How do movies produce meaning

• Film elements
  • Editing
  • Camera angles
  • Camera distance

• Film/theater elements
  • Movement
  • Mise-en-scene
  • Lighting
  • Sound
  • Dialog
  • Character proxemics
Editing

The joining of one shot (strip of film) with another. The shots can picture events and objects in different places at different times. Sometimes referred to as montage, especially in Europe.
1. Editing affects experience of time

“Film seems real to us because through editing it approximates the way our waking consciousness experiences time.”

- Real time
- Subjective time
- Phenomenological time
- Narrative time
2. Editing affects experience of place

- Shrink distance
- Quick change of locals
- Create virtual (screen) space
- Create artificial spatial relationships
3. Editing affects thoughts

“Movies take place in our mind”

- Relates objects that are unrelated
- Produces emotional response
- Creates synthesis
Typology of editing

- Continuity editing
- Structural editing
- Parallel editing
- Psychological editing
Continuity

“Builds an apparently seamless flow of events out of fragments, often helped by the music and sound track.”
Structural

• Ignores continuity and groups objects by what they look like or what they do, in common or odd juxtapositions. May resemble dreams in the way they violate the way the conscious mind experiences discontinuities in life.
Un Chien andalou
Un chien andalou
Parallel

- Also called “cross cutting”
- “The alternating of shots from two sequences, often in different locales, suggesting that they are taking place at the same time.”
Psychological

- Juxtaposing shots to create particular emotional or intellectual responses in the viewer.
Elements of editing

- **Take:** “a single uninterrupted and unedited run of the camera photographing an uninterrupted and continuous action.”

- **Shot:** “the selected and edited take as used in the film” the length of a shot varies from a fraction of a second to the length of a reel of 35 mm film (ca. 12 minutes). Most run between 5 and 70 seconds according to some accounts.
Typology of shots

- Establishing shot: usually an extreme long or long shot at the beginning of a scene which provides the viewer with the context of the subsequent shots

- Insert shot: A shot in medium or close up that is inserted into a particular segment of the continuous action in order to accentuate or emphasize something within the action or mise-en-scene.
Typology (continued)

- Shot/reverse shot: shot of two characters speaking and reacting to each other
- Over the shoulder shot: Preserves communal sense of the two person shot by filming so that one person’s head and shoulder frames the other’s face.
- Shot/reaction shot: Shows character looking at something and then shows what he/she is looking at and then goes back to show the character’s reaction
Transitions between shots

- Jump cut: “An abrupt transition between shots, sometimes deliberate, which is disorienting in terms of continuity of time and space.”
- Cross cut/cutaway: change to another space and action
- Match cut: maintains temporal flow of action
Types of transitions

- **Dissolve**: one shot is replaced by the next gradually by superimposing the second over the first for a brief time.

- **Fade**: major closure by darkening to black or brightening to white to say “this scene or action is over.”

- **Iris fade or wipe**: circular diminishing of the image until it disappears.
Types of transitions (continued)

- Wipe: Pushing one image off the screen and replacing it with another by moving a line across the screen.
- Racking or focusing through: blurs one shot and refocuses to another
Using sound to connect images

- Sound effects
- Dialogue
- Music

- These elements may bleed from one scene to the next to create physical, narrative, psychological continuity between scenes.
Clips

- Breathless
- Diva
- Blue
Mise en scene

“a film’s look or décor, as created by its sets, props, costumes, lighting, photography, and actors’ postures and proximities, making up the film’s visible universe and generating much of its mood and meaning.”
Elements of the mise-en-scene

- Dominant
- Lighting key
- Shot and camera proxemics
- Angle
- Color values
- Lens/filter/stock
- Subsidiary contrasts
Mise-en-scene II

- Density
- Composition
- Form
- Framing
- Depth
- Character placement
- Staging positions
- Character proxemics
Form: Open or Closed

- Open: Does the image suggest a window that frames our view but suggests that the world continues beyond the frame?
- Closed: Does the image suggest a proscenium arch (frame of a stage) in which everything is carefully arranged and balanced and the suggestion is that the world (at least for the character in this scene) stops at the edges.
Dominant

- Where is the eye attracted first? Is it to a character? An object? A particular color or light?
Framing

- Do the characters have room to move or are they constrained by the frame or objects within the frame
Composition

- How is the space organized?
- How many planes are there?
- Do horizontal or verticals dominate?
- How does the dominant influence the arrangement?
Character placement

- Where are the characters within the frame? At the edge? In the center? At the bottom or top?
- Where are the characters in relationship to the camera? Close or far away?
- Where are characters in relationship to each other and to objects (see also proxemic distances).
Color values

- What is the dominant color?
- Are there contrasting colors?
- Is there color symbolism?
- Are the colors crisp or fuzzy/hard-edged or soft-edged?
- Are they muted, pale, or vibrant?
Density

• How much visual information is in the image?
• Is there much clutter between the characters and the camera?
• How detailed is the image?
Depth

- On how many planes is the image composed?
- Is the screen flat (2-dimensional) or does it suggest space (3-dimensional).
- Do persons and objects cross planes?
Character proxemics

- How much space is there between the characters?
- What is suggested by characters who are close to each other?
- What is suggested by characters who are far apart?
Films

- La Strada
- L’eclise
- Christiane F.: The Children of the Subway Stop at the Zoo
Movement

“Cinema” from the Greek kinema which means movement. Or the reason films are called movies is they move.
Basic types of movement

- The camera moves in relationship to what is being captured on film.
- People move and objects are moved in relationship to the camera.
- People move in relationship to each other and objects that are being filmed.
Camera movement

- Pans
- Tilts
- Crane shots
- Dolly shots
- Zoom shots
- Hand-held shots
- Aerial shots
Pan

“a camera’s horizontal pivot across a panorama or wide scene while otherwise immobile on a tripod, creating the impression of a head turning deliberately to inspect a field of vision.”
Tilt

- “during a shot, pivoting a camera vertically from a fixed position and height, as if someone were looking up or down.”
Crane shot

“A shot taken from a special device called a crane which resembles a huge mechanical arm. The crane carries the camera and the cinematographer and can move in virtually any direction.”
Gone with the Wind
Dolly shot

- “A shot taken from a moving vehicle, sometimes called a tracking shot as the camera was placed on tracks built on the set to allow for smooth following of the action.”
The Sacrifice
Zoom shot

“A shot made with a lens of variable focal length that allows the cinematographer to change from wide-angle to telephoto shots and vice versa in one continuous movement, moving the viewer’s attention to and away from the object being filmed, sometimes rapidly.”
Hand-held shots

“Shots made with a portable camera carried by its operator, the image weaving and bouncing unsteadily, conveying a sense of spontaneity and, as with newsreel and documentary footage, a sense of authenticity.”
Blair Witch Project
Aerial shots

- “Variation of the crane shot, often taken from a helicopter.”
Distorted movement

- Animation
- Fast motion
- Slow motion
- Reverse motion
- Freeze frames

- (The above pretty much define themselves)
Why distort?

- Animation (fantasy)
- Fast motion (comedy)
- Slow motion (choreographed emphasis)
- Reverse motion (visual gag)
- Freeze frame (calls attention to time)
Characters moving in relationship to camera

- Coming towards camera (introduction, aggressive)
- Moving away from camera (pulling way, saying goodbye)
Characters moving in relationship to each other

- Choreographed motion
- Dance films
- Musicals
- Commenting on relationships (towards or away from each other)
Umbrellas of Cherbourg
Clips

- Goodbye Franziska (flirting)
- La Haine (opening)
- L’Eclisse (enui in relationship)
- Trainspotting: “I’m choosing life” sequence
- Fear Eats the Soul: Opening sequence
“Everything being heard while a film is being seen, not always noticed as such and therefore often subliminal in effect, including the voices, music, and noises carefully mixed in post production on the sound track.”
Sound’s role in the film

- Binds cut images together
- Comments on images
- Conditions the way images are received
Types of sound

☐ Voices
☐ Noises
☐ Music
Voices

- Narration
  - Authorial
  - Character
  - Commentator
- Monologue
- Dialogue
- Multiple
- Non verbal
- Ambient
Specific role for voices

- Tell the story
- Give background
- Lend credibility
- Reflect reality
- Create dramatic conflict
Noises

- Explosions
- Fighting
- Footsteps
- Weather
- Water
- Eerie sounds
- Silence
Specific role of noise of sound effects

- Create mystery/suspense
- Reproduce/represent environment
- Add excitement
- Suggest/recreate reality
- Emphasize action
- Recall past scene
- Anticipate next scene
Music

- Diegetic or source music
- Nondiegetic or scored music
- Instrumental or with lyrics
- Mickey-mousing
- Synchronized in postproduction
Music’s specific role

- Continuity
- Characterization
- Commentary
  - Ironic underscoring
  - Sincere underscoring
- Foreshadowing
- Control viewer emotion
- Establish period/location/culture
Voice visualization

- Talking heads
- Shot/reverse shot
- Over the shoulder
- Off-screen
  - Nondiegetic or disembodied
  - Diegetic but unseen
Films

- *Diva* (beginning)
- *Marriage of Maria Brown* (end)
- *Four Weddings and a Funeral*