

CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

Film 2254F

Western University

Film Studies Fall 2025

Screenings: Asynchronous weekly screenings—links posted on OWL

Lecture/Discussion: Wednesdays 10:30 am-12:30 pm (UC-1401)

Dr. Joseph Wlodarz

Email: jwlodarz@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:30-5:30 pm (in-person—UC-4411)

Thursdays 12:00-1:00 pm (online) & 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.
[<https://wnnorton.com/books/9780393664898>] **Print: \$144.80; E-Book: \$54.00**

2. Additional readings from E-Journals available on OWL [OWL]

COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING GUIDELINES

- Class Attendance & Participation [10%]
- Discussion Leading (Questions and Clip Analysis) [10%]
- In-Class Exams (Oct. 1 & Nov. 12) [10% each]
- Film Analysis Proposal and Bibliography (Sept. 24) [5%]
- Close Scene Analysis, Outline, and Annotated Bibliography (Oct. 24) [10%]
- Final Film Analysis Essay (Dec. 5) [20%]
- Final Exam [25%]

Course Content: Course Assignments, Lecture slides, OWL readings, Tutorial Clips, and Streaming Links will be posted on the OWL site for the course:

<https://westernu.brightspace.com/> Use the weekly units and related tabs to access the course content for each week. All course assignments must be submitted to OWL by the due dates listed on the syllabus. Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If you need assistance with the course OWL site, you can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, you can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

****Note: Although I will send mass emails to the class through OWL, you should use my Western email account for any correspondence.***

Students must also use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting their instructors.

Electronic Devices: No electronic devices/aids of any kind (e.g. cell phones, tablets, smart watches) are permitted during in-class exams.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI): To foster independent, critical thinking and to help students develop traditional research skills, AI tools, such as ChatGPT, should *not* be used in this course. In all submitted coursework, students are expected to critically evaluate obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop *their own* ideas, arguments, and perspectives. Course assignments that simply borrow or adapt responses from AI tools will not receive full credit and may be reported as plagiarism. ***Essays and assignments that include non-existent and/or improperly cited sources, including incorrect page numbers, will be presumed to be AI-generated and receive a 0.*** You are strongly advised to save all preliminary notes, outlines, and working drafts in case you are suspected of using AI tools. *****See note on plagiarism in the POLICIES and REGULATIONS section below.***

Attendance and Participation: You are required to attend all class meetings. 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.

Discussion Leading: Working with 3-4 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 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.

Exams: There will be two 1-hour exams during the term and one comprehensive (3-hour) final exam for the course. In-class exams will include multiple choice, short answer questions, and/or clip analysis. The final exam will include clip analysis as well as multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The final exam will be a 3-hour exam administered during the formal exam period. One week before each exam, I will also distribute an exam review sheet with sample questions and topics to review.

Paper Assignments: During the term, you will focus your 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 close scene analysis/annotated bibliography to complete the final film analysis paper.

In order to enhance your critical thinking and essay writing skills—and to *discourage* the use of AI—your final film analysis essay will be developed over the course of the term in various stages. There will be three major components to the film analysis essay, and you will receive detailed feedback on the first two components to help you fully develop your final film analysis.

The three writing assignments include:

1. **Film Analysis Proposal and Bibliography (300-500 words) [5%]**
2. **Close Scene Analysis, Outline, and Annotated Bibliography (1200 words) [10%]**
3. **Final Film Analysis Essay (2000 words) [20%]**

Late Work: Course papers must be turned in complete and on time. 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 view weekly screenings before each Wednesday lecture/discussion. All weekly film screenings will be available via streaming sources. Links to the weekly screenings will be found on OWL alongside a screening introduction and related screening questions. I will post the weekly Screening Introduction and Screening Links on Fridays.

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.

Recordings: 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. You should also remember that the course lectures are *not* in the public domain but are each instructor's intellectual property. They should not be shared or distributed outside the course in any manner.

Lecture Outlines: Lecture slides will be posted each week on OWL. These slides will provide a brief overview of lecture topics for that week, but they will not contain all the relevant material from lecture and should not be seen as a substitute for weekly lectures. Be sure to download these lecture overviews before class to help you take notes during lecture periods.

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. **I may, however, 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—Sept. 8-10—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. 15-17—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. 22-24—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)

****Film Analysis Essay Proposal and Bibliography Due by 5pm on Wed. Sept. 24****

Section II: THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIO SYSTEM

Week 4—Sept. 29-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]: Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes* (Ch-2 excerpt)

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

Week 5—Oct. 6-8—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. 13-15—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”

Week 7—Oct. 20-22—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: Close Scene Analysis, Outline, and Annotated Bibliography Due to OWL by 5pm on Friday Oct. 24****

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

Week 8—Oct. 27-29—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—Nov. 3-5—READING WEEK

Week 10—Nov. 10-12—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!”

****Exam #2 on Wednesday Nov. 12 at the Beginning of Class****

Week 11—Nov. 17-19—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. 24-26—Juvenile Delinquency in Widescreen

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

Reading: [Lewis]: Pgs. 239-248; 250-263; 277-282
& [OWL]: Nadel, “Defiant Desegregation”

Week 13—December 1-3—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*”

****Final Film Analysis Essay Due to OWL by 5pm on Friday. Dec. 5****

****Final Exam: See Fall Term Exam Schedule****

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.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students’ personal use within the course, and remain the instructor’s

intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Accommodation and Academic Consideration Policies

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

****All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.**

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. **This exception, however, is *not* applicable to the in-class exams for the Fall and Winter terms.

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationanddisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students”

<http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html>

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Religious Accommodation:

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test.

Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Support Services

Academic Advising:

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence:

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success:

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC:

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC,
<https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

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.

***Note on AI/ChatGPT:** Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized use of AI tools such as ChatGPT to create content that is submitted as one's own. Students are thus required to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding all forms of plagiarism. All course assignments and exams *must* reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work.

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.

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.