Final Report
Academic Program Review
Film Studies Program

Review Process

The Film Studies Program prepared a self-study following program review guidelines. An external review team, composed of three faculty/administrators from other institutions, visited the campus for the purpose of reviewing both the Department of Theatre and the Film Studies Program. The Program Review Committee (PRC) read the self-studies and the external reviews, and discussed both units with the Dean of Arts and Sciences. After thorough study, the PRC decided to follow the decision of the external review team and report separately on each unit. This document reflects the PRC’s findings and recommendations for the Film Studies Program.

Self-Study

Historical Background and Description of Film Studies

The Film Studies Program was founded in 1977 as an interdisciplinary program in the College of Arts and Sciences. The program is administered by a Director and the Film Studies Advisory Committee, both appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The Committee, chaired by the Director, advises on curricular, programmatic and budgetary matters and consists of the Curator of the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Theatre and Gallery (ex officio) and faculty from Theatre, English, Romance Languages, GREAL, Ethnic Studies, History, Popular Culture, and Art. At present, the Theatre Department has an especially close relationship with the program, in that it provides the current Director, serves as a physical “home” for students, and offers the large introductory course in the program.

Mission

The program’s “mission, broadly defined, is to meaningfully contribute to the intellectual and cultural life in society through scholarship, creative work, teaching, and service. More specifically, the program endeavors to provide students with an understanding and appreciation of cinema as a formally innovative visual and narrative (fiction and non-fiction) art form, as an industry and technologically based communications medium, and as a historically contingent social and cultural force in the modern world.” It also strives to prepare students through specialized training for careers in film and to serve the campus community through curriculum (Humanities and General Education requirements), exhibitions and symposia.

Program Components

The program offers an undergraduate major and minor in film studies. The curriculum, comprised of courses from participating or affiliate units, neither offers its
own courses nor cross-lists courses with other units in the College and University. The program coordinates the film collection housed in Instructional Media Services and co-sponsors occasional film exhibition series and symposia. The Dorothy and Lillian Gish Film Scholarship is offered to an undergraduate.

Faculty and Staff Resources

The program has no faculty or staff allocation. The current Director receives neither a salary nor a load reduction. A roster of around 20 participating/affiliate faculty with a wide variety of competencies teach courses in the curriculum and/or serve on the Advisory Committee.

Instruction and Demand

From its inception in 1977, the number of majors in the program has increased to 30 in 1992 and 44 in 1998. Enrollment in film courses has increased from 1199 in 1994 to 1742 in 1998.

The program does not earn SCH, because it has no courses of its own. However, the annual production of SCH in film courses of participating departments is substantial and increasing: 3597 in 1994 to 5260 in 1998.

The program indirectly contributes to the College of Arts and Sciences and University General Education requirements through courses offered by participating departments.

Facilities and Equipment

The program has no physical facilities of its own. However, designated classroom space and public screening facilities exist to support the program in general. These include the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Film Theater, a superb screening facility in Hanna Hall equipped to project 16mm and 35mm film, laser disc and video; and several other large and enhanced classrooms with projection equipment. (To date the Film Studies Program has not established a formal affiliation with the Gish Film Theater.)

The self-study reports that “the equipment and infrastructure to support the production of 16mm film and Super-8 have severely deteriorated” and production courses have been discontinued (TCOM 1994). However, the program does offer a production course in the summer by employing a Detroit filmmaker. Sophisticated video production equipment (Media 100) exists on campus, but is not integrated into the program’s curriculum. Separate Media 100 video editing facilities are housed in the School of Art, the Department of Telecommunications, the Department of Visual Communication and Technology Education, and WBGU-TV, and comprise a unique feature and resource in the state of Ohio.

Information Resources

A report prepared by the Jerome Library film bibliographer describes the general and specific nature of resources. The collections appear quite adequate,
especially in light of services of Ohio Link. Of particular interest are several special collections in the Popular Culture Library (thousands of primary works, with particular strength in mass media) and The Gish Film Theater Collection in the Center for Archival Collections.

**Program Self-Evaluation**

Despite certain positives, the self-study states that the Film Studies Program “has historically been marginalized and disadvantaged” for the following reasons:

- The program is understaffed and underfunded resulting in an inability to promote itself, to sponsor exhibitions and symposia, and to staff and schedule courses in the curriculum.
- The program depends on the largess of participating departments.
- The program’s administrative arrangement is a structural obstacle.
- The assignment of the program to a department has been driven by willingness of faculty to serve as director and by the departments to accommodate the program.
- The program has been unable to establish a formal relationship with the Gish Theatre.
- The program has not forged an intellectual “raison d’être” and/or evolved an identity of its own.

**Faculty Quality and Productivity**

At present there are 18 faculty affiliated with the program—nine are tenured; eight are untenured; and one retains emeritus status. In the past five years, they have published three books and numerous book chapters, articles, and book reviews in premier and reputable journals. They have presented at national and international conferences and have received prestigious awards, including four Emmys and a LASA. Faculty productions have been aired on the Discovery Channel and PBS stations nationally. Recently hired faculty have expanded the range of research and teaching competencies to include gender and cinema, “minoritarian,” Latin American, Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean, and African cinemas.
Quality of the Curriculum

At present, a major in Film Studies requires 24 hours of core courses and 15 hours from the Film Studies Critical Track. The “reconstituted” curriculum, effective Fall 1999, will offer an augmentation of the courses available in the core, to include courses in international and minoritarian cinemas and in film production. In addition, all majors will have to complete 15 hours in one of the following concentrations: Film Theory and Criticism, International and US Minoritarian Perspectives, or Film Production. Also required is a capstone experience (e.g., portfolio review, internship, creative project). A total of 39 hours are required for the major and 24 total hours are required for the minor.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The program uses traditional assessment measures (writing assignments, creative work, exams, presentations) and a senior capstone experience. Depending on the outcome of this review the faculty will develop more effective means of assessing the program within the next two years.

Comparative Advantages and Uniqueness

The core curriculum of the “reconstituted” major gives students a foundational knowledge of the history, theory and aesthetics of world cinema and an understanding of film production. Through concentrations, majors can develop advanced knowledge in select areas of film studies or hands-on film production experience. The self-study states that the concentration in “international and minoritarian cinemas” is unique in the state of Ohio. Although not readily accessible to the Film Studies Program, the self-study reports that the Media 100 video production facilities are some of the best in the state. The film/video collections of Jerome Library, Popular Culture Library, Instructional Media Services, the Gish Film Theater Collection, and WBGU TV are substantial and unique.

Financial Considerations and Adequacy of Resources

The self-study states that the program is severely underfunded ($2300 for 1998), has no staff or faculty of its own and is a low priority in most departments. To gain any degree of national presence and to realize its potential, the self-study claims that the program must have an infusion of resources and must clarify its relationship to other departments and programs.

Unit Plan

The Film Studies Advisory Committee believes that this is a particularly opportune “moment” to consider and recommend alternative models for the development of the Film Studies Program. The Unit Plan is driven by objectives that stress interdisciplinary work, curricular modification (effective in Fall 1999), contributions to the University General Education requirements, promotion of a research culture, encouragement of interdepartmental/unit cooperation (Gish, Art), the
establishment of an archive for Italian filmmaker, Gillo Pontecorvo, and the
development of a graduate degree program or emphasis within an existing program.

1) Priorities
a) Staffing. In light of the goals of the Film Studies Program, the self-study
   recommends the following:
   i) the allocation of two transformational positions, one for Program Director
      (Fall 1999) and a second for filmmaker/videographer (Fall 2000);
   ii) the initial allocation of a half-time clerical position (Fall 1999) to become
       full-time by Fall 2000;
   iii) the assignment of two graduate assistants to teach introductory level
       courses;
   iv) the appointment of a full-time projectionist shared between Gish Theater
       and the new Student Union;
   v) the assignment of two work study students.
b) Budget. The Film Advisory Committee asks for an increase in the operating
   budget to $5000 (1999); $7000 (2000); and $10,000 (2001).
c) Instructional Allocation. The Film Advisory Committee asks that one course
   per semester be offered by the program.

2) Strategies and Recommendations
a) In order to develop its own identity, the self-study recommends that the
   program should “de-link” from any departmental attachment and establish
   an independent or freestanding administrative structure similar to Women’s
   Studies, American Culture Studies, or Environmental Studies.
b) The program should make its changes to the major and minor effective Fall
   1999.
c) A designation (FILM) for film studies courses should be created and used for
   cross-listing.
d) Additional courses should be developed at the upper division level.
e) The Director should review course availability annually to ensure that courses
   are appropriately scheduled and sequenced.
f) The committee should identify existing courses and/or develop new courses
   for consideration in the University General Education curriculum and the Arts
   & Sciences Group requirements.
g) Activities, facilities and equipment should be coordinated among all units
   having film and video equipment [these include: Telecommunications, Art,
   Visual Communication Technology & Education, and WBGU-TV].

3) Program Organization & Staffing: Administrative and Instructional Support
a) The self-study recommends that the Film Studies Advisory Committee would
   serve as arbiter in all major matters and would nominate the Director of the
   program to the Dean of Arts & Sciences.
b) The Advisory Committee would consist of eight core members (from
   Theatre, Popular Culture, Romance Languages, Ethnic Studies, English,
   TCOM, GREAL and Art), two rotating members (from other departments)
   and the Curator of the Lillian Gish Film Theater (ex officio).
c) The self-study recommends that the new Director should be recruited from outside the University with a joint appointment in the program and a department. This is to ensure a degree of independence.
d) New hires in film from other departments should be encouraged to have joint appointments.
e) The Gish Theater should be established as the “hub” of activities.
f) The program should be relocated to permanent quarters in Hanna Hall near the Gish Theater.

Results of Previous Reviews

During Fall 1994, at the request of the Associate Dean of Arts & Sciences, the Film Studies Program was reviewed by an ad hoc Film Studies Review Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. Their report (February 20, 1995) appears in Attachment A of the self-study. The committee addressed staffing and curricular matters, budget, and the appointment and duties of the program director. The current administrative arrangement is an outcome of that review. However, the self-study finds that only two important improvements have occurred since 1995, both in the current academic year: 1) The Theatre Department (in conjunction with English) has obtained a tenure-track “transformational” position to support the film production track of its curriculum; and 2) the curriculum of the program has been modified and expanded (effective Fall 1999).

External Review Team’s Report

The three reviewers commented on the administration’s plan to review both the Department of Theatre and the Film Studies Program at the same time. Although the authors of each self-study expressed concern with this plan, the external review team thought it was wise and made every effort to ensure that both units were examined on their own merits. For that reason, the team made two separate reports, one on Theatre led by Professors Carol Simpson Stern (Northwestern University) and Patti Gillespie (University of Maryland) and one on Film led by Professor Peter Bondanella (Indiana University). The collective team found both self-studies to be informative and candid.

Recommendations

“Although at the onset of the review the team members had reached different judgments regarding the future directions and structure of the Program in Film Studies, by the end of the visit the team concurred in the substance of its judgments and the recommendations that it offered.” The Film Studies Advisory Committee makes a “logical and persuasive case for its major recommendations,” and the external review team is in unanimous agreement with the recommendations put forth as the Unit Plan in the self-study. These include:

- The establishment of a freestanding unit in Film along the lines of American Culture Studies, Women’s Studies or Environmental Studies.
- The authorization to hire a full-time, tenured Program Director at either the Associate Professor or Professor level.
- The authorization to hire a secretary for the Director.
• The allocation of sufficient resources to operate as an interdisciplinary program, including increased budget, graduate assistants, work study students, library acquisitions and a projectionist.

Rationale

The external review team believes that the Film Studies Advisory Committee has conceived a curriculum that is admirable in its varied offerings, its international and multidisciplinary scope, and the quality of its faculty. They find that the three areas of concentration (Film Theory and Criticism; International and US Minoritarian Film Perspectives; and Film Production) comprise a fine program and would compare favorably to that of Indiana University, which is ranked in the top ten. However, the external review team expressed concern with the use of term “US Minoritarian” and its linkage to “International Film Perspectives,” because of the difficulty of finding a clear definition of which groups fall under such a category.

Hiring a tenured Associate or Full Professor to direct the program will resolve some of the critical problems that have prevented its growth. The external review team advised that the Director be hired from the outside and that the search be open as to field, although the external review team asked that an expert in European cinema or one with links to another discipline such as Art be considered. (Most of the present faculty are focused on America or Hollywood.) The new Director should be a talented administrator, who is enthusiastic about building a new program and should have demonstrated scholarly competence as evidenced by serious publications.

The external review team advised that the program should focus any production work on digital media. The external reviewers believe the University should make sure that the program has access to the equipment and space that is already in place (currently, this includes Telecommunications, Art, Visual Communication Technology & Education, and WBGU-TV).
Summary

The external reviewers believe that a very good undergraduate program in Film Studies can be operated without huge investments in production equipment. They recommended that the 1700 students currently enrolled in courses be consulted through written questionnaires as the future hires and curriculum revisions are made.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the program, the external review team asked the administration to ensure that the program has adequate cooperation of all departments involved. A course prefix for Film Studies (the team suggests FILM) should be created, and all courses should be cross-listed under Film Studies and the cooperating departments. Care should be taken that courses are offered on a regular basis and the decision to cancel courses should not be arbitrary or unexpected.

The external review team was extremely impressed by the Gish Theater and suggested that it be made the focal point of the program. They recommended that offices for the program should be moved to the site now facing the Gish.

The external review team clearly stated their opinion that the administration should invest in the Film Studies Program.

Program Review Committee Findings

Strengths Noted by the Program Review Committee

The PRC believes the Film Studies Program contributes significantly to the range of academic programs available at BGSU. The PRC recognizes that many dedicated individuals have contributed to making Film Studies a valuable program, a difficult task in light of existing resources and changing curricular needs.

The “reconstituted” curriculum, which includes more of an international perspective, will be operational in Fall 1999. The course of study is remarkably varied and, for the most part, draws on what is already in place in other departments in the University. Several of the faculty who teach in the program have excellent records of research. The number of majors has grown steadily, and the interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum is timely and in keeping with University initiatives.

The external reviewers were very impressed with the resources of the Gish Theater, the Popular Culture Collection, and the digital media facilities in Telecommunications, Art, Visual Communication Technology & Education, and WBGU-TV. Whereas the PRC agrees that these resources are “strengths”, we note that their connection to the Film Studies Program is weak.

Concerns Noted by the Program Review Committee

The PRC agrees with many of the concerns voiced in both the self-study and the external review team’s report. Specifically, the PRC believes that the failure to provide the Director with a contractual assignment to Film Studies limits the effectiveness of the program. The Film Studies Advisory Committee lacks both authority and
responsibility, and this too limits program effectiveness. The program’s lack of physical space, the limited budget and the need to clarify relationships to other departments regarding use of facilities, equipment and access to courses are also of concern.

Many of the problems in Film Studies are common to other interdisciplinary programs at BGSU, such as limitations of faculty and staff resources. Building on suggestions in the self-study and the external review team’s report, the PRC believes that an effective response to these problems can be based on the models provided by some of the more well-established interdisciplinary programs. We note, for instance, that the Directors of American Culture Studies, Environmental Studies, and Women’s Studies all have joint appointment contracts. The percent of the contract assigned to the interdisciplinary program varies: the Director’s appointments are 100% in American Culture Studies, 90% in Environmental Studies, and 50% in Women’s Studies. Similarly, all three of these programs have space and staff assigned to the program, but the size of the space and the amount of staff support varies with the size and complexity of the program. Finally, we note that all three of these programs have a course prefix through which courses are offered and/or cross-listed in the interdisciplinary program. These features - contractual assignment of the Director, space, staff support, and a course prefix for the interdisciplinary program - seem to be the essential features of what the self-study and the external review team’s report refer to as “freestanding” or “autonomous” interdisciplinary programs, with details regarding the percent of assignment, the amount of space and the number of staff FTE to vary depending on the size and complexity of the program.

The PRC is also aware, however, that alternative models for administering interdisciplinary programs exist, and may actually work better in some instances. Classical Studies’ close alliance with the Department of Romance Languages, for instance, could serve as a model where there is a department with a recognized, continuing commitment to the interdisciplinary program. Such might have been the expectation for Film Studies and Theatre that led to the current relationship.

Given the available information, the PRC believes that the “freestanding” model will work better for the Film Studies Program, although we reserve the “departmental alliance” model as an acceptable - if second best - alternative. Certainly, either is preferable to discontinuation of the program. If the Film Studies Program cannot operate effectively under either of the above models, discontinuation of the program would have to be given serious consideration.

Although the PRC agrees that a Director having a contractual appointment in Film Studies is essential, we disagree that this Director must be hired from the outside. In view of current resources and programmatic needs, the PRC believes that the Director should be an internal appointment.

The PRC finds that the Unit Plan, as put forth in the self-study, was not specific about what the program would do with the additional resources it asked for. Part of the Director’s responsibilities in the first year of his or her appointment will be to create a specific plan of action with regard to the following issues:

1) improvements in the curriculum, including:
a) changes to the major and minor effective Fall 1999;
b) the development of new and upper division courses;
c) improved course availability with appropriate sequencing and scheduling;
d) a clear definition of, or alternative to, “Minoritarian Film Perspectives,” as noted by the External Reviewers;
e) greater contributions to the General Education curriculum;
f) development and implementation of a comprehensive plan to assess student learning outcomes;

2) the development of a strong advisory board;
3) the development of a clearer role for the Gish Theater in the Film Studies Program—as noted in the self-study, the Gish should be the “hub” of activities;
4) development of a long-term solution to the need for courses in film production. This is a long-standing problem, for which the Film Studies Program must own responsibility. The PRC is skeptical that the Media 100 video production facilities can meet Film Studies’ needs in this regard: those facilities are already in very high demand in Telecommunications, Art, Visual Communication Technology & Education, and WBGU-TV; and
5) the assessment of BGSU film/video collections of Jerome Library, Popular Culture Library, Instructional Media Services, Gish Film Theater and WBGU/TV.

Although the requested staffing needs are probably valid, some should be delayed until the success of the program under new leadership can be assessed. If the program is making satisfactory progress on issues noted above, the Dean of Arts and Sciences should give careful consideration to the transformational position of filmmaker/videographer. The other requests should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis: two work study students; the increase of the clerical position to full-time; and the appointment of a full-time projectionist shared between Gish and the new Student Union.

The self-study noted the need of the Film Studies Program to develop better assessment procedures, and that this would be a major concern for the two years following the outcome of program review. The new Director must make this a high priority.

Other proposed initiatives that should be considered after the first three to five years include the establishment of an archive for Italian filmmaker, Gillo Pontecorvo, and the development of a graduate degree program or emphasis within an existing program. The Graduate Dean should have input regarding the request for two graduate teaching assistants, which would be contingent on the development of a graduate program in Film.

Program Review Committee Recommendations

1. Understanding that the governance of the Film Studies Program is of primary importance, the PRC feels that the Dean of Arts & Sciences should choose between one of the two following options, no later than the beginning of Fall semester, 1999. The PRC clearly prefers option A, but understands that the Dean has to weigh the cost of this option in the context of other programmatic needs within the College.
• **Option A.** Establish the Film Studies Program as a “freestanding” interdisciplinary program, as defined earlier in this document, within the College of Arts and Sciences. The essential elements of this model include: joint appointment contract for the Director of Film Studies, secretarial support, assignment of a physical space to house the Director and secretary (and other needs as determined by the Dean), and a course prefix (presumably FILM) for the listing and/or cross-listing of courses in the Film Studies Program.

• **Option B.** House the Film Studies Program in a Department and let the Department assume ownership of the program. This option would obviate the need for a separate Film Studies Advisory Committee. Advising, curriculum revision, and faculty resources would become the obligation of the department, and requests for support would be prioritized among the department’s other requests.

*Recommendations 2A through 5A apply if the Dean chooses to establish Film Studies as a “freestanding” program (option A). Alternatively, if, the Dean elects to house Film Studies within a department (option B), recommendations 2B through 4B apply. Recommendations 6 and following apply in either scenario.*

2A. The PRC believes that an internal search can identify a capable Director. The Dean should identify a Director of the Film Studies Program no later than the third week of Fall semester, 1999. The Director’s contract should reflect a joint appointment, with the percentage of time devoted to Film Studies to be negotiated by the Dean and the Director.

3A. The Dean and Director of Film Studies should work with the Director of Capital Planning to identify space for the Film Studies Program Office. Whereas Hanna Hall is an attractive and sensible location, given the proximity to the Gish Theater, the PRC understands that there are other needs competing for space in Hanna. However, timeliness is essential. Whether Hanna or somewhere else, and whether “permanently” or temporarily assigned, a program office is a prerequisite for many of the other recommendations.

4A. The Dean should work with the Provost to provide at least a half-time secretary and an operating budget increase for the Film Studies Program.

5A. Strengthen the Film Studies Advisory Committee.

*Alternatively, under the “departmental alliance” model...*

2B. In the event the Dean of Arts & Sciences chooses to house the Film Studies Program within a department, the Dean should name the department early in Fall semester, 1999. If there are several departments interested in housing the program, the Dean might consider proposals from the interested Departments.

3B. The Chair of the department chosen to house Film Studies should develop a plan for assigning responsibilities for curriculum development and advising for the Film Studies Program. The Chair and Dean should negotiate this plan, with consideration for its consequences on resource needs within the department, and come to agreement on the plan no later than the end of Fall semester, 1999.
4B. End the formal duties of the Film Studies Advisory Committee.

The following needs must be addressed regardless of how the Film Studies Program is administered.

6. During the 1999-2000 academic year, the changes to the major and minor previously approved should be implemented. As part of this implementation, a clear definition of - or an alternative to - “Minoritarian Film Perspectives” must be provided.

7. During the 1999-2000 academic year, new courses may need to be developed, particularly in the upper division. All curriculum revisions must develop in cooperation with Theatre’s efforts to offer film as part of their curriculum.

8. Whether it is the program Director, or an agent of the Department in which the program is housed, the person responsible for Film should work with departments offering courses that are part of the Film Studies curriculum to ensure the availability of courses, in an appropriate sequence. This will undoubtedly be an ongoing need, something to be reported on an annual basis.

9. Another ongoing need is assessment of student learning outcomes. The learning objectives for the program should be completely reviewed during the academic year 1999-2000. Mechanisms for assessing student achievement of those objectives should be implemented in 2000-01, if not before. The initial implementation can be at the scale of a pilot project, or for a subset of the learning objectives of the program. Thereafter, progress on assessment should be reported on an annual basis, according to the procedures established by the Student Achievement Assessment Committee.

10. Work should begin as soon as possible to develop an effective, long-term solution to the need for courses in film production. The program director or the department chair must explore a variety of options, including the development of an agreement that would rely on the Film Studies program access to the Media 100 video editing facilities. We expect a solution to the production issue by the end of academic year 1999-2000. The satisfactory resolution of the production issue should be taken as a significant expectation for further investment in the Film Studies program.

11. The Dean of Arts & Sciences and the Vice President for University Advancement, in consultation with the Provost, should investigate the possibilities for integrating the Curator of the Gish Theater more fully in the Film Studies Program.

12. If the Dean is convinced that satisfactory progress has been made on the preceding recommendations, the Dean should give serious consideration to additional staffing needs of the program. These needs may well have changed as the Film Studies Program shapes its new identity and makes progress on the above recommendations. The filmmaker/videographer might not be seen as the program’s highest priority. Similarly, the requests in the self-study for work study students, additional staff, the establishment of an archive for Italian filmmaker Gillo Pontecorvo, and a projectionist to be shared between Gish and the new Student Union should be reevaluated in light of developments in the Film Studies program.
13. If the Film Studies program has met the challenges described above, received additional personnel resources, and developed appropriately, consideration should be given toward the end of the seven-year review cycle to developing a tightly focussed graduate program in Film. A graduate program should be developed only if quality and excellence are within its reach. If it is an appropriate contribution to a developing graduate program, the Graduate Dean should consider awarding graduate teaching assistants to the Film Studies program, probably some time in the 2002-03 academic year, or later.

The Film Studies Program should report annually to the Dean of Arts & Sciences, with a copy to the Provost, on the implementation of these recommendations.