

Englit 3114
Spring 2005
Anderson, M.

VON STROHEIM & VON STERNBERG

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Office Hours:
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ENGLIT 3114: Film Directors
CRN 31114

Tuesdays, 6:00 PM to 9:50 PM
Lawrence Hall 209
Spring 2005

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The history of the American film industry is also a history of complaints by film directors about the restraints placed upon their creative work by a profit-driven studio system. While violent clashes between producers and various film artists have become part of Hollywood legend, no two studio directors during the classical era were more insistent about the sanctity of art or were more critical of industrial manufacture than Eric von Stroheim and Josef von Sternberg. Nevertheless, only the studio system was capable of delivering the vast resources that both filmmakers required in order to realize their opulent projects. It is no accident that, for the last thirty years, their films have often been important for institutional histories of early Hollywood, as well as at the center of theoretical discussions on film censorship, historical reception, women audiences, Americanization, the star system, and the political economy of the American film industry. This course investigates the careers of these two renegade directors with an aim toward thinking through some of the more sumptuous contradictions of the classical Hollywood cinema.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Peter Baxter. *Just Watch!: Sternberg, Paramount, and America*. (London: BFI, 1993).

Richard Koszarski. *Von: The Life and Films of Erich von Stroheim*. (New York: Limelight Editions, 2001).

Frank Norris. *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco*. (New York: Penguin, 2003).

Josef von Sternberg. *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*. San Francisco: Mercury House, 1988).

RECOMMENDED TEXT:

Tino Balio, et al. *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Practice, 1930-1939*. (Berkeley, Cal.; University of California Press, 1995).

COURSE WORK:

Students will complete two take-home exams. Each exam will require a three-page response (750 words) to any one of four or five possible questions from which students must choose. Students will have one week to complete each exam. There will be a take-home exam on von Stroheim distributed on

February 15 and due on **February 22**. The second exam on von Sternberg will be distributed on April 5 and due on **April 12**. Each exam is worth 25% of the course grade.

Also, each student will develop a research project for which a two-page proposal (500 words) will be handed in on **March 15**. The proposal will count toward 5% of the final grade. After I receive the research proposals, students will then meet with me in conference to discuss their projects further. Each student's research project will culminate in a ten- to twelve-page paper (2,500 to 3,000 words) due on **April 26**. The project paper is worth 35% of the final course grade. There is no final exam for this course.

Students should consult the university's policies on plagiarism. The Academic Integrity Code of the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh states that a student may be found in violation of her/his obligations if the student "presents as one's own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or words of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources". You can find the Academic Integrity Code on the web at <http://www.fcas.pitt.edu/academicintegrity.html>.

Any student with a disability who might require accommodation in this course is asked to contact both her/his instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, 412.648.7890/412.383.7355 (TTY), as soon as possible in the term. DRS is charged with verifying student disabilities and determining reasonable accommodations. Their web address is www.drs.pitt.edu.

ATTENDANCE:

The success of this course depends upon each student's preparation and classroom participation. Since the class meets only once a week, each student is allowed only *one unexcused absence*. Any student in excess of this limit can anticipate a significant reduction to her or his final grade. Excused absences may be granted for the observance of a religious holiday, for a serious medical condition, or for a *legitimate* family emergency. An excused absence is more easily obtained *prior to* the missed class session. Attendance, preparedness, and participation will for 10% of the final course grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

(x) = an article on reserve at Hillman Library.

WEEK 1

Tuesday, January 11

SCREENING:

Sunset Boulevard (US 1952, Paramount, d. Billy Wilder) 110 minutes.

WEEK 2

Tuesday, January 18

READING:

Koszarski, 3-55.

(x) Lucy Fisher. "Enemies, a Love Story: Von Stroheim, Women and World War I," *Film History* 6:4 (Winter 1994) 522-34.

Norris, 1-118.

SCREENING:

Blind Husbands (US 1919, Universal, d. Erich Stroheim) 93 minutes.

WEEK 3

Tuesday, January 25

READING:

Koszarski, 56-106.

(x) Janet Staiger. "'The Handmaiden of Villainy': Foolish Wives, Politics, Gender Orientation, and the Other," *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*. (Princeton, N.J.: University of Princeton Press, 1992) 124-38.

Norris, 119-87.

SCREENING:

Foolish Wives (US 1922, Universal, d. Erich von Stroheim) 144 minutes.

WEEK 4

Tuesday, February 1

READING:

Koszarski, 108-33.

Norris, 188-260.

SCREENING:

Merry-Go-Round (US1923, Universal, d. Erich von Stroheim [uncredited] and Rupert Julian) 114 minutes.

WEEK 5

Tuesday, February 8

READING:

Koszarski, 134-77.

Norris, 260-347.

SCREENING:

Greed (US 1925, Goldwyn, d. Erich von Stroheim) 130 minutes.

WEEK 6

Tuesday, February 15

READING:

Koszarski, 178-231.

(x) Erich von Stroheim. "In the Morning," *Film History* 2:3 (1988): 283-95.

SCREENING:

The Wedding March (US 1928, Paramount, d. Erich von Stroheim) 113 minutes.

WEEK 7

Tuesday, February 22

FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE

READING:

Koszarski, 233-335.

SCREENING:

Queen Kelly (US 1929, Gloria Productions, d. Erich von Stroheim) 101 minutes.

WEEK 8

Tuesday, March 1

NO CLASS.

SPRING RECESS.

WEEK 9

Tuesday, March 8

READING:

Von Sternberg, 1-53; 112-136; 190-223.

Baxter, 1-38.

SCREENING:

The Last Command (US 1928, Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg) 88 minutes.

WEEK 10

Tuesday, March 15 PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE

READING:

Von Sternberg, 54-111.

Baxter, 39-84.

OPTIONAL READING:

Grand Design, Chapter 1: "Surviving the Great Depression," 13-36.

SCREENING:

The Docks of New York (US 1929, Famous Players Lasky/Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg) 76 minutes.

WEEK 11

Tuesday, March 22

READING:

Von Sternberg, 136-151; 224-69.

(x) Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery. "Aesthetic Film History" from *Film History: Theory and Practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1985: 67-108.

OPTIONAL READING:

(x) Maud Lavin. "Androgyny and Spectatorship," *The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Hoch*. New Haven, Conn. And London: Yale University Press, 1993: 184-204.

Grand Design, David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson, Chapter 5: "Technological Change and the Classical Film Style, 109-41.

SCREENING:

Der Blaue Engel (Germany/US 1930, UFA-Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg)

WEEK 12

Tuesday, March 29

READING:

(x) Marlene Dietrich. "You Are Svengali—I Am Trilby," *Marlene*. Trans. Salvator Attanasio. (New York: Grove Press, 1989) 70-101.

(x) *Cahiers du Cinéma* Collective. "Morocco de Josef von Sternberg," Trans. Diana Matias. *Cahiers du Cinéma, 1969-1972: The Politics of Representation*. Ed. Nick Browne. (Cambridge, Mass.: Oxford University Press, 1990) 174-85.

OPTIONAL READING:

Grand Design, Chapter 6: "Selling Stars," 143-77.

SCREENING:

Morocco (US 1930, Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg) 97 minutes.

WEEK 13

Tuesday, April 5

READING:

Baxter, 133-72.

(x) Lea Jacobs. "Something Other Than a Sob Story," in *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928-1942*. (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1995) 85-105.

(x) Snead, James. "Angel, Venus, Jezebel: Race and the Female Star in Three Thirties Films," *White Screens/Black Images* [collected essays by James Snead] Eds. Colin MacCabe and Cornell West. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994) 62-80.

OPTIONAL READING:

Grand Design, Chapter 3, Richard Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," 37-72.

(x) Janet Staiger. "The Romance of Blonde Venus: Movie Censor versus Movie Fan," *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*. (New York: New York University Press, 2000) 77-92.

SCREENING:

Blonde Venus (US 1932, Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg) 93 minutes.

WEEK 14

Tuesday April 12 SECOND TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE

READING:

Baxter, 85-132.

(x) Gina Marchetti. "The Threat of Captivity: The Bitter Tea of General Yen and Shanghai Express," *Romance and the Yellow Peril*. (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1993) 46-66.

OPTIONAL READING:

(x) Gaylyn Studlar. "Masochistic Masquerade in the Performance of Identity," *In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 50-84.

SCREENING:

Shanghai Express (US 1932, Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg) 90 minutes.

WEEK 15

Tuesday April 19

READING:

Von Sternberg, 270-340.

- (x) Andrea Weiss. "A Queer Feeling I Get When I Look At You': Hollywood Stars and Lesbian Spectatorship in the 1930s," *Vampires and Violets: Lesbians in Film*. (New York: Penguin, 1992) 30-50.

SCREENINGS:

The Scarlet Empress (US 1934, Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg) 104 minutes.

Encuentra entra Dos Reinas [The Meeting of Two Queens] (Spain 1991, d. Cecelia Barriga) 14 minutes.

WEEK 16

Exam Week. No Final Exam.

Tuesday, April 26 FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE

READING:

- (x) Susan Sontag. "Notes on 'Camp,'" in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1966).

Baxter, 173-93.

- (x) Jack Smith. "Belated Appreciation of V.S.," in *Sternberg*. Ed. Pater Baxter (London: British Film Institute, 1980) 56-8.

SCREENING:

The Devil is a Woman (US 1935, Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg) 114 minutes.