

Englit 0540  
Spring 2004  
Wild, D.

Lit 0540

## **ENGLIT 0540 – World Film History**

CRN# 31547, Spring Semester 2004 (04-2), Thursdays 1:00 pm – 4:50 pm LAWRN 207

Instructor: **Daniel Wild**  
**CL 628 L**  
**Email: dhwst5@pitt.edu**  
Tel: 412 – 624 6550

Personal office hours: Tue 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm and by appointment  
Email office hours: Mon 10:00 am – 10:45 am  
Mailbox: CL 501 (left side, towards the back)

### **Course Description**

“History falls apart into images, not into stories.” – Walter Benjamin, 1935

World Film History is an introductory course in film studies which will acquaint you with some of the major works and movements in international cinema from 1895 to the present. In this sense, the course provides you with a primary overview of some major historical developments within the medium film, a medium which, perhaps more than others, has come to define the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Conversely, however, such historical developments have themselves been shaped or influenced by larger social and political events, which, in turn, have provided the basis for numerous films as these events are represented by the cinema. This means that rather than merely looking at films, we will be investigating a highly complex relation – the history of the cinema and the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as it is reflected through films. Throughout the semester, then, we will explore how film is shaped by social events and their history, and how film itself plays a role in shaping world events and the ways in which they are experienced and remembered.

Since it would be preposterous to attempt to cover the history of the cinema within one semester, we will focus primarily on three pivotal events of this century – World Wars I and II and the decolonization of former Western colonies such as Africa or India. These events have profoundly affected world history and the cinema might serve as an exemplary document with which to register and investigate their impact and significance. For example, we can see the ramifications of historical events in film genres, styles, or techniques such as German Expressionism, French Avantgarde, Soviet Montage, Neorealism, French New Wave, or Hong Kong Cinema, all of which were and continue to be highly influential on the film style we are probably most familiar with: the (American) Hollywood cinema.

Nonetheless, you are not required to “master” the historical complexities surrounding these events in the course of the semester, nor are you expected to already have an in-depth knowledge of 20<sup>th</sup> century history. You are, however, expected to develop a rigorous awareness of what it means to think “historically.” This means, for

example, that you are willing to think carefully and critically about the films you will view, that you attempt to see what use you can make of them, and that you reflect on the difficulties that they might pose for you. Most of the films for this course will either be silent or subtitled and they will often be quite challenging or difficult to approach. Do not give up, walk out, or miss screenings as the films are important and not easily accessible. As a college student, you are expected to rise to this challenge, since one of the purposes of this course is to introduce you to “major works of abiding value.” This will enable you to expand and revise your understanding of what cinema was, is, and might be. In fact, it constitutes one of the first problems a real historian faces: the question of how to make sense out of documents that are alien, unfamiliar, difficult, baffling, or seemingly hermetic. World Film History is a course where you are able to begin such work.

**Required Text:** Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997 (available at the Pitt Bookstore).

### Course Procedures

The class is structured into lectures, discussion sessions, and film screenings with short breaks in between them. Attendance is mandatory for *all* classes, not just for the lecture and discussion sections, but also for the screenings. Missing two (2) or more classes may be considered a conspicuous pattern of absence, which may jeopardize a passing grade. It is advisable to practice taking notes during film screenings, as you might have difficulties relying solely on your memory later on. Readings are due on the dates given below.

If necessary or desired, extra or supplementary readings will be made available in class or at the Hillman Library reserve desk. Occasionally films listed on the schedule may not be available. In the event of any change, you are responsible for updating your course syllabus and schedule as we proceed. Please keep any handouts and your class notes in a separate folder, so that you can reference them for the exams and other work on your part.

You are expected to be in class on time. No exams or assignments will be accepted after their due dates, unless you present a formal medical or other legitimate excuse in writing or you have discussed potential difficulties with me in advance. I cannot guarantee adequate comments or careful responses to late materials. All of your written work must be typewritten or computer-printed, stapled, and proofread carefully. Include your name on the first page. Any work that is sloppy in form or difficult to read will have to be resubmitted. Please ensure that you keep a hard copy of your written work for your own protection.

**No plagiarism will be tolerated!** This means that you will have to acknowledge all of your sources according to the standards of academic integrity. If you have any doubts or questions about such reference procedures, please consult with me. In the last few years, online information retrieval and data accessibility has increased exponentially. This means that you are responsible for being especially careful about the problem of accidental or deliberate plagiarism. For your work and research in this class, you are

allowed to use any available sources, but only with proper acknowledgment. Therefore, your work may be subject to random plagiarism checks. In some cases, you will be asked to resubmit your essays electronically to the website <www.turnitin.com> for validation in order to prevent plagiarism and to ensure academic integrity.

**Assessment of your work** is based on 2 tests administered in class, which will cover your *quantitative* knowledge of lecture, discussion, and screening material (worth 20% each), and 2 take-home exams, which require in-depth and critical work with more complex issues raised by the lecture, discussion, and screening material. These exams constitute the *qualitative* assessment of your work (each worth 25%). Your classroom contributions will be worth 10% of your final grade.

### Schedule

(screenings and excerpts subject to change)

**Thu 1/8/04 – Class 1: *Hollywood and Hegemony*:** Screenings: Manchurian Candidate (John Frankenheimer, USA 1962), Rescued by Rover (Cecil Hepworth, GB 1906).  
Readings: *World Cinema*, pp. 6 – 42, 443 – 460.

**Thu 1/15/04 – Class 2: *German Expressionism*:** Screening: Nosferatu (F.W. Murnau, Germany 1922). Excerpts from The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Robert Wiene, Germany 1920).  
Readings: *World Cinema*, pp. 43 – 62, 136 – 151.

**Thu 1/22/04 – Class 3: *French Impressionism and Avantgarde*:** Screening: Ménilmontant (Dmitri Kirsanov, France 1924), L'Age d'Or (Luis Bunuel, France 1930). Excerpts from Napoleon (Abel Gance, France 1927), Entr'Acte (Rene Clair, France 1924).  
Readings: *World Cinema*, pp. 62 – 70, 95 – 105, 112 – 123.

**Thu 1/29/04 – Class 4: *Soviet Montage*:** Screening: Strike (Sergei Eisenstein, USSR 1924). Excerpts from Battleship Potemkin (Sergei Eisenstein, USSR 1925).  
Readings: *World Cinema*, pp. 159 – 174, “Theory of Dialectical Montage” (handout).

**Thu 2/5/04 – Class 5: *Documentaries and World War II*:** Screenings: London Can Take It (GB 1940), Diary for Timothy (GB 1945), Listen to Britain (GB 1942). Excerpts from Triumph of the Will (Leni Riefenstahl, Germany 1936).  
Readings: *World Cinema*, pp. 86 – 95, 211 – 220, 323 – 343.

**Midterm Exam handed out.**

**Thu 2/12/04 – Class 6: *Italian Neorealism*:** Screening: Rome, Open City (Roberto Rossellini, Italy 1945). Excerpts from Bicycle Thief (Vittorio de Sica, Italy 1948), Germany, Year Zero (Roberto Rossellini, Italy 1947).  
Readings: *World Cinema*, pp. 353 – 361, 436 – 443.

**Test 1 in class.**

**Thu 2/19/04 – Class 7: French New Wave:** Screening: Alphaville (Jean-Luc Godard, France 1966). Excerpts from Pierrot le Fou (Jean-Luc Godard, France 1965), Masculin féminin (Jean-Luc Godard, France 1965). **Readings:** *World Cinema*, pp. 344 – 353, 567 – 586.

**Midterm Exam due in class.**

**Thu 2/26/04 – Class 8: New German Cinema:** Screening: Germany Pale Mother (Helma Sanders-Brahms, Germany 1980). Excerpts from Veronika Voss (R.W. Fassbinder, Germany 1982), The Marriage of Maria Braun (R.W. Fassbinder, Germany 1979). **Readings:** *World Cinema*, pp. 374 – 382, 614 – 632.

**Thu 3/4/04 – Class 9: Film and Postcolonialism:** Screenings: So Be It (Gai Ramaka, Senegal 1996), The Perfumed Nightmare (Kidlat Tahimik, Phillipines 1977). Excerpts from Xala (Ousmane Sembene, Senegal 1974). **Readings:** *World Cinema*, pp. 667 – 672, 527 – 550.

**Thu 3/18/04 – Class 10: Indian Cinema:** Screening: Spices (Ketan Mehta, India 1986). Excerpts from The Middleman (Satyajit Ray, India 1976), Khuda Gawah (Mukul Anand, India 1992). **Readings:** *World Cinema*, pp. 398 – 409, 678 – 689.

**Thu 3/25/04 – Class 11: Japanese Cinema:** Screening: Ugetsu Monogatari (Kenji Mizoguchi, Japan 1953). Excerpts from Tokyo Story (Yasujiro Ozu, Japan 1953). **Readings:** *World Cinema*, pp. 177 – 182, 714 – 721.

**Thu 4/1/04 – Class 12: Hong Kong and Chinese Cinema:** Screening: Rouge (Stanley Kwan, Hong Kong 1987). Excerpts from Red Sorghum (Zhang Yimou, China 1988). **Readings:** *World Cinema*, pp. 693 – 713.

**Final Exam handed out.**

**Thu 4/8/04 – Class 13: Transnational Cinema:** Screening: In This World (Michael Winterbottom, GB 2002). Excerpts from East is East (Damien O'Donnell, GB 1999). **Readings:** *World Cinema*, pp. 483 – 490, 750 – 766.

**Test 2 in class**

**Thu 4/15/04 – Last Class: The Future of History:** Screening: Russian Ark (Alexander Sokurov, Russia 2002). Excerpts from Beautiful People (Jasmin Dizdar, GB/Bosnia 1999).

**Thu 4/22/04: Final Exam due** in my mailbox in CL 501 at 1:00 pm