

## CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

Film 2254F

Western University

Film Studies Fall 2019

Screening: Wednesdays 11:30 am-2:30 pm (UC-1405)

Lecture/Discussion: Thursdays 11:30 am-1:30 pm (UC-1405)

Dr. Joseph Wlodarz

Email: [jwlodarz@uwo.ca](mailto:jwlodarz@uwo.ca)

Office: UC-4411

Phone: 661-2111 x86164

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:30-5:30 pm; Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 pm and by appt.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course surveys the central industrial, technological, aesthetic, and ideological developments in the history of classical Hollywood cinema. Given the global prominence and influence of Hollywood cinema, much of the course will be focused on the establishment of the Hollywood studio system and its many transformations over the course of the 20th century. We will begin with an analysis of the origins of the medium and its place in American culture at the turn-of-the-century. We will then examine the development of narrative cinematic standards and the rise and consolidation of the Hollywood studio system, paying close attention to genre, stardom, marketing, and popular reception from the 1920s to the 1960s. In addition to key technological developments such as the coming of sound and the emergence of widescreen cinema, we will also explore social anxieties about cinema's effects, the institution of the Production Code, and the complex relationship of Hollywood film to key social crises (The Depression, WWII, McCarthyism, Civil Rights) of the period.

**Course Objectives:** This course operates as an American film history course, but it also investigates the methods and ideological issues of film historical research more broadly. In addition, the course explores how film aesthetics and theory may be understood in the context of American film history.

**Learning Outcomes:** In addition to enhancing your formal analysis and critical thinking skills through class discussion and research papers, you will acquire the basic tools necessary to conduct informed film historical research, particularly of American film history, which can then be applied to the study of other cinemas.

### COURSE TEXTS

*Required:*

1. Lewis, Jon. *American Film: A History*—2<sup>nd</sup> Edition New York: Norton, 2019.
2. Additional readings from E-Journals available on OWL [OWL]

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING GUIDELINES

- Class Attendance and Participation [10%]
- Discussion Leading [10%]
- Exams (October 2 & October 30) [10% each]
- Film Analysis (1500 words) [15%]
- Marketing and Reception Analysis (1500 words) [15%]
- Final Exam [30%]

**Attendance and Participation:** You are required to attend all class meetings and screenings for the full duration. Attendance will be taken regularly. Be sure to come to class fully prepared, having read all of the weekly reading assignments, and with your course readings and textbook in hand. Thoughtful participation is highly encouraged and will improve your final participation grade. Lateness, early departures, not having the appropriate readings, texting, or other disruptive behavior will adversely affect your participation grade. More than **THREE** *unexcused* absences will result in a zero for your final participation grade. Only documented medical emergencies—verified through the Dean's office (see below)—will be considered for paper extensions or exam rescheduling. ***If you are absent for TEN or more classes (excused or unexcused) you will automatically fail the final exam and the overall course.***

**Laptops, Tablets, Cell Phones:** Laptops/tablets/cell phones are *not* to be used during screenings. You will need to take notes using paper and pens, so be sure to bring these materials to class. Exceptions *may* be granted in the case of students with special needs, but this will only come with official approval from the Dean's office. Laptops/tablets will be permitted during lecture, but only on a probationary basis: if the instructor is distracted two times during the semester by non-note-taking/internet laptop use, the instructor will ban ALL use of laptops/tablets for the remainder of the year. In addition, be sure to turn off cell phones and refrain from text messaging during class. This counts as disruptive behavior and will lower your final participation grade.

**Discussion Leading:** Working with a small group of your fellow classmates, you will lead discussion at least once during the term on the weekly screenings. I will provide a list of guidelines and tips, but each discussion leader will be responsible for presenting a specific question about the film and/or the course readings as well as engaging your fellow students in a discussion about that element. You will need to coordinate with your group members in order to prepare and organize the discussion questions/material, and in most cases I will assess the group as a whole based on the overall quality of the discussion leading.

**Quizzes and Exams:** There will be two 1-hour exams during the term and one comprehensive (3-hour) final exam for the course. The first exam will be administered at the beginning of the screening session on Wednesday October 2 and the second exam will be given at the beginning of the screening session on Wednesday October 30. The two 1-hour exams will test material from readings, lectures, and screenings. The final exam will be a 3-hour exam administered during the formal exam period. Students are advised not to book travel out of the city until the December exam schedule has been

posted. The final exam is a comprehensive exam, but it will emphasize course material since the second exam. Finally, there may be periodic *unannounced* reading quizzes given at the beginning of Thursday lecture sessions; the grades from these quizzes will be calculated into the final Participation and Attendance grade.

**Paper Assignments:** During the term, you will focus your two writing assignments on *one* film made in the United States that is listed on the assignment sheet. The list includes films that will *not* be screened in class but that are relevant to the overall course material. The films will be drawn from the period of 1928-1961. You are encouraged to meet with me about these assignments at any point, especially when expanding on the first paper to write the marketing and reception analysis. The two paper assignments for each term are:

1. **Film Analysis (1500 words min.)** [15%]  
*Due Wednesday October 16*

2. **Marketing and Reception Paper (1500 words min.)** [15%]  
*Due Wednesday November 27*

***\*\*While daily late penalties apply (see below), papers that are over ONE week late will automatically receive a zero. Both paper assignments must also be submitted or you will automatically fail the final exam and the overall course\*\****

**Late Work:** Course papers must be turned in complete and on time. In order to be fair to the entire class, I will not grant individual extensions on paper assignments, so be sure to budget your time accordingly. Late papers will be penalized 5% points per day late (including weekends), except in the case of *properly documented* medical emergencies or illnesses (see below).

**Note on Screenings:** You are *required* to attend weekly screenings on Wednesdays at 11:30 am (attendance will be taken). Be sure to arrive to the screenings on time and to follow traditional screening etiquette (turn off cell phones, no talking, no laptops, etc.). If you are ill or have a legitimate excuse, you should set up an appointment to view the film in the study center [UC 1126] sometime before Thursdays's lecture. You may contact the Film Library Assistant, Rachel Gunn (rgunn4@uwo.ca) (Phone: x85730), to do so.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Section I: DEFINING a NATION ONSCREEN**

**Week 1—September 5—Course Intro**

**Week 2—September 11/12—Analyzing Classical Hollywood Cinema**

**Screening:** *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939, 96 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. xi-xvi  
& [OWL]: Bernstein, "*Stagecoach*"  
& [OWL]: Wills, "Prologue: The Most Dangerous Man"

### Week 3—Sept. 18/19—Modernity and Early American Film

**Screening:** Select Edison Co. Films

*The Lonedale Operator* (D.W. Griffith, 1911, 17 min.)

*Making an American Citizen* (Alice Guy-Blaché, 1912, 12 min.)

& Clips from *The Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915, 187 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. 3-20; 25-42; 54-58

& [OWL]: Hansen, “A Cinema in Search of a Spectator”

### Week 4—Sept. 25/26—Race, Gender, and Citizenship

**Screening:** *The Cheat* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1915, 60 min.)

& *Within Our Gates* (Oscar Micheaux, 1920, 79 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. 20-25; 45-53; 58-74

& [OWL]: Stewart, “We Were Never Immigrants”

& [OWL]: Higashi, “Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Film” (excerpt)

## Section II: THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIO SYSTEM

### Week 5—October 2/3—Warner Bros. and the Coming of Sound

**Screening:** *Little Caesar* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1930, 80 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. 74-95; 97-113; 120-136

& [OWL]: Warshow, “The Gangster as Tragic Hero”

& [OWL]: Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes* (Ch-2 excerpt)

**\*\*Exam #1 on Wednesday October 2 at the Beginning of Class\*\***

### Week 6—Oct. 9/10—The Great Depression and the Production Code

**Screening:** *Baby Face* (Alfred E. Green, 1933, 75 min.)

& *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934, 105 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. 113-120; 136-149; 176-181

& [OWL]: Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin* (Ch-3 excerpt)

& [OWL]: Maltby, “Comedy and the Restoration of Order”

**Week 7—Oct. 16/17—The MGM Musical**

**Screening:** *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Vincente Minnelli, 1944, 108 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. 151-164; 187-193  
 & [OWL]: Dyer, “The Perfection of *Meet Me in St. Louis*”  
 & [OWL]: Schatz, “Hollywood: The Triumph of the Studio System”

**\*\*Film Analysis Paper Due Wednesday Oct. 16\*\***

**Section III: POSTWAR CRISES and the DECLINE of the STUDIO SYSTEM****Week 8—Oct. 23/24—Realism and the Returning Vet**

**Screening:** *The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, 1946, 172 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. 164-176; 193-195  
 & [OWL]: Westwell, *War Cinema*, Ch-2, “World War Two on Film”  
 & [OWL]: Kozloff, excerpts from *The Best Years of Our Lives*

**Week 9—Oct. 30/31—Disillusionment and Disorder: Film Noir**

**Screening:** *Detour* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1945, 67 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. 181-187; 207-230  
 & [OWL]: Sobchack, “Lounge Time”

**\*\*Exam #2 on Wednesday October 30 at the Beginning of Class\*\***

**Week 10—November 6/7—FALL TERM READING WEEK****Week 11—Nov. 13/14—Hitchcock and Homosexuality**

**Screening:** *Rope* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948, 80 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. 266-275  
 & [OWL]: Wood, “The Murderous Gays: Hitchcock and Homophobia”  
 & [OWL]: Noriega, “Something’s Missing Here!”

**Week 12—Nov. 20/21—Hollywood’s Red Scare**

**Screening:** *My Son John* (Leo McCarey, 1952, 122 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. 197-207; 230-237  
 & [OWL]: Rogin, “Kiss Me Deadly”

### Week 13—Nov. 27/28—Juvenile Delinquency in Widescreen

**Screening:** *Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955, 111 min.)

**Reading:** [Lewis]: Pgs. 239-248; 250-263; 277-282  
 & [OWL]: Belton, “Glorious Technicolor”  
 & [OWL]: Mitchell, “Jim Stark’s ‘Barbaric Yawp’”

**\*\*Marketing & Reception Analysis Due Wednesday Nov. 27\*\***

### Week 14—December 4/5—Melodrama and the Civil Rights Era

**Screening:** *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959, 125 min.)

**Reading:** [OWL] Fassbinder, “Six Films by Douglas Sirk” (excerpt)  
 & [OWL] Fischer, “Three-Way Mirror: *Imitation of Life*”

**\*\*FINAL EXAM: SEE SCHEDULE for DATE and TIME\*\***

### POLICIES and REGULATIONS

This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically disabled, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor. For Film Studies regulations governing Term Work, Exams, Faculty Office Hours, Academic Relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please consult “Information for Students” on our website at [www.uwo.ca/film](http://www.uwo.ca/film)

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Students must write their essays in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage, from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. In this course, citation of all material other than students' own ideas must be completed according to the guidelines established in *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*. For additional information on plagiarism see:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

**Plagiarism Checking:** All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](http://Turnitin.com).

**Prerequisites:** Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:** Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and or assignments must apply to their Academic Counseling Office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. *Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Official accommodation is also required for ALL missed assignments (including quizzes).*

Please go to the following site for information on the university Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>)

For information on the examination services provided by the Student Development Centre, please visit [www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd)

**Mental Health:** Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.  
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

**Disabilities:** Please consult with me during the first three weeks of class regarding disabilities that might require special accommodations.

**Complaints:** If students have a complaint concerning a course in which they are enrolled, they must first discuss the matter with the instructor of the course. If students are still not satisfied, they should then take the complaint to the English Department chair. These regulations are in place because a failure to follow these procedures creates the potential for injustices of various kinds affecting either the instructor or the students themselves, or both parties. Concerns should not be allowed to fester but should be raised with the instructor in a timely manner, so that they can be addressed in time to make a difference to the course.

**Office Hours:** I will be available to answer questions, clarify concepts/assignments, and assist you with your coursework during my weekly office hours (posted above). If you have an occasional conflict, feel free to email me and we can set up an alternative time to meet. I will also be available via email M-F from 9-5 and will do my best to respond to your email within two days. *\*Please note, however, that I may not respond to questions about the course that can be answered by simply reviewing the course syllabus.*

## GRADING CRITERIA

### A+ (90-100):

**Argument:** Clear development of a specific, challenging and original thesis. The writer has taken significant risks successfully; in the resulting piece, distinctive ideas and content have discovered their necessary distinctive form. Detailed reference to appropriate texts, with evidence of individual response. Ability not only to expound subject but to see it around–subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.

**Presentation, structure:** Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. Almost no typographical errors.

**Language Skills:** Sentence structure correct, with full range of sentence types (compound, complex, and compound-complex), with full range of punctuation (including semicolons, colons, dashes, parentheses). Graceful style, neither pompous nor breezy, and few errors.

**Research/scholarship:** Evidence of effective, extensive and independent research, with proper documentation of sources. Quotations used appropriately and purposively.

### A (80 to 89):

**Argument:** The writer has taken risks and most of them succeed. Clear development of a specific and challenging thesis, with proper paragraphs. Detailed reference to appropriate texts, with evidence of individual response. Ability not only to expound subject but to see it around–subtleties and ambiguities, qualifications and concessions, relations to other subjects, etc.

**Presentation, structure:** Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. Almost no typographical errors.

**Language Skills:** Sentence structure correct, with full range of sentence types (compound, complex, and compound-complex), with full range of punctuation (including semicolons, colons, dashes, parentheses). Graceful style, neither pompous nor breezy, and few errors.

**Research/scholarship:** Evidence of effective and independent research, with proper documentation of sources. Quotations used appropriately and purposively.

### B (70 to 79):

**Argument:** Clear development of a specific thesis, with proper paragraphs. Adequately detailed reference to texts. Ability to expound reasonably sophisticated ideas with clarity.

**Presentation/structure:** Quotations well integrated into text. Proper paragraphs. A few typographical errors.

**Language Skills:** Sentence structure correct, with reasonable range of sentence types and full range of punctuation. Style not too wordy, with errors relatively few and minor.

**Research Scholarship:** Evidence of adequate research, with proper documentation of sources.



**C (60 to 69):**

**Argument:** Reasonably clear development of a thesis, with proper paragraphs. Basic ability to expound ideas, whose development might be rather thin. Effort to support points with references to the text. Tendency to replace analysis with descriptive retelling of plot.

**Presentation/structure:** Presentation showing lapses in tidiness and/or proofreading. Poor use of paragraphs.

**Language Skills:** Sentence structure correct, but perhaps overly simple, with tendency to avoid punctuation besides period and comma. Errors relatively few, but occasionally serious, with evident misunderstanding of some point of elementary grammar (comma splices, fragments, semicolon errors, subject-verb disagreements, poorly integrated quotations)

**Research/Scholarship:** reasonable effort at documentation, but rather thin.

**D (50 to 59):**

**Argument:** Difficulty with paragraphing or consecutive thought. Ideas inchoate but clouded by weak expression. Overgeneralization with inadequate support, or examples that run to lengthy paraphrase, with little or no analysis.

**Presentation/Structure:** Very poor to non-existent use of paragraphs. Inadequate and inaccurate documentation. Multiple typographical errors.

**Language Skills:** Errors of grammar or diction frequent enough to interfere with understanding.

**Research/Scholarship:** Little serious effort to research the topic.

**F (49 and below):**

**Argument:** Ideas too simple for level of course. Argument completely incoherent. Erroneous content showing little or no understanding of subject.

**Presentation/Structure:** Very sloppy proof-reading. Documentation virtually non-existent.

**Language Skills:** writing frequently ungrammatical.

**Research/Scholarship:** Non-existent. Content largely “borrowed” from sources with no individual distillation, but no apparent attempt to deceive. Failure to follow the course assignment and guidelines.

**0 (Report to Department)**

Plagiarism with intent to deceive