Film, Power and American History: History 225g
Spring 2013

Professor Vanessa R. Schwartz
10:00-11:50, M, W
THH 202
TAs: Max Felker-Kantor (felkerka@usc.edu)
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Schwartz Office Hours: M: 8:30-10:00, 12-1 M and by Appointment
Location: SOS 170
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Course Description:
The goal of this class is to consider the history of the twentieth century as created by
the existence of the movies and its institutions. This is not a class on American
history through the movies. Instead, we will ask about the special role played by
America in shaping the history of "the cinematic century." Hollywood has played a
disproportionately large role in the history of the movies and their influence but
that influence has been global in scale. This course is the story of how America came
to dominate the world in part by capturing hearts and minds through a powerful
form – at once art and document. We follow the emergence of Hollywood itself as a
cosmopolitan and international center of film production. Hollywood is not nor has
it ever been "America." We begin from the premise that the openness of Hollywood
and the mobility (often forced) of foreign-born filmmakers who came to Hollywood,
made Hollywood into Hollyworld. The class examines the history of the movies and
its institutions and practices at the same time that it considers the enormous
influence and impact of the movies on shaping the history of the twentieth century.
The course suggests that the major social issues of the twentieth century were not
only debated in the medium of film but also that film became a major social force,
functioning as a center of power because of its mass nature since the advent of the
movies in 1895.

General Education: Category VI. Social Issues
Courses in this category prepare students for informed citizenship by teaching them
to analyze compelling local, national and/or international issues or
problems. Analytical tools are examined systematically so that students may
fruitfully apply them to understand a broad range of social and political phenomena.
Students learn to assess the validity of arguments and discern the connections
between data cited and conclusions drawn. Students completing this category
develop the basic critical skills needed to evaluate and use the vast amount of
information concerning social issues now available via the internet, media, and
traditional scholarship. They acquire the concepts and confidence necessary to
discuss contemporary social issues in an informed manner and develop a passion
for learning that will allow them to engage complex questions about human beings
and society.

**Class Format:** We will meet twice weekly in a lecture format (with lots of materials being screened) and then once a week for discussion of the reading materials, screenings and lectures in section directed by the teaching assistants. Attendance, three times a week, is mandatory. You must arrive before class begins at 10 am. All readings and screenings are to be completed by Friday’s discussion. Readings come from books made available for purchase or in the form of articles that are posted on the class blackboard. All screening materials will be available on reserve in Leavey Library.

**Required Readings and Screenings:**

**Books for Purchase:**

**Articles on Blackboard:**


National Archives. Description of Photographic Unit from National Archives – Experiences in European Theater of Operations.


*Variety* on “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?” in Ross, 273-279

Out of Class Film Screenings:

- Charlie Chaplin, “The Great Dictator” (1940) - LVYDVD 786 disc 1; LVYDVD 786 disc 2
- Mervyn LeRoy, “Gold diggers of 1933” (1933): LVYDVD3319
- Christian Delage, “Nuremberg: The Nazis Facing their Crimes” (2006) - LVYDVD 3728 disc 1; LVYDVD 3728 disc 2
- Walt Disney’s “Fantasia” (1940) - LVYDVD 294
- Stanley Donen & Gene Kelly, “It’s Always Fair Weather” (1955): LVYDVD4693
- Todd, Around the World in Eighty Days (1956): LVYDVD 4691 discs 1 and 2
- Richard Lester, “A Hard Day’s Night” (1964) - LVYDVD 1026 disc 1; LVYDVD 1026 disc 2
- Paul Mazursky, “An Unmarried Woman” (1978) LVYDVD4279
- Stephen Chow, “Kung Fu Hustle” (2004) - LVYDVD 1282

**IMPORTANT DUE DATES**

Short Paper, 3-5 pages: Wednesday, Feb. 6, 10 am.
In-Class Mid-term: Wednesday, February 20, 10-12pm
Second Paper, 5-7 pages: Monday, April 29, 10 am.
Final Exam: Monday, May 13, 8-10 am

No late papers will be accepted. No missed exams will be accommodated unless there is a true emergency such as a documented death or severe illness.

**GRADING DISTRIBUTION**

First Paper: 15%
Mid-Term: 15%
Second Paper: 25%
Final: 30%
Participation: 15%

**Statement for Students with Disabilities:**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with the Disability Services Program (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30am-5:00pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number is 213-740-
Statement on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: all work submitted must be your own. Cutting and pasting from the internet is especially common. The instructor and TA’s will enforce all university regulations in regard to the violation of policies related to academic integrity to the furthest extent. See http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tig.pdf for definitions of plagiarism.

Digital Etiquette Policy: The following policies have been developed with one thing in mind: the quality of your education. I do not seek to ban technology as such for there are many advantages to having a laptop and ipad in the classroom and even internet access when it is fixed on the learning at hand. For the length of a class session you are expected to focus exclusively on the class and your classmates and your behavior should reflect that engagement. Other chores and tasks will simply have to wait.

The classroom is a place where you leave your other worries and commitments behind for a fixed amount of time. When in doubt, please recall the principle that the use of all technology should specifically enhance and relate to the course.

The best studying also happens when you dedicate fixed off-line times. I highly recommend you do that at set times during the week.

Phones: Please silence all phones or turn them off entirely. Do not put them on vibrate.

Laptops: You may use a laptop to take notes during class. I may even ask someone with a laptop to check something on the internet for us. Do not, during class, IM, look at Facebook, shop at Amazon or anywhere else, follow a game, respond to email. These behaviors distract you and those around you. Although multi-tasking is a skill, you are in dire need of lessons in focus and concentration and I am here to help with that. If you have trouble resisting temptation, turn off your wifi and if we need to get on-line, we can wait the ten seconds it takes you to get on-line to look something up.

Expectations regarding interaction with TA’s and Instructor: If you email one of us you should expect a reply within 24 hours, Monday to Friday and within 48 hours on the week-end unless you receive an email explaining that we are unable to reply as quickly as usual due to travel or other reasons. Each of us has regular office hours and can also see you by scheduled appointment in our offices or via electronic video communication if the instructor determines that is most desirable.

Schedule of Lectures, Readings, Screenings and Discussions

Week One: Before the Movies Begin
Monday, January 14: Introduction: Mass Culture and Shaping America’s Power in the 20th Century

Wednesday, January 16: Modern Life Before Film: Mobility, Machines and Mechanical Reproducibility
- David Bordwell on Doing Film History

Friday, 1/18: Discuss Readings

Week Two: The Birth of Cinema: Popular Realism

Monday, January 21: No Classes

Wednesday, January 23: The Public Taste for Reality
Screen In Class: Lumière Brothers, Méliès Films, Zecca Film
- Read: Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*: Schwartz, pp. 297-319; and Verhagen, 103-129.
- Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, pp. 3-32

Friday, 1/25: Discussion

Week Three: The Birth of Cinema: Mass Entertainment vs. Information

Monday, January 28: Nickel Madness
Screen in Class: “The Great Train Robbery” and “Life of a Fireman”

Wednesday, January 30: Delivering Messages: Movies and Morality
Screen in Class: “Immigrants Arriving” and “Children who Labor” (1912) with commentary by Steve Ross

Read:
• *Whissel, Regulating Mobility.* in Camera Obscura, 17:1

**Screen** with Stamp Voice-Over: George Loane Tucker, “Traffic in Souls” (1913) dornsife.usc.edu/hist225g/pages/home/index.html

**Friday: 2/2:** Discussion

**Week Four: Social Problems, Social Significance**

**Monday, February 4:** Americans in the Making
Screen in Class: Emigrants Landing at Ellis Island, (1903), An American in the Making (1913) and Ramona (1910)

**Wednesday, February 6:** Film Goes to War: The News Reel and Propaganda
Screen in Class: From “Battle of the Somme,” “The Great War” “The Archives of the Planet.”

**First Paper Due in Class at 10 am**

Read:
• Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, pp. 48-64
• *Boleslas Matuszewski, Laura U. Marks, and Diane Koszarski, “A New Source of History,” Film History 7:3 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 322-324
http://wn.com/tcm%27s_race_hollywood_latino_images_in_film_ramona,_1910
• *Noriega, “Birth of the Southwest” in Bernardi, The Birth of Whiteness, 203-225

**Friday, 2/8:** Discussion

**Week Five: Writing History with Lightening**

**Monday, February 11:** DW Griffith and the Birth of a Nation
Screen in Class: Scenes from DW Griffith, “Father of Film” and clips from “Birth of a Nation” and “Intolerance”

**Wednesday, February 13:** Moving West: Hooray for Hollywood, international capital of film
Screen in Class, from “Hollywood” Brownlow and Gill (1980) and “Hollywood: An Empire of their Own” (Jacobovici, 2005) and “Hollywood: The Dream Factory” (Rosten, 1972) and “Singin’ in the Rain” (Donen and Kelly, 1952)

• *Boston Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, “Fighting a Vicious Film: Protest against ‘The Birth of a Nation’” (1915) from Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts, eds., Hollywood’s America: United States Through Its Films (St. James, New York: Brandywine Press, 1993), pp. 79-80

Discussion: 2/15

**Week Six: Mid-term: From the Birth of Film to Rise of Hollywood**

**Monday, February 18:** No Class; President’s Day Holiday

**Wednesday, February 20:** In-Class mid-term

Read:
• Sklar, 67-103, 141-157
• McDonald, The Star System, pp.1-55

**No Discussion Section this week**

**Week Seven: Chaplin: Global Icon and Filmmaker**

**Monday, February 25:** The Power of the Star: Selling War Bonds to Modern Times

**Wednesday, February 27:** The Little Tramp vs. The Dictators
• Screen: Charlie Chaplin, “The Great Dictator” (1940)
• Read: Sklar, Movie-Made America, pp. 104-120
• *Ross, Chapter One from Hollywood, Left and Right
• McDonald, The Star System, pp. 89-97

Discussion: 3/1

**Week Eight: To What World Problems Should the Movies be the Answer?**
**Monday, March 4:** The Depression and Making Hollywood Matter  
In-Class screening from “The Plow that Broke the Plains” and part of the “Triumph of the Will”

**Wednesday, March 6: Guest Lecture: Monica Pelayo: The Good Earth and Hollywood’s Chinatown**

Read:

Screen: Mervyn LeRoy, “The Gold Diggers of 1933” (1933)

**Discussion: 3/8**

**Week Nine: World at War**

**Monday, March 11:** Contributing to the War Effort  
Clips from “From D-Day to Berlin” “Saving Private Ryan” “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” and “Private Snafu”

**Wednesday, March 13:** Filming Atrocity  
In-Class Screening of “This is Your Life: Hannah Bloch Kohner”


Read:
- *Description of Photographic Unit from National Archives*
- Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, 249-269

**Discussion: 3/15**

**March 18-23: Spring Break**

**Week Ten: Where High Meets Low: Film Internationalism I**

**Monday, March 25:** Disney, Europe and Animation  
Screen in-class from Walt Disney’s “Fantasia” (1940) “The Old Mill” “Snow White”

**Wednesday, March 27:** What is Cosmopolitanism in Film? Selling Culture
In-class screening: From Frenchness Films: “An American in Paris” “Gigi” “Moulin Rouge” and “Funny Face”

Screen: Finish “Fantasia” and “Around the World in Eighty Days”
  • Read: Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, pp. 269-286
  • Schwartz, *It’s So French!* Intro, chapters 1, 2 and 4

**Discussion: 3/29**

*Week Eleven: Where High Meets Low Two: Big and Little Screens*

**Monday, April 1:** TV, Widescreen and the Epic
Screen in class clips from “Lawrence of Arabia” “Ben Hur” “The Ten Commandments” and “The Sound of Music”

**Wednesday, April 3:** Guest Lecture: Steve Collicelli, “HUAC and The Cold War on Film and TV”

Screen: “It’s Always Fair Weather”

Read:

**Discussion: 4/5**

*Week Twelve: Youth Culture*

**Monday, April 8:** Disneyland is your Land
Screen in Class: “Disneyland USA” opening footage

***Screen: “Richard Lester, “A Hard Day's Night” (1964) before Wednesday

**Wednesday, April 10:** The Rock and Roll Movie
  • Read: McDonald, *The Star System*, pp. 55-113
  • Morton, *A Hard Day’s Night. Music on Film*

**Discussion: 4/12**

*Week Thirteen: New Waves*

**Monday, April 15:** American Re-Makes of French Films and the New Hollywood
**Wednesday, April 17:** Screen: “Bonnie and Clyde” (1967) in class.

**Discussion: 4/19**


**Week Fourteen: The Return of Social Issues**

**Monday, April 22:** Feminism and Race Relations at Home and Abroad
Clips from “Shaft” “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner,” “Breakfast at Tiffany’s,” ”That Girl” “The Best of Everything.”

**Wednesday, April 24:** Guest Lecture: Max Felker-Kantor: “Urban Decay and Renewal”

Read:
- From * Helen Gurley Brown, Chapters 4 and 7 from *Sex and the Single Girl* (New York: Pocket Books , 1962), pp. 65-88 and 119-137
- Betty Friedan, Chapters 1 and 2 of *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Books, 1963), pp. 11-27 and 33-68
- *Variety on “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?”

**Discussion: 4/26**

**Week Fifteen: Global Cinema: Film Internationalism II**

**Monday, April 29:** Blockbusters: Spielberg as Griffith
Clips from “Jaws”, “Amistad” and “ET”

*Second Paper due, 5-7 pages April 29, 10 am*

**Wednesday, May 1:** Conclusion: Film, America and the Universal Language

**Discussion: 5/3**

Read:

Final Exam: Monday, May 13, 8am-10am