Giorgio Bertellini is a film historian who primarily works on the transnational destinies of Italian culture in the U.S and Argentina. He is the editor of *The Cinema of Italy* (2004; 2007) and *Italian Silent Cinema: A Reader* (2013), recently shortlisted for the 2014 Kraszna-Krausz Book Award, and the author of *Italy in Early American Cinema: Race, Landscape, and the Picturesque* (Indiana University Press, 2010), winner of Book Awards from the American Association of Italian Studies and the Canadian Association for American Studies, as well as of *Emir Kusturica* (1996; 2011), forthcoming in English in the Contemporary Film Directors series of the University of Illinois Press.

His talk is part of his next project, entitled: *The Divo and The Duce: Film Stardom and Political Leadership in 1920s America*. In the early 1920s, Hollywood’s superstar Rudolph Valentino and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini gained outstanding popularity in America. Their fame resonated with a widespread fascination for narratives casting a white, charismatic leading man capable of presiding over a new phenomena often gendered as female: crowds of film fans, political unrest, and an expanded social and political suffrage.

Through a close reading of press and archival evidence and in dialogue with both star studies and American political history, my talk seeks to discuss the emergence of an expansive cultural and political discourse that, by relying on the racial and national alterity of these two Italian icons, pragmatically questioned the foundations of democracy against its seemingly mainstream approval.

The Lecture commences promptly at 6:15pm.

For further information, please contact: Gaoheng Zhang, Ph.D. at gaoheng.zhang@usc.edu

Light refreshments will be served. Sponsored by the USC Provost’s Office.