultaneously with the projection of the images. Some film makers will allow the story to unfold for a while (this initial part of the film is called a "teaser") and then begin to slowly flash the credits one at a time. (Personally, I like this approach because it reminds audiences in a dramatic way that there are actual people who are responsible for making the film they are, presumably, enjoying.) Recently, some filmmakers have been rolling the principal credits at the end of the film.

For the purposes of *this class*, the following film personnel, listed alphabetically, make up the principal credits:

- casting director
- cinematographer
- composer
- director
- editor
- producer
- production designer
- writer (screenplay)
- writer (book—if relevant)

Crane shot: An areal shot taken from a crane.

Cross-cutting: Also called parallel editing where shots are intermingled to suggest parallel action.

Cue cards: see Katz

Cut: see Katz

Cutaway: see Katz

Dailies: see Katz

Deep focus: See Katz.

Detail shot: A close-up shot, but even more magnified. A closeup of the eyes alone, for example, would be a detail shot.

Dialogue editor: The person responsible for ensuring, after film shooting is completed, that all speech in the films is fully audible and there are no unwanted noises on the sound track. If an actor's lines are found to be inaudible then he/she will be called to re-record the speech at a sound studio.

Dialogue track: see Katz

Direct cinema: The preferred style of making documentaries today in the U.S. where the film-maker avoids any participation in the ongoing action; even avoiding, if possible, narration.

Director: see Katz

Director of photography: See Katz

Discovery shot: Using a pan or a dolly shot to provide new information in a scene to the viewer.

Dissolve: The fading out of an image as a new one is faded in.

Docudrama: A dramatization of a true story.

Documentary: see Katz (read only the first *six* paragraphs of this long entry)

Dolby Laboratories Inc.: see Katz

Dolly: see Katz

Dolly shot: see Katz.

Double: see Katz

Double system: see Katz

Dramatization: An actual event reproduced fictionally in film or theatre (or in novels).

Dubbing: see Katz

Editing: see Katz

Editor: see Katz

Environmental sound: see wild sound.

Episode: see Katz

Establishing shot: see Katz

Event films: these are films produced with the aim of rendering their release into media and business events in themselves. Their releases will become part of the daily evening news broadcast on radio and television, not to mention subjects of the talk-show circuit. In addition to the millions spent on production and marketing of the actual films, event films are accompanied by the production and marketing of ancillary merchandise ranging from T-shirts and toys through to books and school supplies on to shoes and cereals; that is almost anything on which the film logo or title can be printed. Another important characteristic of event films is that they are produced for the widest segment of the population possible, more so than in the case of ordinary Hollywood releases, with the result that incredible amounts of resources and talent is expended in the making of a film that in terms of actual substance is, to the intelligent mind, nauseatingly bland. (James Bond films are an example of event films.) Event movies are designed to exploit the gullibility of the *ignorantsia* to the fullest.

Executive producer: see Katz

Exploitation films: see Katz

Expressionism: see Katz

Extra: see Katz

Extreme close-up: see Katz

Extreme long shot: see Katz

Fade: see Katz

Feature film: see Katz

Fill light: see Katz

Filmmaker: generally refers to the director but in this course this term refers to the core group of people (in addition to the director) responsible for making a film and who are usually listed in the principal credits.

Filmography: see Katz

Film noir: see Katz

Film theory: see Katz

Film time: Length of time as portrayed by a events in a story rather than actual playing time of the film.

Film rating: see rating.

Final cut: The film that is finally released for public viewing (from the filmmaker's point of view the final version that the producer cannot temper with).

First cut: The first edited version of a film (which may also be called a rough cut. (See also Final cut.)

First run: see Katz

Flashback: see Katz

Flashforward: see Katz

Focus: see Katz

Focus puller: see Katz

Foley artist: see Katz

Follow shot: see Katz

Frame: see Katz

Freeze frame: see Katz

Front projection: see Katz

Full shot: A full length shot of a subject in which the subject dominates.

Gaffer: see Katz

General release: see Katz

Genre: A category of films that share similar styles, story types, character-types, etc. Examples of film genres include: action/ adventure, science fiction, horror, western, comedy, children, drama, mystery, documentary, romance, suspense, teen, etc.

Grip: see Katz

Gross receipts: see Katz

Hollywood: see Katz

Jump cut: see Katz

Key light: see Katz

Lighting cameraman: see director of photography in Katz

Location: see Katz

Long shot: see Katz

Macro lens: A special type of lens that permits extremely close focusing (involving distances as short as a tenth of a centimeter from the lens surface.)

Married print: see Katz

Master shot: see Katz

Mise-en-scène: see Katz

Mix: see Katz

Montage: see Katz

Motion Picture Association of America: see Katz

Narrative: A story.

Narrative film: Usually a feature film that tells a story (as distinct from say a poetic film).

National Film Preservation Act: see Katz

No-budget film: A low budget film produced at a cost of around one hundred thousand dollars. In probably all instances, a no-budget film will be made by an independent filmmaker strongly committed to making the film. A low-budget film, it may be noted, is a film made at a cost of around five million dollars.

Nontheaterical: see Katz

Out-takes: Shots filmed but eventually remain unused in the final product because of editing decisions.

Over-the-shoulder shot: A shot usually taken when two persons are involved in a dialogue that permits the viewer to see the speaker over the shoulder of the listener. In such a shot parts of the head and shoulder of both the speaker and the listener will be visible in the film frame.

Pan: see Katz

Point-of-view (POV) shot: see Katz

Postproduction: The phase of filmmaking that takes place between principal photography and the distribution of the film to movie theatres. In this phase such tasks as the following will be attended to: editing, addition of sound and visual effects, reshooting of scenes where necessary, music synchronization, making of answer prints, and so on. (See also preproduction.)

Preproduction: The phase of filmmaking that takes place between receiving financial approval to make a film and principal photography. In this phase such tasks as the following will be attended to: setting up a production office, hiring of film crew members, casting of parts in the film, designing of sets, planning of stunts, setting up a shooting schedule, and so on.

Principal credits: see credits.

Principal photography: The actual shooting of a film where the main photography of the film is accomplished (also referred to as the production phase). This is the phase that brings together all the work of the preproduction phase.

Process shot: see Katz

Producer: see Katz

Production code: see Katz

Production designer: see art director

Production values: the general quality of a film as perceived by viewers (in terms of almost everything that is noticeable—outside of the acting and directing—from costumes to color, from lighting to sound, from music to sets, and so on).

Property: see Katz

Prop man: see Katz

Props: see Katz

Publicity still: see Katz

Pull back shot: A shot that is reversed via tracking or zooming in order to reveal the context of the subject. For example a shot that commences with a close up and then gradually proceeds to reveal the entire person and finally the surroundings too.

Rating: see Katz

Realism: A technique of making films in which the subject matter is more important than the filmmaker's personal viewpoint. It is opposite to expressionism.

Real time: Actual present time. A live broadcast of a performance, for example, occurs in real time (compare with a pre-recorded broadcast of a performance).

Release: see Katz

Rentals: see Katz

Rough cut: see Katz

Run-through: see Katz

Running shot: see Katz

Running time: see Katz

Rushes: Another term for dailies.

Scene: see Katz

Screenplay: see Katz

Screenwriter: see Katz

Script: see Katz

Second unit: see Katz

Sequence: see Katz

Set: see Katz

Set designer: see Katz

Shooting ratio: see Katz

Shooting script: see Katz

Short: see *short subject* in Katz

Shot: see Katz

Soporific films: A term I use to describe films that can be best described by adjectives such as asinine, banal, *soporific*, degenerate, mediocre, idiotic, decadent, and so on. (Two examples of such films are *Indecent Proposal* [1993] and *Wayne's World* [1992].) In general, most "event films" tend to be soporific films. Soporific films, as one can guess, stand in stark contrast to *intelligent* films—which are films that are, at once, immensely entertaining but powerfully thought-provoking, and emotionally challenging but intellectually enriching. Most importantly, they fulfill the mandate of true art: via the medium of the aesthetic experience to comment upon and/or question the status quo--at whatever level it may be (global, regional, national, local, etc.) and from what ever perspective (the family, society, polity, economy, the environment, etc., etc.)--in the service of a better future. To explain this point in another way: the difference between an intelligent film and non-intelligent film, at the simplest level, is that the intelligent film makes demands on the intelligence of the viewer. This difference emerges most clearly when one makes the distinction between art and entertainment. Art makes one look at the world differently, while entertainment throws back what one already knows, but in an oversimplified manner. Youngblood (1979:754) captures this distinction in relation to cinema succinctly: "By perpetuating a destructive habit of unthinking response to formulas, by forcing us to rely ever more frequently on memory, the commercial entertainer encourages an unthinking response to daily life, inhibiting self-awareness....

He offers nothing we haven't already conceived, nothing we don't already expect. Art explains; entertainment exploits. Art is freedom from the conditions of memory; entertainment is conditional on a present that is conditioned by the past. Entertainment gives us what we want; art gives us what we don't know what we want. To confront a work of art is to confront oneself--but aspects of oneself previously unrecognized." Intelligent films, then, are also works of art.

Stand-in: see Katz

Star system: see Katz

Steadicam: see Katz

Still: see Katz

Stock footage: see Katz

Stop motion: see Katz

Storyboard: see Katz

Story editor: see Katz

Studio: see Katz

Studio system: see Katz

Subjective camera: see Katz

Swish pan: see Katz

Take: see Katz

Titles: see Katz

Track laying: see Katz

Tracking shot: see Katz

Verisimilitude: A quality of making something appear to be real. There is a very important aspect of verisimilitude that is of considerable relevance to this course: it has to do with the fact that the quest for verisimilitude has become an inadvertent vehicle for the socialization of marginality, in this way:
1. The human desire for entertainment (genetically determined? Perhaps).
2. Leads to an eternal and insatiable quest for verisimilitude.
3. Leads to the invention of cinema/television (and mass visual entertainment).
4. Requires expensive technology (production, and distribution).
5. Requires large financial outlays—especially because films are a gamble.
6. Requires marketing to as large an audience as possible to recoup the financial investment.
7. Requires themes and depictions that are in consonance with the outlook of the majority

of the audience—Euro-Americans, males, etc.

8. In the areas of race/ gender/ class relations these themes and depictions will play to pre-existing racist/ sexist/ class stereotypes, as well as act to reinforce them. In other words: There is a dialectical relationship between, say, racism and sexism in film, and racism and sexism in society at large.

9. Also leads to "textual erasure" of blacks, women, etc. from scenes and storylines altogether—as if they don't exist in society at all.

10. Final outcome: leads to socialization of "marginality" of blacks, women, the working class, etc. (because films have become a powerful medium of socialization in general). Note further:

Independent cinema is under less pressure to subscribe to the above scenario, than "Hollywood" cinema.

"Textual erasure" refers to the non-inclusion of a group of people for discriminatory reasons. This is most clearly visible at the time of film casting where ordinary roles, which in real life could be performed by anyone (including blacks, women, etc.), are assigned exclusively to whites or males. Textual erasure results from stereotypes or outright racism/sexism on the part of filmmakers. For example, the stereotype that blacks occupy only lower class positions in society [which of course is not entirely true]—therefore film roles featuring middle or upper class positions should not be assigned to black actors. A group who are almost always targets of textual erasure in films (for racist reasons) are Asians—even though many of them in this country are middle class and professionals.

"Stereotypes" refers to the generalization of a quality in an individual to an entire group of people that the individual belongs to. (Note, therefore, that stereotypes by definition dehumanize those who are stereotyped.) Stereotypes are created by artists (writers, actors, filmmakers, painters, musicians, comedians, journalists, etc.) in order to justify discrimination and prejudice. The newest stereotype popularized in the West in recent years—especially following 9/11—is that Arab and Asian Muslims are all terrorists. Some stereotypes can go out of fashion because of changed circumstances (e.g. the stereotype that all Russians are communists is no longer in vogue today.)

"Marginality" refers to pushing people to the margins of society by means of prejudice and discrimination.

"Socialization" refers to the process of passing values, norms, mores, etc. from one group of people to another—e.g. from the older generation (parents) to the younger generation (children), or from a peer-group to a new member of the group.

Video: see Katz (read entire entry).

Walk-on: see Katz

Wild sound: see Katz

Wipe: see Katz

Working title: see Katz

Writer: see screenwriter.