

Englit 1291  
Spring 2003  
Lockett, M.

LIT 1291

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ENGLIT 1291

History of American Film, Part 2

Spring 2003 (03-2)

Instructor: Moya Lockett

Office: 517J Cathedral of Learning

Office Hours: Monday 10-11 a.m., Tuesday 9:30-10:30 a.m. and by appointment

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Lecture, screening and discussion, Mondays, 6 p.m.- 9:50 p.m., 209 LAWR

This class covers the history of American cinema from 1935 to the present. It combines social, economic and institutional analysis of the film industry with studies of the films characteristically produced within Hollywood during this time. This period witnesses fundamental transformations in Hollywood, from the establishment and dissolution of the studio system, the development of television, the collapse of censorship and the dissemination of color and widescreen technologies. We will be exploring how events like these radically transformed the nature of the film industry, the star system and the films produced within the United States. We will also explore how these films--and the studio system as a whole responded--to broader social and ideological movements, from the New Deal to the Civil Rights movement and beyond.

Throughout the semester, we will investigate how Hollywood retained its global power throughout periods of vast political and social upheaval, analyzing the narrative, economic and technological strategies used to produce films that dominated the international market. As we will be thinking about Hollywood as a business as well as a form of art and entertainment, we will study the economic and marketing strategies used by Hollywood and think about their impact on the films produced and how we, as audiences, might understand these films.

We will also think about the social impact of these films, exploring the ways they respond to the American historical contexts in which they were produced and helped produce specific images of America. In particular, we will pay attention to questions of race and history, studying how these are used in Hollywood to produce specific images of America, both for the domestic market and for export. We will also consider the question of genre--in particular, *film noir*--to think about the kinds of stories told, why and how they have been told and what this might say about American culture.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

The following are available from the University Bookstore:

Tino Balio (ed.), The American Film Industry (Revised Edition) (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985)

Janet Staiger (ed.), The Studio System (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995)

Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds.), Contemporary Hollywood Cinema (London: Routledge, 1998)

Readings will also be taken from the following book which is on reserve in Hillman Library:

Jon Lewis (ed.), The New American Cinema (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998)

The text below is out of print and also on reserve in Hillman--it contains important readings and is a good source for more information on the Hollywood studios:

Douglas Gomery, The Hollywood Studio System (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986)

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Attendance and Participation**

You are expected to attend all classes. Missing class, screenings or failing to contribute in discussion will result in a lower grade.

You are expected to participate in class discussions about the films, ideas and readings. In-class discussion is a crucial forum for you to explore ideas, and will help you work through the concepts that you will be at the heart of the writing assignments.

### **Written Assignments**

You will be evaluated on attendance, participation and the following work. The breakdown for these is given below:

**Participation and Attendance--10%**. You will not receive full credit if you never contribute to the class discussion.

**In class quiz--10%**. This tests your comprehension of readings, concepts raised in class and your knowledge of the legal and economic workings of the Hollywood studio system and the reasons behind its dissolution.

**Midterm--40%**. Take-home exam combining essay and shorter questions. This requires you to synthesize material studied in the first half of the course, analyzing readings, lectures, films and historical and industrial concepts.

**Final--40%** :--EITHER--

**Take-home exam.** This follows the same model as the midterm, but covers material from the second half of the course.

-or-

**Research paper and proposal.** Your paper should be 10-15 pages long and cover a topic of your own choice on American film from the period covered in class. You will submit a paper proposal and bibliography to me no later than week 11 (March 24) outlining your topic, methods, ideas and the questions you hope to answer in this paper.

All assignments, should be typed, double-spaced in an acceptable 12-point font (Times, Palatine) with 1-inch margins.

**NO PLAGIARISM PERMITTED. ANY STUDENT INVOLVED IN ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL FAIL AND COULD BE SUBJECT TO DISCIPLINARY ACTION. THIS COULD INVOLVE SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION FROM THE UNIVERSITY.**

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Each month, you will be responsible for viewing one film out of class that I will place on reserve. These films will count as part of the course, and will appear on exams and quizzes. We will also talk about these in class discussion.

### **Reserve Films:**

January: Gone With the Wind (Victor Fleming, 1939, Selznick)

February: Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, 1941, Mercury/RKO)

March: The Godfather (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)

April: Out of Sight (Steven Soderbergh, 1998, Jersey Films)

### **Week 1, 1/6: Introduction: Questions of Film History**

**Screening:** North By Northwest (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959, MGM)

**Readings:** Staiger, pp. 1-14, 200-225

### **Part I: Industrial, Economic and Cultural Histories**

### **Week 2, 1/13: The Hollywood Studio System: Production, Distribution, Exhibition**

**Screening:** Sunset Boulevard (Billy Wilder, 1950, Paramount)

**Readings:** Tino Balio, pp. 253-350 (this includes illustrations and magazine articles on film finance from the 1940s); Staiger, pp. 39-49

### **Week 3, 1/20: NO CLASS: MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY OBSERVED**

### **Week 4, 1/27: Hollywood and World War II**

**Screening:** Best Years of Our Lives (William Wyler, 1946, Goldwyn/RKO)

**Readings:** Staiger, pp. 279-297

### **Week 5: 2/3: A and B Films**

**Screenings:** Gun Crazy aka Deadly Is The Female (Joseph H. Lewis, 1949, King Brothers/United Artists); Detour (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1945, PRC)

**Readings:** Staiger, pp. 17-36, 5073 \*Gomery, "Specialized Studios," pp. 173-188 (in Gomery book on reserve)

### **Week 6, 2/10: Post-Classical Hollywood**

**Screening:** Chinatown (Roman Polanski, 1974, Long Road/Paramount)

**Readings:** Neale and Smith, pp. 1-73, 166-177

### **Week 7, 2/17: Censorship and Obscenity**

**\*IN CLASS TEST\***

**Screening:** Midnight Cowboy (John Schlesinger, 1969, United Artists)

**Readings:** Staiger, pp. 251-278, Balio, pp. 377-400; 510-536.

**\*MIDTERM HANDED OUT\***

### **Week 8, 2/24: Stars, Youth Culture and the Collapse of the Studio System**

**Screening:** The Graduate (Mike Nichols, 1967, Embassy/MGM)

**Readings:** Balio, pp. 351-376 401-462; Staiger, pp. 298-316

### **3/3 SPRING BREAK--NO CLASS**

**Week 9, 3/10: Technology**

**Screening:** Minority Report (Steven Spielberg, 2002, Amblin/Dreamworks/Twentieth Century-Fox/Cruise-Wagner/Blue Tulip et. al.)

**Readings:** Neale and Smith, pp. 107-129

**\*MIDTERM DUE\***

**Part II: Social and Aesthetic Histories****Week 10, 3/17: Television: Competition, Collaboration and Change**

**Screening:** Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter? (Frank Tashlin, 1957, Twentieth Century-Fox)

**Readings:** Neale and Smith, pp. 130-141

**Week 11, 3/24: New Hollywood and the Director**

**Screening:** Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976, Columbia, Bill/Phillips, Italo/Judeo)

**Readings:** Jon Lewis (ed.), The New American Cinema. pp. 11-63.

**\*RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSALS DUE\***

**Week 12, 3/31: Vietnam**

**Screening:** The Deer Hunter (Michael Cimino, 1978, EMI/Universal)

**Readings:** Lewis, pp. 125-186.

**Week 13, 4/7: Race and Civil Rights**

**Screening:** Foxy Brown (Jack Hill, 1974, A.I.P.)

**Readings:** Neale and Smith, pp. 209-228; Lewis, pp. 328-352; \*Guerrero, "The Rise and Fall of Blaxploitation" from Ed Guerrero, Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), pp. 69-112 (on reserve)

**\*FINAL DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS\***

**Week 14, 4/14: Postmodern Contemporary Film: History, Remakes and Revivals**

**Screening:** CQ (Roman Coppola, 2002, Sawyer Productions/American Zoetrope/CQ Productions/Delux Productions/United Artists)

**Readings:** Neale and Smith, pp. 74-90, 191-208.

**FINALS AND EXAMS DUE NOON, MONDAY APRIL 21**