

Call for Chapter Proposals for Edited Book

Screening the Crisis: U.S. Cinema and Social Change in the 21st Century

This project aims to develop innovative insights into the interplay between U.S. cinema and the contemporary, multifaceted crisis. In particular, the aim of this publication is to explore how cinema engages with the various changes that are transforming U.S. society as a consequence of the crisis, how cinema pushes ideas in particular directions and how cinema provides us with a different, more complex understanding of the challenges before us. The financial meltdown of 2008 exposed the contradictions of the political settlement that had emerged during the previous decades, but in a sense, it was just a symptom of a cancer that had already spread to other areas of the sociopolitical body. On that occasion the diagnosis pointed toward the dominant neoliberal ideology as the root cause of the disease. One of the most serious consequences of this ongoing malady is that it has profoundly transformed the way we make sense of society. Anyone would think that the collapse of the financial system would bring about a critical examination of the neoliberal dogmas that have led to this situation. However, it seems that these ideological forces not only continue unabated but are often perceived as the only viable solution. Or, to put it another way, the economic crisis has somehow reshaped the relationships between political and civil society, producing a new consensus respecting the authority of the market in serving the interests of the people. It is feasible that neoliberalism is not a hegemonic or unquestioned project, but during the last decade and as a result of the 2008 crash, there is no doubt market values have permeated every aspect of society, making some alternatives reasonable and acceptable while other options appear unrealistic and naïve.

In the past few months, a discussion has started in economic and political circles about whether the current sluggish economic growth will morph into another full-blown global recession (a prospect trumpeted by a compliant media that is never held accountable). Such a gloomy economic forecast needs to be evaluated with caution and situated within a very concrete field of forces. However, we cannot ignore that even the prospect of another recession might exacerbate a reactionary backlash and take the country further down the neoliberal road, fomenting legislation that continues to subvert the democratic process, dismantle the welfare state, privatize public services, shift taxes on to the less well-off, and remove government regulations on big business, with all the consequences that these measures entail respecting social relations, labor rights and climate change.

How we make sense of these events, how we think about the challenges faced by society, and how we envisage other possibilities cannot be separated from the ways crises are represented. While other areas of knowledge have already produced analyses of today's crisis, film studies has yet to theorize approaches to it as an economic and, more importantly, as a political, social, and cultural phenomenon. We work on the assumption that the current sociopolitical situation calls on film scholars to reconsider the nature of the relationship between cinema and culture and to think more carefully about what issues need pursuing and how to proceed. In line with these considerations, this project is, on the one hand, an attempt to elucidate the impact of the crisis on film narrative and film aesthetics. On the other hand, it is concerned with how these changes

in modes of representation provide audiences with different ways to think about the crisis and thus help spectators navigate the various, interconnected social, political, economic and ideological forces and contradictions that characterize the present conjuncture. Along these lines, we invite contributions that explore the engagement of cinema with the various manifestations of the contemporary moment of crisis. Topics may include but are not limited to the following (in particular, we encourage approaches that address the interconnectedness of some of these issues):

- Film narrative and aesthetics; film theory; film genre; performance; stars
- Film and society: class; race; immigration; the refugee crisis; environmental issues; gender identity; militarism; surveillance
- Film and economics: neoliberalism; privatization and deregulation; austerity; globalization; labor; imperialism
- Film and politics: democracy; social welfare; inequality; poverty; plutocracy; fascism
- Film and the nation: nationalisms; national sovereignty; borders; white supremacy
- Film and culture: feelings and emotions; nostalgia; hope; media and information technologies; thought leaders and (anti)intellectualism
- Film and personal relationships: intimacy; family; queer representation; love; sexuality

Please email your proposal to screeningthecrisis@gmail.com by April 30, 2020. Full chapters are due by November 30, 2020. The volume will be published by a major British or US publisher in the course of 2021.

All submissions must include an abstract of approximately 300-500 words with selected bibliography, keywords (up to five), and a short biographical note stating the author's current research interests and recent publications.

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