

Dr. Jon Cowans
Class meets: MW 6-7:20, Conklin 238

Office: Con. 305; 973 353-3893; ofc hrs: MW 3:30-4, 5:30-6
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SEMINAR: READINGS: CINEMA AND SOCIETY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

21:510:489, section 70 (01905) (Fall 2014)

This course uses cinema to examine the history of the twentieth century, principally in the United States and Europe. In addition to looking at how films interpreted events and trends of their time and focusing on moments when cinema became a topic of general social discussion, it also traces the history of the film industry from its birth through the end of the twentieth century and analyzes major stylistic developments in the evolution of the art form.

READINGS

Course reader, available **only** at Porta Print, 33 Halsey St., 973 622-1828

Note: The reader is **not** available at the campus bookstore or at New Jersey Books.

GRADING

TESTS: There will be a **COMPREHENSIVE** final exam on Fri. Dec. 19, 6:20-9:20pm. The format for the final will be a series of short essays (1/2 to 1 page). Please **read the exam instructions** (in the reader) very carefully before the exam. All students must sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge.

LECTURE QUESTIONS: At the end of each lecture, you must hand in one or two brief questions or comments on the material in the lecture. Grades are based on the number of days when you attend and hand in a card; each unexcused absence will lower this score by five points. **To receive credit, your card must contain a relevant question or comment.**

For an absence to be excused, you must provide written evidence of a valid reason, and all excuses must be in by the end of the final exam. Your overall course grade will fall by a half-letter (e.g., from B to C+) for each unexcused absence starting with the fourth one. Any student who misses eight or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will not earn credit in this course; such students should withdraw from the class.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Everyone is **required** to pay attention and to speak regularly in class, asking questions or making relevant comments. Grading is based on how often you participate and on your level of comprehension of the day's readings and ability to analyze the course material. Use of electronic devices (texting, etc.) in class will lower your score. Laptops are not allowed in this class.

QUIZZES: Several times during the semester, you will be quizzed on the readings and/or films assigned for that day. These quizzes will be **unannounced**. The lowest grade on the quizzes will not count.

PAPERS: This class requires two scene-analysis papers, each 3 to 5 pages. See separate instructions.

PAPER PROPOSAL: By Wed. Nov. 12 you will hand in a one-page single-spaced description of three possible proposal topics (one paragraph on each). Each of the three should identify the films and primary sources you would use. We will then confer to choose one of them. By completing this assignment on time and satisfactorily, you earn one extra point for the course grade.

By Wed. Dec.10, you will turn in a proposal of 4 to 5 double-spaced pages, describing a research paper to be written in the spring. The proposal will state: 1) what questions that future paper will try to answer; 2) why that topic is important; and 3) what primary sources you will use. It is a *proposal*, not a paper, so it should not present conclusions only your research can answer. With the proposal, you will hand in an annotated bibliography with a one-sentence description of at least 6 secondary works (books or articles). Late papers lose 5 points per weekday.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Lecture questions	5%
Papers (2)	10%
Class participation	15%
Proposal	15%
Quizzes	20%
Final exam	35%
	100%

Wed. 9-3: Introduction

Mon. 9-8: The Advent of Cinema [15 pages of reading]

Kristin Thompson & David Bordwell, "The Invention and Early Years of the Cinema" (Reading 1)

Russell Merritt, "Nickelodeon Theaters, 1905-1914" (R-2)

Chicago Vice Commission, "Cheap Theaters" (R-3)

Garth S. Jowett, "The First Motion Picture Audiences" (R-4)

Wed. 9-10: Early Cinema [17]

Samantha Barbas, "The First Movie Fans" (R-5)

Kay Sloan, "Silent Cinema as Social Criticism" (R-6)

"The Moving Picture and the National Character" (R-7)

Eric Niderost, "*The Birth of a Nation*" (R-8)

Mon 9-15: The Origins and Growth of Hollywood [16]

Neal Gabler, "An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood" (R-9)

Henry Ford, "The All-Jewish 'Movies'" (R-10)

Mark Wheeler, "The Development of Hollywood" (R-11)

"The Sins of Hollywood: The Arbuckle Scandal" (R-12)

Wed. 9-17: Europe in the 1920s [12]

James Chapman, "The Emergence of National Cinemas" (R-13)

Kristin Thompson & David Bordwell, "Dada, German Expressionism, & Soviet Montage" (R-14)

Mon. 9-22: Film Fandom and Audience Research [16]

Samantha Barbas, "The Fandom Menace" (R-15)

Melvyn Stokes, "Female Audiences of the 1920s and 1930s" (R-16)

Susan Ohmer, "The Science of Pleasure: George Gallup & Audience Research in Hollywood" (R-17)

Film: *The Sheik* (1921)

Wed. 9-24: Hollywood and Europe [15]

Robert Sklar, "Selling Movies Overseas" (R-18)

Ruth Vasey, "Hollywood's Global Distribution and the Representation of Ethnicity" (R-19)

Mon. 9-29: The Hollywood Studio System; The Advent of Sound and Color [17]

Thomas Schatz, "MGM, Irving Thalberg Era, and the Studio System" (R-20)

Neal Gabler, "Warner Bros. and the Advent of Sound" (R-21)

"Contemporary Articles on the Advent of Sound" (R-22)

Ed Buscombe, "Color and Cinematic Realism" (R-23)

Wed. 10-1: Hollywood and the Depression, Part I [8]

James Chapman, "Hollywood in the Great Depression" (R-24)

Lary May, "Utopia on Main Street: Modern Theaters in the 1930s" (R-25)

Film: *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933)

Mon. 10-6: Europe in the 1930s [7]

Kristin Thompson & David Bordwell, "Surrealism" (R-26)

James Chapman, "European Cinema in the 1930s" (R-27)

Wed. 10-8: Social-Problem Films in the 1930s [10]

Peter Roffman & Jim Purdy, "Social-Problem Films: Gangsters" (R-28)

Mick LaSalle, "Complicated Women" (R-29)

Henry James Forman, "Our Movie-Made Children" (R-30)

Film: *Baby Face* (1933)

Mon. 10-13: Censorship & the Production Code in the 1930s [18]

Mark Wheeler, "The Production Code" (R-31)

The Production Code (R-32)

Lea Jacobs, "The Model of Self-Regulation" (R-33)

Mick La Salle, "The Censors Strike Back" (R-34)

Wed. 10-15: Hollywood and the Depression, Part II [6]

Alan Brinkley, "*The Grapes of Wrath*" (R-35)

Russell Campbell, "The Ideology of the Social Consciousness Movie" (R-36)

Films: *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940)

Mon. 10-20: No readings or films assigned. We will discuss writing and the research proposals.

Wed. 10-22: Open Session

Mon 10-27: Hollywood, the Nazis, and World War II

Ben Urwand, "Hollywood's Pact with Hitler" (R-37)

Robert H. Stanley, "Hollywood Goes to War" (R-38)

Film: *Mrs. Miniver* (1942)

Wed. 10-29: The 1940s: Film Noir [9]

James Chapman, "A Dark Mirror to Postwar America" (R-39)

Raymond Borde & Etienne Chaumeton, "Towards a Definition of Film Noir" (R-40)

Joseph Breen, "The Production Code Administration Letters on *Double Indemnity*" (R-41)

Film: *Double Indemnity* (1944)

Mon. 11-3: Postwar Europe: The American Invasion; Neo-Realism [7]

James Chapman, "Liberation, Reconstruction, Neo-Realism" (R-42)

Carl Foreman, "European Viewpoint on What's Wrong with U.S. Pix," *Variety* (R-43)

Film: *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) (also known as *The Bicycle Thief*) (Original title: *Ladri di biciclette*)

Wed. 11-5: HUAC, the Hollywood Ten, and the Blacklist [10]

Robert Sklar, "HUAC and Hollywood" (R-44)

The Motion Picture Alliance, "Statement of Principles" (R-45)

I.F. Stone, "The Grand Inquisition" (R-46)

Mon. 11-10: The Decline of the Studio System [14]

Mark Wheeler, "Hollywood Cartelism and US Antitrust Rulings" (R-47)

Dennis McDougal, "Lew Wasserman, MCA, & the Deal that Doomed the Moguls" (R-48)

John Izod, "Divorcement: The End of the Studio System?" (R-49)

Wed. 11-12: Hollywood and the 1950s: Industry Crisis and Response [12]

John Belton, "Widescreen Cinema" (R-50)

Samuel Goldwyn, "Hollywood in the Television Age" (R-51)

Kevin McCarthy, "Juvenile Delinquency and Crime Theory in *Blackboard Jungle*" (R-52)

Film: *Blackboard Jungle* (1955)

THREE PROPOSAL TOPICS DUE

Mon. 11-17: Censorship Debates after WW II [14]

Robert Stanley, "The Weakening of Censorship in the 1950s" (R-53)

Paul Blanshard, "The Church and the Movies" (R-54)

Gregory D. Black, "American Catholics Debate Film Censorship" (R-55)

Luis Buñuel, "On *Viridiana*" (R-56)

Wed. 11-19: The 1960s: From the New Wave to the New Hollywood [15]

James Chapman, "The European New Wave & the New Hollywood of the 1960s" (R-57)

Mark Harris, "*Bonnie and Clyde*: From Conception to Reception" (R-58)

Bonnie and Clyde: Reviews and Letters (R-59)

Mon. 11-24: Hollywood and Race in the 1960s [17]

Aram Goudsouzian, "Sidney Poitier's Rise to Stardom" (R-60) [3]

Clifford Mason, "Why Does White America Love Sidney Poitier So?" (R-61) [5]

Ed Guerrero, "From Sidney Poitier to Blaxploitation" (R-62) [5]

Alvin Poussaint, "Blaxploitation Movies" (R-63) [4]

Mon. 12-1: The 1980s: Home Video, the Film Business, & the Culture Wars [16]

Robert C. Allen, "Home Video, Hollywood, and the Family Film" (R-64)

Barbara Stones, "The Movie Theater in the 1980s: Life after Death?" (R-65)

Michael Medved, "Hollywood vs. America" (R-66)

Wed. 12-3: New Voices [10]

Kevin Elstob, "Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (*Hate*), 1995" (R-67)

"Spike Lee: Interview with Elvis Mitchell" (R-68)

Films: *Do the Right Thing* (1989); *La Haine* (English title: *Hate*) (1995)

Mon. 12-8: Film and Globalization [14]

Mark Wheeler, "Film and Globalization in the Late Twentieth Century" (R-69)

Daniel Singer, "GATT and the Shape of Our Dreams" (R-70)

Marc Cooper, "Runaway Shops: The Loss of American Film Employment" (R-71)

James Chapman, "Cinema without Frontiers" (R-72)

Wed. 12-10: Open Session: Proposal Due

Assigned Films:

		Netflix	Dana (call #)	Amazon rental	Swank
The Sheik (1921)	Mon. 9-22	yes	yes: 442	yes	no
Gold Diggers of 1933 (1933)	Wed. 10-1	yes	yes: 576	yes	yes
Baby Face (1933)	Wed. 10-8	yes	yes: 692	yes	yes
The Grapes of Wrath (1940)	Wed. 10-15	yes	yes: 20 (vhs)	no	no
Mrs. Miniver (1942)	Mon. 10-27	yes	yes: 580	yes	yes
Double Indemnity (1944)	Wed. 10-29	yes	yes: 579	yes	no
Bicycle Thieves (1948)	Mon. 11-3	yes	yes: 465	no	yes
Blackboard Jungle (1955)	Wed. 11-12	yes	yes: 582	yes	yes
Do the Right Thing (1989)	Wed. 12-3	yes	yes: 578	yes	yes
La Haine (Hate) (1995)	Wed. 12-3	yes	yes: 577	yes	yes