

# ENGL 241 History and Criticism of American Cinema Fall 2004

Professor: Thomas Cohen	Office: Palmer 308A
Time: T and R 8-9:15 AM (section 1) T and R 11:00 AM-12:15 PM (section 2)	Office hours: T and R 9:30-10-30 a.m.
Screening: Tuesday 7:30-10 p.m.	Messages: ext. 3399
Room: Palmer 206; Blount (screening)	E-mail: cohent@rhodes.edu

## Overview

This course introduces students to the study of American cinema as art and industry. Students will compose essays that demonstrate their grasp of film history and analysis.

## Texts

- *The Genius of the System* – Thomas Schatz
- *The New American Cinema* – Ed. Jon Lewis
- *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* – Timothy Corrigan (recommended)

## Course requirements

- Two papers eight-ten pages each
- Brief class presentation
- Four one-page paragraphs (described below)
- Class participation

## Goals

The course consists of two major units. The first focuses on “classical” Hollywood during the studio era. We will study:

- The elements of the classical style.
- The studio mode of production.
- The relation between the above.

The second unit focuses on American cinema in the post-classical era. We will study:

- The events that undermined the studio system.
- American Cinema’s responses to these events in the 1950s – 1970s.
- The emergence of the “new Hollywood.”

## Paper Assignments

**Essay one:** Write an essay on some aspect of the classical Hollywood cinema. I will distribute a list of suggested topics.

**Essay Two:** Choose a claim from one of the articles we have read and write an essay that disagrees with that claim. Support your argument with examples from texts we have read and films we have viewed in our screenings or in class. Some outside research, while not mandatory, may benefit your paper.

## Paragraphs

These assignments are designed to improve students' writing and will cover the following areas: 1. Plot synopsis; 2. Introductory paragraphs; 3. Quoting and paraphrasing; 4. Revision. The schedule gives due dates for these assignments.

### **Participation**

The grade depends on the student's contributions to class discussion. Quality rather than quantity counts.

### **Presentations**

These will be group presentations on an assigned topic. Students will be graded on organization, delivery, and content. Although grades will be assigned individually, collaboration is essential. I will be glad to recommend texts and films, but students are responsible for the presentation's content.

### **Grading**

- 2 papers = 30% each (60% total)
- Presentation = 10% total
- 4 short papers = 5% each (20% total)
- Participation = 10%

### **Grading Criteria for Papers**

- **A** Excellent work. The essay states a clear thesis or objective. Ideas are logically developed. The essay is organized as a whole and on the paragraph level. Points are supported with examples. Quotations are introduced appropriately. The writer has engaged assigned readings and film(s) and has demonstrated command of tone and word choice. Free of serious mechanical errors.
- **A-** Very fine work. Shares many qualities with *A* work but lacks the sophistication and polish of the latter.
- **B+** Very good work. Contains a clearly stated thesis that is logically developed. Demonstrates engagement with assigned readings and films. May contain some awkward expressions. Style shows competence if not polish. No serious mechanical errors.
- **B** Good work. Fulfills the assignment requirements. Demonstrates the writer has read the assignments, seen the films, and attended class. Free of serious, chronic mechanical errors but may need improvement on grammar and style.
- **B-** Fair work. Shares most of the qualities of *B* paper but may contain more mechanical errors, awkward expressions, or flaws in logical development.
- **C (+)** Satisfactory but needs improvement.
- **F** Unsatisfactory work.