

CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD CINEMA, FILM 2254
Western University, Fall 2026

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00-2:00 and 4:30-5:30 or by appointment (in-person, phone, Zoom)

You are responsible for *all* the following information. Please read it completely and carefully:

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.

Prerequisites

At least 60% in [Film Studies 1020E](#) or [Film Studies 1022](#), or 1.0 of English 1000-1999 plus [English 2112F/G](#), Film 2212F/G, or [Theatre Studies 2212F/G](#), or permission of the department.

Student Conduct

"All students will conduct themselves in a manner that will be consistent with the maturity and academic integrity expected of university students. Student conduct shall be consistent with the general laws of the community and with University regulations. Students shall show regard and respect for the rights, safety, and property of all members of the University community and are expected to act in a responsible manner within the University and the community at large."

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Lewis, Jon. [American Film: A History](#). 2nd ed., Norton, 2019. [Lewis]

- [UWO bookstore](#) prices: Print: \$154.99; E-Book 4 Year Rental: \$54.00
2. Additional readings posted on OWL [OWL].

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING SCHEME

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	LENGTH	VALUE
Attendance/Participation	weekly		10%
Midterm Exam (in class)	Oct. 21	2 hours, ~1000 words (~4 pages, double spaced)	20%
In-Class Essay	Nov. 18	2 hours, ~1500 words (~5 pages, double spaced)	30%
Final Exam	tba	3 hours	40%

COURSE INFORMATION

COURSE CONTENT

Course assignments, lecture slides, OWL readings, tutorial clips, and streaming links will be posted on the [course site](#) in OWL Brightspace (<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. The OWL site 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, go to [OWL Brightspace Learner Support Site](#) or call the Western Technology Services Helpdesk at 519-661-3800.

Electronic Devices

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

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

To foster independent, critical thinking and the developments of traditional research skills, AI tools, such as ChatGPT, are **NOT** to 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. **See note on plagiarism in the POLICIES and REGULATIONS section below.

Attendance and Class Participation

Students are required to attend all class meetings. Attendance will be taken regularly. Be sure to come to class fully prepared, having read all 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 mark. Only documented medical emergencies—verified through the Dean's office (see below)—will be considered for paper extensions or exam rescheduling.

Screenings

You are required to view the weekly screenings before each class. All weekly film screenings will be available via streaming sources. This course requires you to have a reliable high-speed internet connection and a computer that meets the technical requirements for streaming films and writing assignments.

Links to the weekly screenings can be found in the Screening Info and Streaming Link tab on OWL, and screening links will be posted by Friday afternoon the week before lecture/tutorial (if not earlier). There will also be screening introductions and guiding questions posted alongside the Streaming Link each week.

Students should 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.

Recording Lectures and Tutorials

Participants in this course are **not** permitted to record the lectures or tutorials, 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.

Exams

There will be one exam during the term and a final exam at the end of the course.

The 2-hour in-class exam comprises short paragraph-answer and essay questions.

The 3-hour final exam will be comprehensive, but it will be somewhat weighted towards material covered after the in-class exam. The final exam for the course will be scheduled during the December exam period (time/date TBA).

Note! The in-class midterm exam and final exam are central to the learning objectives for this course. Students seeking academic consideration for these assessments must provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for these assessments will be provided with the opportunity to take a make-up exam.

Assignment

There is one major assignment for this course: a 2-hour, hand-written in-class essay. Students will be given a list of 5 non-course, classic-era films to watch at least three weeks before the date of the in-class essay. As their "research" for the essay, students will watch all 5 films and review the main themes

covered in the course up to week before the essay and write notes on how each film represents the classic Hollywood cinema and the themes and issues we have covered.

For the in-class essay, students will be given the essay topics and will choose one topic and one of the non-course films and write a properly structured essay (introduction, several body paragraphs, conclusion). The essay must have a clear thesis statement, and the supporting points presented must be grounded in the film the student has chosen. That is, students must make specific references to the chosen film throughout your essay. The essay will be marked according to the rubric posted on the Assessment page in OWL Brightspace.

Assignment Submission Policy

The in-class essay must be submitted to the professor at the end of the class in which the assignment is written. Students who have received formal accommodation will write an in-person make-up assignment which will be scheduled at the professor's convenience.

Students who miss the assignment date and do not have formal accommodation may be granted a make-up assignment at the professor's discretion. If a make-up assignment is allowed in this case, the assignment will be returned with a grade only, no comments, and 3% per day late (including weekends) will be deducted from the grade assigned to your paper, dating from the original assignment date. No make-up assignments will be arranged after the assignment has been returned to the rest of the class.

We strongly recommend that you map out the assignment due dates and exam dates for all your courses at the beginning of the year or term and plan your research, writing, and study times accordingly. That you have a busy week is not an acceptable reason for an extension since you will have had several weeks prior to the due date to get your work done.

Extensions

All requests for extensions **must be made through Academic Counselling in your home faculty**. Students must make such requests well in advance of the due date and have a good reason for the extension. Extensions can only be granted *after* we have received confirmation of accommodation from your Academic Counsellor. *See section on Accommodation and Academic Consideration Policies below.

Returning Assignments

I will do my very best to return assignments *within three weeks of the due date*. Assignments will be returned through OWL. If you wish to discuss the comments or grade you have received on an assignment or exam with your instructor, **you must wait at least three days after the assignment has been returned to you**—no exceptions.

If you believe an assignment has been unfairly graded for whatever reason and you wish to make an appeal, you must follow the procedures prescribed by the university. See the "Undergraduate Student Academic Appeals" document posted on the University Secretariat's "Rights and Responsibilities" webpage and in the Academic Calendar.

In short, you must first consult with me, and I will then review the assignment and contact you with a decision. If you are still not satisfied after I have re-examined the assignment, you must make a request for academic relief in writing to the Chair of the English and Writing Studies department.

Final Grades

All assignments and exams worth more than 5% of your final grade *must* be completed: failure to do so will lead to an automatic F for the course. Your final grades are also released by the Registrar's Office, not your instructor.

TALKING TO YOUR PROFESSOR

Office Hours

I have two office hours and am always happy to answer questions. If you have a conflict with my posted office hours, you may contact me to book an in-person, phone, or Zoom appointment. Please note that I do not live in London and am on campus only on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Please be aware that professors are extremely busy people, so please be considerate: if you schedule an appointment, show up! I will not book further appointments with any student who does not appear for a scheduled appointment, unless that student has a darn good reason (i.e. sudden onset of some tropical disease, natural disaster, etc.). Do not expect your instructors to be at your beck and call.

There may be times—because of illness, snowstorms, zombie apocalypse, etc.—when I must cancel my regular office hours. I will try to let you know in advance, but if I can't, a note will be posted on my office door.

Email

I am happy to communicate with students via e-mail, but with a few provisos:

1. Students must also use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting me.
2. I can't always answer emails instantly; please allow 48 hours for a response and remember that I might not check email after the end of workdays or on weekends (therefore, emails received Friday to Sunday will be answered by Tuesday).
3. I will respond only to *short* emails. Extended discussions or questions about lecture material, assignments or exam expectations or results, course readings, etc. must be in person or, if there are extenuating circumstances, by telephone or Zoom (see below).

Make Use of Me!

I sincerely encourage you to make use of me, your professor. Do not hesitate to contact me (well ahead of deadlines) to talk or ask questions about any topic or issue, including assignments, suggestions for further reading, or clarification of issues raised in class. Unfortunately, most students wait until the last minute or until all hell is breaking loose before consulting their instructors.

Student Email Accounts

The university requires that students use their uwo.ca email accounts for university business. If we need to contact you, we will email you either at your uwo.ca email account or through Owl. You have the option to forward your Owl messages to your uwo.ca or other email address. Students are required, therefore, to **check your UWO email account(s) daily**.

If you miss or do not see for quite some time an email from your professor, academic counsellor, etc. because you are not regularly checking your uwo.ca account, you will be held responsible. For example, if an assignment is returned to you because it is too long, late marks will count from the day the email is sent to the day the paper is resubmitted. Do not come to us three weeks after we've emailed you saying that you didn't see the email and expect us to reduce the late penalties: full penalties will apply.

COURSE SCHEDULE

NB: the screening and reading list is subject to change.

Section I: The Studio System, Great Depression, and World War II

Week 1 – Sept. 9 – Introduction and Analyzing Classical Hollywood Cinema

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

Required Reading: Lewis, pp. xi-xvi and 3-4; Bernstein, “*Stagecoach*” (OWL); Wills, “Prologue: The Most Dangerous Man” (OWL)

Recommended Reading: Lewis pp. 5-95

Week 2 – Sept. 16 – Warner Bros. and the Coming of Sound

Screening: *Little Caesar* (LeRoy, 1930, 80 min.) **and** *The Public Enemy* (Wellman, 1931, 83 min.)

Required Reading: Lewis pp. 97-113, 120-136 and Munby, “Public Enemies, Public Heroes” (OWL)

Week 3 – Sept. 23 – The Great Depression and the Production Code

Screening: *Baby Face* (Green, 1933, 75 min.) **and** *It Happened One Night* (Capra, 1934, 105 min.)

Required Reading: Lewis pp. 113-120, 136-149, 176-181; Jacobs, “The Wages of Sin” (OWL); and Maltby, “Comedy and the Restoration of Order” (OWL)

Week 4 – Class is cancelled this week because of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Week 5 – Oct. 7 – The MGM Musical

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

Required Reading: Lewis pp. 151-164 and 187-193; Dyer, “The Perfection of Meet Me in St. Louis” (OWL); and Schatz, “Hollywood: The Triumph of the Studio System” (OWL)

FALL READING WEEK (October 10-18)



Week 6 – Oct. 21 – **Midterm Exam** (2 hours)

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

Week 7 – Oct. 28 – Realism and Returning Veterans

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

Required Reading: Lewis pp. 164-176 and 193-195; Westwell, “World War Two on Film” (OWL); and Kozloff, excerpts from *The Best Years of Our Lives* (OWL)

Week 8 – Nov. 4 – Disillusionment and Disorder: Film Noir

Screening: *Detour* (Ulmer, 1945, 67 min.) **and** *Crossfire* (Dmytryk, 1947, 86 min.)
Required Reading: Lewis pp. 181-187 and 207-230; Sobchack, “Lounge Time” (OWL)

Week 9 – Nov. 11 – Hitchcock and Homosexuality

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

Required Reading: Lewis pp. 266-275; Wood, “The Murderous Gays: Hitchcock and Homophobia” (OWL); and Noriega, “Something’s Missing Here!” (OWL)

Week 10 – Nov. 18 – Hollywood’s Red Scare

Screening: *Pickup on South Street* (Fuller, 1953, 80 min.) **and** *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956, 80 min.)

Required Reading: Lewis pp. 197-207 and 230-237; Mann, “You’re Next!: Postwar Hegemony Besieged in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*” (OWL)

Week 11 – Nov. 25 – **In-Class Essay** (2 hours)

Week 12 – Dec. 2 – Juvenile Delinquency in Widescreen

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

Required Reading: Lewis pp. 239-248, 250-263, and 277-282; Nadel, “Defiant Desegregation” (OWL)

Week 13 – Dec. 9 – Melodrama and the Civil Rights Era

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

Required Reading: Fassbinder, “Six Films by Douglas Sirk” (OWL); Fischer, “Three-Way Mirror: *Imitation of Life*” (OWL)

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

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

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/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.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/academic_considerations/index.html.

****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

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.”

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.”

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 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](#).

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

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. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

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

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

Academic Integrity Module

Incoming undergraduate students are required to complete Western's Academic Integrity Module. Information about the module, including access instructions, and completion deadlines, is available at: https://vpacademic.uwo.ca/Academic_Integrity_Module.html.

This training is part of the required training suite for all incoming students. Students who do not complete the Academic Integrity Module by the deadline will have an academic seal placed on their records and will not be able to add/drop courses, obtain a transcript, or Intent to Register the following year.

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, here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

The Senate states, “Plagiarism and other scholastic offences will be prosecuted to the fullest extent that university regulations allow. In its academic calendars, Western University defines plagiarism as “The act or an instance of copying or stealing *another’s words or ideas* and attributing them as one’s own” (emphasis added). 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.

“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 English and Writing Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in a failure for the course.

If you are not sure what plagiarism is or what constitutes an academic offence, *ask!* The university assumes that all students have read “[Scholastic Offences](#)” and are thus knowledgeable about academic integrity. Remember, ignorance is no excuse.

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/>.

For further information, including the regulations governing Term Work, Exams, Faculty Office Hours, Academic Relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please see the [Academic Policies](#) page in the University Secretariat's website and the [Student Services](#) pages in the Academic Calendar and the Western Student Guide, SAO Handbook, and other publications posted on the [Academic Calendars](#) webpage.

Enjoy the course, and good luck.