

CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

Film 2254F

Western University

Film Studies Fall 2020

Screening: Wednesdays 11:30 am-2:30 pm (online/asynchronous)

Lecture/Discussion: Thursdays 11:30 am-1:30 pm (synchronous discussion via zoom)

Dr. Joseph Wlodarz

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Online Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:30-4:30 pm; Thursdays 1:30-2:30 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*—2nd Edition New York: Norton, 2019.
2. Additional readings from E-Journals available on OWL [OWL]

COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING GUIDELINES

- Class Participation (online forums and/or synchronous online) [10%]
- Discussion Leading (Questions and Clip Analysis) [10%]
- Take-Home Midterm Exam (October 15) [15%]
- Film Analysis Essay (1500 words) [15%]
- Final Research Paper (2000 words) [20%]
- Take-Home Final Exam [30%]

Class Participation: Students are highly encouraged to attend and to participate in the weekly zoom-based class discussions at 12:30 pm on Thursdays. If you cannot attend one or more of these discussion sessions, however, you may also participate asynchronously by responding to questions/clips that will be posted in the Forum section of OWL. Your final Class Participation grade will be based on the quantity *and* quality of your participation in these discussion sessions and forums.

Discussion Leading: Working with 4-5 of your fellow classmates, you will lead discussion at least once during the term on the weekly screenings and readings. 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. Discussions will take place synchronously via zoom and the clips/questions will also be posted in an online forum.

Exams: There will be one 90-minute take-home midterm (Oct. 15) and one comprehensive (3-hour) take-home final exam for the course. The midterm and final exams will be posted to OWL at least 24 hours before the submission deadline in order to allow for any potential technological or accommodation-based issues that may arise. The midterm and final exams will include clip analysis, identification, short answer, and/or essay questions.

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 (virtually) about these assignments at any point, especially when expanding on the first essay to complete the final research paper. The two paper assignments are:

1. **Film Analysis Essay (1500 words) [15%]**
Due Wednesday October 21
2. **Film Research Paper (2000 words) [20%]**
Due Wednesday December 9

*****While daily late penalties apply (see below), papers that are over ONE week late—without any approved accommodation—will automatically receive a zero.***

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 Lectures: Weekly lectures will be recorded in advance and posted on OWL on Wednesday afternoons/early evenings. You will then have the option of viewing the lecture before Thursday's class OR during the first hour of our scheduled Thursday class (11:30-12:30). Zoom-based discussions will begin promptly at 12:30pm each Thursday, and I will inform you in advance if the weekly lecture happens to run longer than an hour.

Note on Screenings: You are required to view weekly screenings before each Thursday lecture/discussion. All weekly film screenings will be available via streaming sources. Links to the weekly screenings can be found in the Resources tab on OWL, and I will try to have screening links posted by Monday of each week. There will also be screening introductions and guiding questions posted each week in the OWL Forum section.

I encourage you to view the films on as large a screen as possible so that you can pay close attention to the visual style and formal construction of the films. Most screening links will also have optional subtitles/closed captions that you will be able to turn on (or off). Finally, you may also make an appointment to view any of the course films in the Film Study Center [UC-1126] by contacting the Film Library Assistant, Rachel Gunn (rgunn4@uwo.ca) (Phone: x85730).

Office Hours: I will be available to answer questions, clarify concepts/assignments, and assist you with your coursework during my weekly, virtual 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.*

COURSE SCHEDULE

Section I: DEFINING a NATION ONSCREEN

Week 1—September 9-10—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 2—Sept. 16/17—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 3—Sept. 23/24—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 4—Sept. 30/Oct. 1—Warner Bros. and the Coming of Sound

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

& *The Public Enemy* (William Wellman, 1931, 83 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)

Week 5—Oct. 7/8—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 6—Oct. 14/15—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”

****Take-Home Midterm Due to OWL by 3pm on Wednesday Oct. 15****

Section III: POSTWAR CRISES and the DECLINE of the STUDIO SYSTEM

Week 7—Oct. 21/22—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*

****Film Analysis Essay Due to OWL by 3pm on Wednesday Oct. 21****

Week 8—Oct. 28/29—Disillusionment and Disorder: Film Noir

Screening: *Detour* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1945, 67 min.)
 & *The Reckless Moment* (Max Ophuls, 1948, 82 min.)

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

Week 9—November 4/5—FALL TERM READING WEEK

Week 10—Nov. 11/12—Hitchcock and Homosexuality

Screening: *Rope* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948, 80 min.)
 & excerpts from *The Celluloid Closet* (Epstein/Friedman, 1996)

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

Week 11—Nov. 18/19—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 12—Nov. 25/26—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]: Nadel, “Defiant Desegregation”

Week 13—December 2/3—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*”

Week 14—December 9—Course Wrap-up

Screening/Discussion: TBA

****Final Research Essay Due to OWL on Wednesday Dec. 9****

****Take Home Final Exam: Due Date TBA****

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

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.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student’s final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24

hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or 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. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

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 for such checking 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://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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.

Recordings: All of the remote learning sessions for this course will be recorded. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals under special circumstances. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings.

****NOTE: Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.***

Statement on Online Etiquette

Some components of this course will involve online interactions. To ensure the best experience for both you and your classmates, please honour the following rules of etiquette:

- please “arrive” to class on time
- please use your computer and/or laptop if possible (as opposed to a cell phone or tablet)
- ensure that you are in a private location to protect the confidentiality of discussions in the event that a class discussion deals with sensitive or personal material
- to minimize background noise, kindly mute your microphone for the entire class until you are invited to speak, unless directed otherwise
- [suggested for classes larger than 30 students] In order to give us optimum bandwidth and web quality, please turn off your video camera for the entire class unless you are invited to speak
- [suggested for cases where video is used] please be prepared to turn your video camera off at the instructor’s request if the internet connection becomes unstable
- unless invited by your instructor, do **not** share your screen in the meeting

The course instructor will act as moderator for the class and will deal with any questions from participants. To participate please consider the following:

- if you wish to speak, use the “raise hand” function and wait for the instructor to acknowledge you before beginning your comment or question
- remember to unmute your microphone and turn on your video camera before speaking
- self-identify when speaking.
- remember to mute your mic and turn off your video camera after speaking (unless directed otherwise)

General considerations of “netiquette”:

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” is never appropriate.
- Be professional and scholarly in all online postings. Cite the ideas of others appropriately.

Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online classes, including inappropriate use of the chat function, is unacceptable. Students found guilty of Zoom-bombing a class or of other serious online offenses may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

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