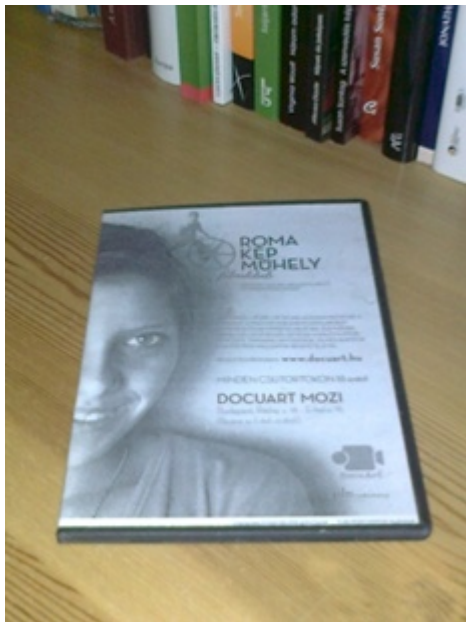




ROMA KÉP

CEU CRC Course Development Competition ELTE BTK Média és Kommunikáció Tanszék

2010-ben, az ELTE MMI Film-, Média és Kultúraelméleti Doktori Programjának doktorjelöltjeként sikeresen pályáztam a Közép-Európai Egyetem Felsőoktatási Módszertani Központjának (CEU Course Resource Center <http://web.ceu.hu/crc/cdc.html>) kurzusfejlesztési támogatására. A tíz hónapos ösztöndíj tartalmazta a fejlesztéshez szükséges anyagi támogatást és két (a kurzusfejlesztés elkezdésekor és közvetlenül a kurzus indítása előtt szervezett) módszertani workshopon való részvételt. A támogatás kötelező felhasználása kiterjedt szakirodalom vásárlására. A kurzusfejlesztés keretében az ELTE Stúdióban egy digitális oktatási segédeszköz elkészítésére is módunk volt: ez tartalmazta a kurzushoz használt filmrészleteket és szakirodalmat. A kurzus hallgatói azokat a félév elején megkapták, majd a félév végén leadták a stúdióban, ahol elhelyezték a dvd-tárban.



A kurzus tematikája az akkor készülő doktori dolgozatomra épült. Az „antropológiai képértelmezésnek” nevezett módszer lényege szerint a filmeket nem elsősorban formanyelvi

szempontok alapján elemeztük, hanem igyekeztük elhelyezni azokat az adott korszak társadalmi terének dinamikájában. Ezekhez az értelmezésekhez társadalomtudományi, főleg antropológiai és kultúraelméleti szövegeket hívtunk segítségül.

A kis létszámú csoport lehetőséget adott a szemináriumjelleg erősítésére: a frontális előadások mellett/helyett egyre inkább előnyben részesítettem a közös elemzéseket, a hallgatók bevonását. Ezt a párhuzamosan futó Romakép Műhely vetítéseinek és beszélgetéseinek elemzése még érdekesebbé, változatosabbá tette. A félév során a hallgatókkal való „törődés” egyénileg történt, a hierarchikus tanár/diák viszony egyre inkább partnerivé vált. Ehhez nagyban hozzájárultak a választható feladatok: egy-egy programelem beszélgetésének moderálása (Farkas Clara, Kováts Bálint és Szalmás Attila vállalták egy-egy estét). A félév végén, a kurzus hallgatóinak egy részével az Erzsébet téri Gödör teraszán határoztuk el a filmklub közösségi formában való folytatását.

Az alábbi „Course Portfolio” tartalmazza a kurzusfejlesztés módszertani alapjainak leírását, ezt a támogatás felhasználásáról írt beszámolóhoz készítettem a CEU CRC munkatársainak.

COURSE PORTFOLIO

Introduction

During the course development process (which started in fact in December 2009 when I decided to apply for the CDC grant coming to the end of and being unsatisfied with a course of the same topic) I went through several stages concerning my own development as a teacher. Apart from all the benefits this grant made possible for our department (including its teachers and students) I would highlight in the introduction the development of my personal teaching philosophy. I have become more and more convinced that any innovative change in the traditional teaching and learning practices combined with deepened personal care and contact with students can lead to strong motivation to study and practice skills acquired during the course. Partnership based on constant change of ideas about teaching methodology, self-reflection does not destroy the prestige of teachers but on the contrary: it makes students more aware of their own roles in the outcomes of the learning process, heightens their respect and strengthens their ties to the teacher. Thus not the grades but the teacher's personal (and yet professional) views and comments on their achievements become more important. I think in higher education it helps a lot students to initiate and provides them with more self-confidence which is indispensable just as in classroom activities as in their own research. The other fruitful result of course development is that a research into one's own teaching can help a lot in the future: even without a course portfolio one is more conscious of his/her own innovations, the pitfalls they might have and this self-reflection can be built in everyday teaching practices.

Course design essay

CONTEXT

How to combine university mission with my background and scholarly interests with the students' backgrounds, needs and interests?

The mission of ELTE EMC Media and Communication Department suits very much my scholarly interests and perspectives since in the recent years its curriculum gradually shifted emphasis to an interdisciplinary study of media phenomena and contemporary culture. What is crucial for me, that "the program offers skills in journalism and communication as well as a critical understanding of the mechanisms and changes in media, communication, and contemporary culture, with a social and cultural studies emphasis" (General description, <http://mmi.elte.hu/english/media>).

In contrast with my expectations the courses were attended mainly by BA students from the Film Department and some BA students from the Media Department. (Apart from them some student visited the course from other departments who study social sciences, pedagogy and strangely enough at ELTE training-school for kindergarten teachers.) Roma representation was the key word which attracted students from all over the university.

I have very little teaching experience in higher education (a creative media practice at ELTE EMC, several film history courses at PPKE and a cultural studies course at ELTE EMC Film Department.) The most important among these was the last one since the course was based on my research and the enthusiasm and openness toward the subject from the part of the students made a great impression on me. Their opinion expressed openly at the end of the term, the ongoing relation with some of them (partly in the form of the continuation of the research they started as a seminar assessment) has motivated me a lot and made me ask several questions about my research and teaching methodology.

My doctoral research is an interdisciplinary study of Roma representation in film and this is a subject terrain that requires basic skills in arts and humanities, communication and film studies, but mainly in social and cultural studies. This complexity means that building a course around this topic has got lots of open or hidden pitfalls.

One of the greatest challenges was the alignment in course design: how to choose the right goals and outcomes, but mainly: what type of knowledge do I intend to deliver?

I had a fear that because of the complexity of the subject I might do a mistake with planning the course with "too broad coverage" presuming that students are not familiar enough with basic social scientific terms, although I would prefer to deliver performative and transferable type of knowledge that they can use in other analytical and interpretative activities, tasks.

My perspective is mainly anthropological: thus the analysis of Roma representation in film is based on using terms like (cultural, collective) identity, community, social act, etc.

I argue, (as the starting point of my research itself) that the most "spectacular" change in representational politics after the change of system can be traced on "Roma images", thus e.g. the fiction and documentary films become a type of minority representation that gives us a broad insight into power politics. The knowledge gained at analyzing them can be very useful in the examination of groups formed by gender, race and class.

Approaching Roma representation from several social scientific and cultural studies angles I would have also liked to bridge a gap in Hungarian film studies: namely examining films on social issues using the tools and terms of anthropology and establishing new interpretational frameworks based on visual anthropological film theory.

The course was optional and additive in its function: it aimed to further develop all those transferable skills students should use in their jobs as journalists, editors, filmmakers, etc. The most closely related course was "The politics of representation" held by Léna Pellandini-Simányi. It was built around three crucial issues connected and partly overlapping my subject: examining the relation between media and reality they analyze and discuss manipulation/reception; the role of representational processes in formulating reality and the critical approach of representation highlighting the main issues of "rightful" representation. (I revealed at the first lessons that only a couple of students visited earlier these courses.)

STUDENTS

There was a problem I could hardly deal with concerning my knowledge about the existing skills, background knowledge and priorities, expectations of the students. First of all I could lean on my experiences of the previous course with similar content: the participation, motivation of the students and the result of the seminar papers (plus many conversations with some of the most enthusiastic students.)

In order to fill this gap I found a solution (that might or might not work): on the very first lecture apart from the usual conversation about their studies, interests, expectations I gave them an exercise. They had to write a short analysis of Roma representation based on a visual text that made great impression on them either in positive or negative way. Thus I could reveal the type of their choices (if it comes from their previous studies, out-school experiences or any other resources), the way they describe, analyze or interpret that certain visual material). The result was a mixture of expressing naïve, romantic views and stating precise, academic argumentation.

On the following lecture I just referred briefly to the papers having given up their detailed analysis.

SOURCES

The decisions I had to make choosing the most appropriate readings were rather difficult. I could not be sure about the language skills of the students, although I hoped they can at least read the required articles in English. The readings reflected well the interdisciplinary approach of the course: the proportion of social sciences (sociology and anthropology), communication, film and cultural studies was nearly equal.

What was a great help for the course is that we could use a digital course reader that contained all the compulsory and optional readings in pdf files, and lots of visual material (photos, film extracts). So the students could watch and analyze them at home before each

lesson so that after watching them together they could participate actively in the discussion about them. (I was edited at ELTE Studio and I am glad to say

As part of the assessment the students either had to make a presentation related to the reading and the visual materials given for each seminar or prepare and moderate the follow-up discussion at DocuArt, where the seminars took place. But after having read the papers mentioned above I decided to ask them to write a short essay connected to their presentation by the end of the term. (I will come back to student evaluation in details later in the portfolio.)

AIMS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

Among my purposes the first (but least important) was to deliver a certain amount of examples of Roma representation in Hungarian film history in a descriptive/systemizing way. The stress was not on film historical description (introducing the students to interesting examples) but on the cultural theoretical / methodological approach of the analyses (discussing the use of Roma characters, attributes). The way we questioned all the time the meaning of certain terms used in analysis (Roma identity, culture, ethnicity, stereotypes, etc.) meant to help students to identify and compare the representational politics of different eras. With the tools of social sciences they could comprehend the construction of Roma images in that certain visual representation but they also became able to generalize the representational modes, characterize other artistic or media products and analyze the representation of other ethnic, class or gender groups.

Learning outcomes

The most important learning outcomes were the followings:

the students should become aware of the importance of the identification of the attributes of Roma (cultural) identity and differentiate between the attributes of class identity

analyzing several forms of visual representation they can construct the way “ethnicity” changes in certain social-historical environment, the – open or hidden – discursive elements of them

comparing the representational modes of several periods they can identify the historical changes in representational politics

they have a better understanding about our contemporary media environment and carry out critical media text analysis

they can use terms of social sciences with exact definition in their research work and write professional articles on related issues

they get confidence in public discussions

they become more innovative choosing their research topic and applying interdisciplinary approaches.

STRUCTURING THE COURSE (CONTENT)

Structuring the course was one of the most difficult tasks for me in designing the course.

First of all there were some circumstances independently from the department's decisions: a new regulation at ELTE EMC does not allow for professors who do not have status at the department to hold theoretical only practical courses. So my courses were both offered as "media analysis". It meant that my structure (lecture and seminar) might not work if not the same students visit the two parts of the courses. Although it was mentioned in the electronic study system of the university that the two courses are built on each other, and they both should be visited, for some reason system did not allow attend both of them. Consequently fifteen students attended the lecture-like course at ELTE and only three the seminar-like course at DocuArt. But most of them promised to visit both because as they said they were highly interested in the screenings.

Thus I had to restructure the courses: my original plan was that each lecture would be divided into two parts: a teacher-led introduction with the main theoretical statements and student-centered analysis of certain visual materials where the students can internalize the related terms of the introductory part.

According to the syllabus the seminars held at DocuArt (the only cinema of documentary films in Budapest) as a traditional film club tightly or loosely connected to the topics of the lectures. At the follow-up discussions two guests were to participate: a film scholar or filmmaker and a social scientist. The issues of the discussions were naturally connected to the film but structured previously around certain representational problems.

In the end we had a completely different structure. In the first part of the term (when the lectures were centered around theoretical issues) I tried to keep this system: combining teacher-led introduction with presentations and discussions of certain issues. In the second part of the term when the history of representation was the basis of the content the lectures became seminar-like analyzing certain visual materials mainly film extracts. But since the students who visited regularly the screenings and follow-up discussions at DocuArt were very much interested in their topics and because these events were fascinating, we often had discussions about them at the lectures: analyzing the previous ones or preparing the following ones.

Revised syllabus

Name of instructor: Andrea Pócsik

Course title:

Roma Representation in the Light of Cultural Theories / “Roma Image Laboratory”

Course type: optional

Course level: BA students

University/institution: ELTE EMC

Department: Department of Media Studies

Country: Hungary

I. INTRODUCTION

A/ Locating the course within the discipline

The course offers a critical understanding of the mechanisms and changes in media, communication, and contemporary culture, with a social and cultural studies emphasis. Thus examining the cultural representation of the Hungarian Roma from the cultural studies perspective means a certain interdisciplinary approach: the most “spectacular” change in representational politics after the change of system can be traced on “Roma images”, thus e.g. the fiction and documentary films become a type of minority representation that gives us a broad insight into power politics. The knowledge gained at analyzing them can be very useful in the examination of groups formed by gender, race and class.

Approaching Roma representation from several social scientific we can bridge a gap in Hungarian film studies: namely examining films on social issues using the tools and terms of anthropology and establishing new interpretational frameworks based on visual anthropological film theory.

B/ Locating the course within the curriculum

This course adds some important new elements to the curriculum of Media Department. It provides the students with a deeper anthropological perspective apart from those studied at courses on social psychology, sociology, communication studies etc. It arms them with terms and theories which make them able to gain access to and interpret social processes which deeply influence cultural representation.

The course should be optional and additive in its function: it should further develop all those transferable skills students should use in their jobs as journalists, editors, filmmakers, etc. The most closely related course is “The politics of representation” held by Léna Pellandini-Simányi. It is built around three crucial issues connected and partly overlapping my subject: examining the relation between media and reality they analyze and discuss manipulation/reception; the role of representational processes in formulating reality and the critical approach of representation highlighting the main issues of “rightful” representation.

C/ Students’ assumed knowledge

The students possess basic knowledge and terminology connected to the disciplines of communication and media in general which should be enlarged and complete with those of filmic representation and visual anthropology.

Their language skill in English is usually at advanced level.

D/ Number of participating students

15 BA students (mainly from the Film Department, some of them from the Media, Sociology and Pedagogy Department).

II. AIMS OF THE COURSE

To familiarize the students with a certain amount of examples of Roma representation in Hungarian film history in a descriptive/systemizing way.

To describe certain film historical periods from cultural studies perspective (discussing the use of Roma characters, attributes).

Questioning all the time the meaning of certain terms used in analysis (Roma identity, culture, ethnicity, stereotypes, etc.) thus to help the students identify and compare the representational politics of different eras.

With the tools of social sciences to help the students comprehend the construction of Roma images in that certain visual representation.

To help them to generalize the representational modes, characterize other artistic or media products and analyze the representation of other ethnic, class or gender groups.

To motivate them to look for new paths in their media / film studies.

To equip students with theoretical tools for the critical analysis of Roma representation avoiding exoticism or orientalism which often accompany studies on the Roma.

Through critical approach of the corpus of the chosen visual material and the class discussions to arm the students with tools that can help them to create outlines of a theoretically informed research agenda.

III. LEARNING OUTCOMES (OBJECTIVES)

The students can identify the attributes of Roma (cultural) identity and differentiate between the attributes of class identity.

Analyzing several forms of visual representation they can construct the way “ethnicity” changes in certain social-historical environment, their – open or hidden – discursive elements.

Comparing the representational modes of several periods they can identify the historical changes in representational politics.

They have a better understanding about our contemporary media environment and carry out critical media text analysis.

They can use terms of social sciences with exact definition in their research work and write professional articles on related issues.

IV. STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

Lectures (A)

The course consists of large-scale panels which include smaller units. These panels reflect two directions from where we approach Roma representation:

1. visual communication and anthropological perspective,
2. cultural studies and film theories.

The split between the two large panels reflects a change in aspect: in the first part of the course (1-6.) theoretical terms and assumptions will be clarified, the main anthropological approaches will be illustrated with crucial filmic examples.

In the second part of the course (7-12.) film historical periods will be examined revealing through the usage of the medium certain social and cultural historical context they were born in.

Thus from the epistemological and political issue of representation in general through the observation, description and interpretation of otherness we get to the problem of visibility, namely to its role in our cultural environment.

Seminars (B)

On the occasion of the lectures theoretical background will be provided, and concrete case studies on Roma representation will be carried out during the seminars applying the theoretical tools.

The seminars will take place at a documentary film cinema near the university in the form of a traditional film club.

V. TEACHING METHODOLOGY

According to the structure of the course which is based on lectures and seminars the teaching methodology basically combines frontal lecturing with discussions and other interactive activities. I will stress the importance of the compulsory and optional readings. A great help will be the digital course reader in the lectures: using it at home the students can make home works, deepen their knowledge.