

**Film, Power and American History: History 225g  
Fall 2010**

**Prof. Vanessa R. Schwartz**

**10:00-11:50, MW**

**THH 202**

**TAs: Steve Collicelli, Karin Higa , Sarah Hollenberg**

**Schwartz Office Hours: M: 12-1pm and W: 8-9:30 am and by appt. (SOS 170)**

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**Description:** Few contemporary institutions and forms of representation have had a greater impact on the world than film and television. Yet, while we learn to be spectators early on in our lives, we often lack the critical tools needed to contextualize, analyze, and critique the images and ideologies of screen culture. Just as reading and literacy is a fundamental stage in human development in the Western world, so is one's identity as a consumer of the moving image. We cannot understand the world around us nor understand how to improve it unless we consider the meaning of the role of spectatorship and the power and influence of moving images both on the screen and in the world outside the image.

There is also a specificity of the cinematic image (photographed images that appear to move because of an optical illusion) that gives film a particular recourse to the "real world." Film has offered an amazing alchemy of dreams and realities that have made the movies a powerful vehicle for story-telling (whether fictional or non-fictional) and is a mode that continues to be very influential despite changes in technologies of production and consumption formats.

This is not a class on American history through the movies. Instead, 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. We will ask about the special role played by America in shaping that history. 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." Its global success hinged not on selling Americana to swanky Parisians but rather on the fact that it already represented the values of swanky Parisians and Germans and Europeans to American farmers. We begin from the premise that the openness of Hollywood and the mobility (often forced) of filmmakers in coming to Hollywood, first as a place, then as a method of production, has made Hollywood, Hollywood. 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 the history of the twentieth century that produced a condition in which little appears to have happened "off screen." This course is about the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "as a movie."

**Class Format:** We will meet twice weekly in a lecture format and then once a week for discussion of the reading materials, screenings and lectures. 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 in Leavey Library. We will also offer a public screening with snacks on Wednesdays of the week's film(s) from 6:30-8:30 pm (or thereafter) in our classroom where you can watch the week's required films. This is optional, of course.

**Requirements:** The course includes a midterm (25% of the grade), a final (30% of the grade), 2 papers (15 each%), and class participation (15%). We expect students to attend all scheduled classes and discussions; unexcused absences will affect your grade and more than 3 will result in an automatic failure in the class. All work submitted must be entirely written by the student. Plagiarism will result in an F in the course and the initiation of expulsion proceedings.

### **Required Readings and Screenings:**

#### **Books for Purchase:**

Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press)

Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books and Toronto: Random House, 1994)

Vanessa Schwartz, *It's So French!: Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of Cosmopolitan Film Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007)

#### **Articles on Blackboard:**

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

Collier, John. "Cheap Amusements." *Charities and Commons* (11 April 1908). In Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900-1910*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999, 73-77.

Currie, Barton W. "The Nickel Madness," *Harper's Weekly* (August 24, 1907). In Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts, eds. *Hollywood's America: United States Through Its Films*. St. James, New York: Brandywine Press, 1993, 76-78.

Fein, Seth. "Culture Across Borders in the Americas." *History Compass*

Franklin, John Hope. "Silent Cinema as Historical Mythmaker." In Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts, eds. *Hollywood's America: United States Through Its Films*. St. James, New York: Brandywine Press, 1993, 42-52.

Fraser, Alastair H., Andrew Robertshaw and Steve Roberts. *Ghosts on the Somme: Filming the Battle, June-July 1916*. Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2009, 1-14 and 163-174.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Dell Books, 1963, pp.11-27 and 33-68

Gurley Brown, Helen. *Sex and the Single Girl*. New York: Pocket Books, 1962, Chapters 4 and 7, pp. 65-88 and 119-137

Hulfish, David. "A Store-Front Theater Building," *Cyclopedia of Motion-Picture Work* (1911). In Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900-1910*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999, 77-79.

Kael, Pauline. "Bonnie and Clyde." *The New Yorker* (October 21, 1967), 147-171.  
Litwack, Leon F. "The Birth of a Nation." In Mark C. Carnes, ed. *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*. New York: An Owl Book, Henry Holt and Company, 1996, 136-141.

Maland, Charles J. "The Popular Front , *The Great Dictator*, and the Second Front, 1936-1942." In Charles J. Maland. *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989, 159-186.

Matuszewski, Boleslas, Laura U. Marks, and Diane Koszarski. "A New Source of History." *Film History* 7:3 (Autumn, 1995), 322-324.

Selections from Paul McDonald, *The Star System: Hollywood's Production of Popular Identities* (London: Wallflower, 2000)

Menand, Louis. "Finding It at the Movies." *The New York Review of Books* (March 23, 1995).

Menand, Louis. "Gross Points: Is the Blockbuster the End of Cinema?" *The New Yorker* (February 7, 2005).

Menand, Louis. "Masters of the Matrix: Kennedy, Nixon, and the Culture of the Image." *The New Yorker* (January 5, 2004).

Menand, Louis. "Paris, Texas: How Hollywood Brought the Cinema back from France." *The New Yorker* (February 17, 2003), 169-177.

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

Ross, Steven J., ed. *Movies and American Society*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2002, 14-37.

Scott, A. O. "Two Outlaws, Blasting Holes in the Screen." *New York Times* (August 12, 2007).

Smither, Roger. "Introduction." In Imperial War Museum. *The Battle of the Somme* (DVD Booklet).

Sontag, Susan. "The Decay of Cinema." *The New York Times* (February 25, 1996).

Sorlin, Pierre. "How to Look at an ' Historical ' Film." In Marcia Landy, ed. *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000, 25-49.

Wasson, Haidee. "Studying Movies at the Museum: The Museum of Modern Art and Cinema's Changing Object." In Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, eds. *Inventing Film Studies*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008, 121-148.

Wolfe, Charles. "The Poetics and Politics of Nonfiction Film: Documentary Film." In Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 351-386.

**Out of Class Film Screenings: When call number is not there, it is because the library is currently purchasing the DVD.**

George Loane Tucker, "Traffic in Souls" (1913) – from Giorgio Bertellini, *Perils of the new land: films of the immigrant experience (1910-1915)* - **LVYDVD 2524 disc 1; LVYDVD 2524 disc 2**

Geoffrey Malins and John McDowell, "The Battle of the Somme" - documentary (1916)

Jacques Richard, "Henri Langlois: The Phantom of the Cinémathèque" (2004)

Charlie Chaplin, "The Great Dictator" (1940) - **LVYDVD 786 disc 1; LVYDVD 786 disc 2**

Mervyn LeRoy, "Gold diggers of 1933" (1933)

Alfred Hitchcock, "Foreign Correspondent" (1940); also available on Netflix instant watching.

Christian Delage, "Nuremberg: The Nazis Facing their Crimes" (2006) - **LVYDVD 3728 disc 1; LVYDVD 3728 disc 2**

US Department of Defense, "The Nazi Concentration Camps" (1945) – on the Delage DVD

Walt Disney's "Fantasia" (1940) - **LVYDVD 294**

Stanley Donen & Gene Kelly, "It's Always Fair Weather" (1955)

Michael Anderson, "Around the World in 80 Days" (1956)

Richard Lester, "A Hard Day's Night" (1964) - **LVYDVD 1026 disc 1; LVYDVD 1026 disc 2**

Arthur Penn, "Bonnie and Clyde" (1967) - **LVYDVD 196**

Hal Ashby, "Coming Home" (1978)

Paul Mazursky, "An Unmarried Woman" (1978)

Stephen Chow, "Kung Fu Hustle" (2004) - **LVYDVD 1282**

### **IMPORTANT DUE DATES**

**Wednesday, September 15: First short paper (3-5 pages) ; due at the start of class**

**Monday, October 4: In-Class Mid-Term**

**Monday, November 24: Second Paper (5-7 pages); due at the start of class**

**Monday, December 13, 8am: Final Exam, place tba**

### **SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND SCREENINGS AND READINGS**

#### **Week 1: Before the Movies Begin**

Monday, August 23: Introduction: Mass Culture and Shaping America's Power in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Wednesday, August 25: Modern Life Before Film: Mobility, Machines and Mechanical Reproducibility

Read: Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*: Introduction, pp. 1-12; Singer, pp. 72-99; Rappaport, pp. 130-155.

\*Susan Sontag, "The Decay of Cinema," *The New York Times* (February 25, 1996)

Optional reading: <http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/doing.php>; David Bordwell on Doing Film History

Friday, August 27: Discussion

## **Week 2: The Birth of Cinema**

Monday, August 30: The Public Taste for Reality  
Screen In Class: Lumière Brothers, Méliès Films, Zecca Film

Wednesday, September 1: Nickel Madness  
Screen in Class: Porter Films

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

\*Barton W. Currie, "The Nickel Madness," *Harper's Weekly* (August 24, 1907), in Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts, eds., *Hollywood's America: United States Through Its Films* (St. James, New York: Brandywine Press, 1993), pp. 76-78

\*John Collier, "Cheap Amusements," *Charities and Commons* (11 April 1908) and David Hulfish, "A Store-Front Theater Building," *Cyclopedia of Motion-Picture Work* (1911) from Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900-1910* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 73-79

Friday, September 3: Discussion

## **Week 3: Raising Social Problems**

Monday, September 6: No Class Labor Day Holiday

Wednesday, September 8: Delivering Messages  
Screen in Class: "Immigrants Arriving" and "Children who Labor" (1912) with commentary by Steve Ross

Screen: George Loane Tucker, "Traffic in Souls" (1913)

Read: \*Steven J. Ross, ed., *Movies and American Society* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), pp. 14-37

Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, pp. 122-140

Abel, pp. 183-223, From *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*

\*Pierre Sorlin, "How to Look at an ' Historical ' Film," in Marcia Landy, ed., *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), pp. 25-49

Friday, September 10: Discussion

## **Week 4: History Written with Lightning**

Monday, September 13: Film Goes to War: The Birth of the Newsreel  
In-Class: Section of "The Great War and the Making of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century"

Read for Class on Wednesday:

\*Leon F. Litwack, "The Birth of a Nation," in Mark C. Carnes, ed., *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies* (New York: An Owl Book, Henry Holt and Company, 1996), pp. 136-141.

Wednesday, September 15: Griffith and the Spectacle of History

In-Class: Clips from "Birth of a Nation" and "Intolerance" from the documentary, "D.W. Griffith: Father of Film" Brownlow and Gill (1993)

### **First Short Paper Due in Class**

Screen: Geoffrey Malins and John McDowell, "The Battle of the Somme" (1916)

Read: Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, pp. 48-64

\*Roger Smither, "Introduction," in Imperial War Museum, *The Battle of the Somme* (DVD Booklet)

\*Alastair H. Fraser, Andrew Robertshaw and Steve Roberts, *Ghosts on the Somme: Filming the Battle, June-July 1916* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2009), pp. 1-14 and 163-174

\*Boleslas Matuszewski, Laura U. Marks, and Diane Koszarski, "A New Source of History," *Film History* 7:3 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 322-324

\*John Hope Franklin, "Silent Cinema as Historical Mythmaker," in Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts, eds., *Hollywood's America: United States Through Its Films* (St. James, New York: Brandywine Press, 1993), pp. 42-52

\*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

Friday, September 17: Discussion

### **Week 5: Building Institutions**

Monday, September 20: 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)

Wednesday, September 22: High-brow approaches to film

In-Class screening of "March of Time, 1938; "The Movies March On"

Screen: first hour of Jacques Richard, "Henri Langlois: The Phantom of the Cinémathèque" (2004)

Read: Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, pp. 67-103, and 141-157

McDonald, *The Star System*, pp.1-55

\*Haidee Wasson, "Studying Movies at the Museum: The Museum of Modern Art and Cinema's Changing Object," in Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, eds., *Inventing Film Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 121-148.

Friday, September 24: Discussion

### **Week 6: Chaplin: Global Icon and Filmmaker**

Monday, September 27: The Power of the Star: Selling War Bonds to Modern Times  
Screen In-Class: Clips from: Brownlow, "Hollywood, " Robinson Intro to "Modern Times;" Chaplin, "The Immigrant," "Shoulder Arms" and "Modern Times"

Wednesday, September 29: The Engaged Critic: The Great Dictator  
Screen in Class: From documentary, Brownlow, (2002) "The Tramp and the Dictator"

Screen: Charlie Chaplin, "The Great Dictator" (1940)

Read: Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, pp. 104-120

\*Charles J. Maland, "The Popular Front, *The Great Dictator*, and the Second Front, 1936-1942," in *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 159-186.  
McDonald, *The Star System*, pp. 89-97

Friday, October 1: Discussion

### **Week 7: 1930's: To What World Problems Should the Movies be the Answer?**

#### **Monday, October 4: In-Class Mid-Term**

Wednesday, October 6: The Depression and Making Hollywood Matter  
In-Class screening from "The Plow that Broke the Plains" and "Triumph of the Will."

Screen: Mervyn LeRoy, "The Gold diggers of 1933" (1933) and Alfred Hitchcock, "Foreign Correspondent" (1940)

Read: Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, pp. 175-194 and pp. 215-246

\* Charles Wolfe, "The Poetics and Politics of Nonfiction Film: Documentary Film," in Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 351-386.

Friday, October 8: Discussion

### **Week 8: World at War**

Monday, October 11: Contributing to the War Effort  
Clips from "From D-Day to Berlin" and "The Longest Day" and "Saving Private Ryan"



Wednesday, October 13: Filming Atrocity  
In-Class Screening of "This is Your Life: Hannah Bloch Kohner"

Screen: Christian Delage, "Nuremberg: The Nazis Facing their Crimes" (2006) and  
US Department of Defense, "The Nazi Concentration Camps" (1945) – on the Delage  
DVD

Read: \*Description of Photographic Unit from National Archives

Friday, October 15: Discussion

### **Week 9: Where High Meets Low: Film Internationalism I**

Monday, October 18: Disney, Europe and Animation  
Screen in-class from Walt Disney's "Fantasia" (1940) and "Silk Stockings"

Wednesday, October 20: TV, Widescreen and the Epic  
Screen in class clips from "Lawrence of Arabia" "Ben Hur" "The Ten  
Commandments" and "The Sound of Music"

Screen: Selections from "Fantasia" and watch Stanley Donen & Gene Kelly, "It's  
Always Fair Weather" (1955)

Read: Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, pp. 249-286

Friday, October 22: Discussion

### **Week 10: Footloosing and the Decline of Hollywood: Film Internationalism II**

Monday, October 25: What is Cosmopolitanism in Film? Selling Culture  
In-class screening: Frenchness Films: "An American in Paris" "Gigi" "Moulin Rouge"  
"Funny Face" and "Daddy Long Legs"

Wednesday, October 27: Internationalism vs. The Cold War

Screen: Michael Anderson, "Around the World in 80 Days" (1956)

Read: Schwartz, *It's So French*: Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 4

Friday, October 29: Discussion

### **Week 11: Youth Culture**

Monday, November 1: Disneyland is Your Land  
Screen in Class: "Disneyland USA" opening footage

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

Wednesday, November 3: Guest Lecture by David James on Rock and Roll Movie

Read: McDonald, *The Star System*, pp. 55-113

\*\*\*Read:

[http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr\\_18/CMfr18a.html](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr_18/CMfr18a.html)

Friday, November 5: Discussion

### **Week 12: New Waves**

Monday, November 8: Re-Making French Films in America

Wednesday, November 10: The New Hollywood

Screen: Arthur Penn, "Bonnie and Clyde" (1967)

Read: \*Pauline Kael, "Bonnie and Clyde," *The New Yorker* (October 21, 1967), pp. 147-171.

\*A. O. Scott, "Two Outlaws, Blasting Holes in the Screen," *New York Times* (August 12, 2007)

\*Louis Menand, "Finding It at the Movies," *The New York Review of Books* (March 23, 1995) and Louis Menand, "Paris, Texas: How Hollywood Brought the Cinema back from France," *The New Yorker* (February 17, 2003), pp. 169-177.

Friday, November 12: Discussion

### **Week 13: The Return of Social Issues**

Monday, November 15: Feminism and Race Relations at Home and Abroad

Wednesday, November 17: Clips from "Shaft" "Breakfast at Tiffany's," "That Girl," and "And God Created Woman"

Screen: Paul Mazursky, "An Unmarried Woman" (1978)

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

Schwartz, *It's So French!*, Chapter 3

Friday, November 19: Discussion

### **Week 14: Movies as War Memorials**

Monday, November 22: Vietnam and Social Critique; **Second Paper Due: 5-7 pages**

Wednesday, November 24: No Class

Screen: Hal Ashby, "Coming Home"

\*Louis Menand, "Masters of the Matrix: Kennedy, Nixon, and the Culture of the Image," *The New Yorker* (January 5, 2004)

Friday, November 26: No Discussion session

### **Week 15: Global Cinema**

Monday, November 29: Blockbusters and Spielberg Returns to Griffith  
Clips from "Jaws", "Amistad" and "ET"

Wednesday, December 1: Conclusion: The Universal Language

Screen: Stephen Chow, "Kung Fu Hustle" (2004)

Read: \*Louis Menand, "Gross Points: Is the Blockbuster the End of Cinema?," *The New Yorker* (February 7, 2005)

\*Seth Fein, "Culture Across Borders in the Americas," *History Compass* 1 (2003), pp. 1-6

Friday, December 3: Discussion

**EXAM: Monday, December 13 at 8am ; location TBA**