Week 3: Editing and Continuity in Hollywood and It’s Others
Announcements

Reading for Next Week on Electronic Reserves
- “Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound,” ALTMAN

Work on Visualization of Ideas Component of Preproduction Notebook (due at end of class next week)
Announcements

"Demand Nothing, Occupy Everything": a film series examining the roots of the current economic crisis affecting universities, and strategies that social movements have been using to respond.

Visual Arts Facility (VAF) Performance Space
This evening, Tuesday, Jan 19, 7-9 pm: POSTPONED due to weather

Excerpts from:
- Un Granito de Arena
- The Potentiality of Storming Heaven - on the Greek Student Occupations
- Excerpts from Tout Va Bien by JP Gorin and Jean-Luc Godard
- UC Berkeley Protests at Wheeler Hall Part 2
- UC Berkeley Budget Protest. The Wheeler Frontlines
- Occupied Berkeley: The Taking of Wheeler Hall
Hollywood’s Others

- Experimental
- European
- Documentary / Newsreels
- Television (serials, novelas, other formats)
- Third Cinema
- World / Regional Cinema
- Independent Cinema
- Industrial / Educational
- Scientific
- Are there more?
Hollywood and Its Others

What distinguishes these other cinematic practices from Classical Hollywood Narrative Cinema?

- Differences in formal and aesthetic approach
- Distribution, Audiences, Venues and Presentation
- Differences in message and ideological/political orientation
- What attachments to tradition/convention; and drives to innovation characterize each mode?
The Production Cycle

Pre - Production - planning / development / preparation, actor casting and rehearsals

Production - shoot, and record sound and picture

Post Production - editing, mixing, digital effects

Distribution
Continuity and Editing

The continuity style is characterized by the experience of a smoothly flowing, *seamless* narrative--one that is *visibly continuous* and where we tend not to notice the gaps and breaks of scene changes, editing, and subtitles. Continuity editing is a system or grammar for organizing shots with the goal of maintaining the viewer's spatial orientation and temporal orientation. The continuity system is geared toward maintaining engagement and reducing self-consciousness of the act of viewing.
Continuity

• "With the continuity system, the film could do what the eye does naturally: select and focus on the quintessential drama. This practice spelt economy in attention, vividness of effect, and dramatic intensity." (actor Milton Sills in 1928)

• The continuity system organizes the spectator's attention, acting in concert with principles of depth and centering of composition to guide the eye within and between shots.
Continuity

Introduces new concepts of causal and temporal unity based on editing, camera framing and movement, and (later) sound to establish patterns of narrative flow and logic.

The continuity style is primarily a visual system, unlike the novel. It breaks with the tableau-like setting of theater, and isolates and breaks up space through framing and editing, directing our field of view, unlike theater, which allows our eye to move more freely over a broader established space.
Early Development of Continuity

*Great Train Robbery*, Edwin Porter, 1903
- parallel editing; cross cutting
- minor camera movement
- location shooting
- less stage-bound camera placement

D. W. Griffith refined much of what has become continuity style in his biograph shorts and later epics such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915). Crosscutting, rhythmic editing, varied angles and framing, close ups and full shots.
Covering a Scene

Types of shots filmed (determined by editing style):

- Establishing shot
- Master take
- Shot/ Reverse Shot
- Cut Away
Types of Edits

- **Graphic matches**: connects shots based on visual similarities or connections.

- **Rhythmic cutting**: shots cut together according to a pattern or rhythm - length of each shot relates to this beat.

- **Spatial cutting**: creates unified space through the editing shots from different angles and framing. Shot/Reverse Shot. Kuleshov effect. Parallel editing.

- **Temporal cutting**: connects shots to support narrative development. May be linear progression or not. Flashback or flash-forward. Establishes the progression of time.
Editing Transitions/Effects

- **Cut**: simple splice—one clip ends and is followed by another in a clean break.

- **Dissolve**: an edit in which consecutive clips are superimposed—the first is faded out while the second is faded in.

- **Fade In**: a transition from a black or white clip to a shot.

- **Fade Out**: a transition from a shot to a black or white clip.

- **Wipe**: a transition in which one clip replaces another over time through a graphic pattern. (i.e., moving from right to left, top to bottom, like a set of opening blinds, etc...)
Temporal Editing

Match on Action - no time passes, continuous movement between one shot and the next

Elliptical Editing - suggesting time has passed. Use of the dissolve or wipe, show character leaving frame and cut to a shot before character has reentered frame.

Overlapping Editing - action occurs again and again (*Battleship Potempkin*, Eisenstein)

Flashback - intercut action from previous scene or scene assumed to have occurred already
Continuity Editing

- Classical Hollywood Style of Editing
- Invisibility of edits
- Seamless construction
- Removing acknowledgement of filmic apparatus (that which contributes to it’s making / construction).
- Construct, preserve and maintain space
- Screen direction and eyeline match
- 180 degree rule
Spatial Continuity

180 Degree Rule:
Spatial Continuity

A *jump cut* will result from cuts between two shots of the same subject that are too similar in angle and distance. There are several ways to avoid a jump cut: shift framing distance (i.e., medium to close up shot); insert a cut away shot; or use the 30 degree rule.

30 Degree Rule: make sure that the angle of view of the camera to the subject changes by thirty degrees or more between two shots cut together, the background will move enough that the shots will cut together well without any apparent visual discontinuity.
Examples:

Vertigo, Alfred Hitchcock
(1958, USA)

Before the Devil Knows You’re Dead, Sidney Lumet
(2007, USA)
Both space and time are constructed in cinema. In the classical Hollywood style space and time are unified, continuous and linear. They appear as a unified whole to match our perception of time and space in reality. This is for example achieved by the 180° rule or by the relative lack of jump cuts (cuts that leave out a time period of a continuous action).
Space, time, and style

For example if you have a hostage situation there will invariably be a cross-cutting between the rescuers and the hostage. All of the above results in what Bordwell has called "an excessively obvious cinema," in that it follows a set of norms, paradigms, and standards that match and gratify viewers expectations. The end of a classical Hollywood film answers for all questions that have been provided and one doesn’t leave the cinema perplexed. From an ideological perspective, these practices discourage viewers critical inquiry of any particular film as well as the underlying practices of mainstream cinema in general.
Breaking with CHC

Many more contemporary (post-1960) and most recent independent films are less straightforward. There may well be unresolved issues and unanswered questions, as well as highly ambiguous motivations. Starting in the 1960s, many filmmakers, often for political reasons, rejected the well-made linear narrative and added ambiguity to their narrative tools. In conjunction, with this we see formal experimentation, and breaks with rules of continuity being employed.
Alternatives to Continuity Editing

- Montage brings together shots to create new meanings: symbolically related images, psychological relationships

_Battleship Potemkin_ (USSR, 1925), Sergei Eisenstein
Soviet Avant-Garde

- **Sergei Eisenstein** - theorist of montage. Masses as protagonist. Affect or emotion as key to power of cinema.
- **Dziga Vertov** - Kino Eye, technology of vision, industrialization/modernization as theme.
- **Lev Kuleshov** - established world’s first film school. First theorist. Editing/montage as central to film. Kuleshov experiment/effect.
- **Vsevolod Pudovkin** - focus on individual. Influenced by Hollywood continuity.
- **Aleksander Dovzhenko** - Drawing on cultural/ethnic roots and folk motifs.
Abstract or Associational Form

- Use graphic and rhythmic montage
- Experimental film
- *Ballet Mécanique*, 1924, Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy
- *Man with a Movie Camera*, 1929, Dziga Vertov
- *A Movie*, Bruce Conner
Jump cuts

- The appearance of a temporal gap between similar shots.
- *Breathless*, Jean Luc Godard (France, 1960)
Jump cuts as intentional effect

- French New Wave or Avant-Garde Cinema
- *Breathless*, Jean Luc Godard (France, 1960)
Jump cuts as intentional effect

- Critical Ethnographic Film/video