

**From Hollywoodland to Planet Hollywood: History of American Cinema  
ENGL 241**

Professor Rashna Richards

Office: 308A Palmer

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Semester: Fall 2010

Class: MWF 12:00-12:50

Room: 208 Palmer

Screening: W 7:00-9:30

Room: 34 Barret

*Course Description*



This course traces the evolution of American narrative cinema from its beginnings in the nickelodeons to its worldwide dominance during the studio era to its rebirth as a countercultural medium to its most recent transformations in today's global cultural marketplace. We will begin the semester by sketching the rise and fall of the studio system within the context of tumultuous historical events, major economic changes, and noteworthy technological breakthroughs. Then, we will turn to the emergence of New Hollywood, which was born out of the turmoil of counterculture movements and offered a radical departure from the thematic and stylistic uniformity of classical Hollywood. Finally, we will examine how contemporary Hollywood has been altered radically by growing media conglomerations, new exhibition formats, and the transnationalization of the American film industry. Along the way, we will explore the notion of classical cinema; investigate Hollywood's ideological influence on American society; and assess the cultural, technological, and industrial changes that have occurred in American film practice over the course of the last century.

**Standard of Work:** This is not a course in film appreciation. Our primary focus will be on interpretation and analysis; we will not be making evaluative claims or trying to judge whether a film is "good" or "bad." The readings are going to be intellectually challenging, as are the films. You will need to take careful notes on the films, readings, and in-class discussions. In addition, this is a rigorous writing course. Assignments will expect you to use film terminology to analyze scenes, make interpretive claims about a film's themes or motifs, and participate in the ongoing scholarly conversation about film history and criticism. We will never write popular reviews,

engage in a thumbs up-thumbs down appraisal of films, or treat films as mere entertainment. Therefore, you are encouraged to think seriously about whether this is the right course for you.

### *Course Policies*

**Attendance:** You are required to attend all classes and screenings. You should not email me about your absences. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get information and/or handouts from a classmate. You are allowed two absences over the course of the semester, no questions asked, for extracurricular activities or medical/personal emergencies. After the second absence, each subsequent absence will result in a deduction of 20 points from your final course grade. After six absences, you will fail the course.

**Tardiness:** You are required to be on time. Habitual tardiness, even if it's only a couple of minutes, will hurt your participation/professionalism grade.

**Late Work:** I do not accept late work. If you do not plan on being here when an assignment is due, it must be in my mailbox before the deadline. You will receive a zero on an assignment if it is not turned in when it is due. Please note that you are required to complete all assignments in order to receive a passing grade.

**Class Participation:** You are required to come to class prepared with the assigned reading for that day. I expect constructive verbal contribution to each class meeting. A student who disrupts class, interrupts another student's presentation, or in any way creates a hostile environment will be subject to disciplinary action. A student who reads the newspaper, chats with a neighbor, or simply dozes off should expect a low participation grade even if they have contributed to class discussions on other occasions. I will likely say nothing at the time of the incident, but disruptive behavior will adversely affect your participation/professionalism grade.

**Screenings:** We will view a wide variety of films in class. You may find these films intellectually challenging or troubling. Learning how to watch and analyze them critically will be an important part of our discussions and assignments.

**Electronic Devices:** You should turn off all electronic devices before class begins. Do not allow cell phones, pagers, or any type of beepers to go off in class. You are expected to refrain from sending or receiving calls as well as text messaging. A laptop may be used for taking notes. However, instant messaging, gaming, or surfing the web is prohibited.

**Food or Drink:** I don't mind if you bring something to drink, but please avoid bringing any food into the classroom.

**Consultation:** I'll be happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you have about the class. Feel free to stop by during my office hours. If those times don't work, I can make an appointment to meet with you at a time that is mutually convenient. If you have questions about an assignment, do not wait until the last minute. Remember, I want you to do well in the class and am always willing to work with you.

**Email:** It is always preferable to meet in person to discuss any questions or concerns, since the impersonal medium of electronic communication is a poor substitute for a genuine face-to-face conversation. However, I'm available by email for simple queries (expect a response during business hours: 9am-5pm Monday-Friday). Please regard email correspondence as formal communication. It is always best to ask specific rather than general questions in an email and abide by rules of professional etiquette. It is not advisable to email me the evening before an assignment is due asking for help because there is very little I can do at that point; besides, last-minute emails are very unprofessional. Email is absolutely not the medium for negotiating special requests, addressing grade concerns, or discussing ideas for assignments; those issues must be handled in person.

**Format of Assignments:** All written assignments need to be typed and double spaced, in 12 pt. font, using Times New Roman, with one-inch margins on all sides. The format and citations must conform to MLA specifications, or the assignment may not be accepted. You do not need a title page; instead, include your name, my name, course name/number, and date in the top left corner of the first page. Be sure to number and staple your pages; also, proofread your work before printing up the final draft. I do not accept any assignments via email. A paper copy is expected at the beginning of class on the day the assignment is due.

**Intellectual Honesty:** All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. You are advised against posting your work on the internet, since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. You are also advised to save drafts of your work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and, if convicted, the student will receive an F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, please consult me.

**Disability Issues:** Students with documented disabilities may be entitled to specific accommodations. Please contact the office of Student Disability Services for more information. In every case, it is your responsibility to provide me with an official letter from SDS.

### *Course Evaluation*

#### **Grade Distribution**

Participation/Professionalism	15%	150 points
Response Papers	15%	150 points
Paper #1	20%	200 points
Paper #2	20%	200 points
Research Paper	30%	300 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

**Assignments** (Additional guidelines will be provided when each assignment is introduced.)

**Participation/Professionalism:** You are required to contribute comments and questions that further class discussion. Simply agreeing or disagreeing with your classmates and/or the readings is not enough. You are expected to add thoughtful ideas to the debate by engaging with the texts in a sophisticated manner. Participation will be evaluated in terms of quantity and quality. From time to time, you will also be quizzed or asked to respond to specific short-answer questions on the week's film or reading. Quizzes are always unannounced, and they cannot be made up. Failure to follow any course policies or guidelines will hurt your professionalism grade.

**Response Papers (500 words x 3):** You will write three short papers that respond to historical documents. Prompts will be provided.

**Paper #1 (3-4 pages):** For the first paper, you will be given several critical statements about classical Hollywood. You will choose one of them to write an analytical essay about the role of cinema in American culture.

**Paper #2 (3-4 pages):** For the second paper, you will assess how New Hollywood films and filmmakers absorb or critique classical principles and how they reflect changes in American culture since the 1960s.

**Research Paper (8-10 pages):** For the final project, you will write a research paper exploring a single decade in American film history. You will be given several general prompts to help you arrive at your thesis about what a set of films says about a particular decade. Your research paper should use a historical-critical approach. It will be evaluated on the originality of your argument, the rigor of your analysis, and the thoroughness of your research.

### Grading Guidelines

**A** = 100-94; **A-** = 93-90

**B+** = 89-87; **B** = 86-84; **B-** = 83-80

**C+** = 79-77; **C** = 76-74; **C-** = 73-70

**D+** = 69-67; **D** = 66-64; **D-** = 63-60

**F** < 60

**A range (100-90):** Excellent work; exemplary in argument and organization; professionally presented; free of mechanical errors.

**B range (89-80):** Good, solid work; substantive in argument and organization; meets all requirements, but needs some revisions; no more than five mechanical errors.

**C range (79-70):** Satisfactory work; addresses the assignment adequately, but requires some significant revisions of content and/or mechanics.

**D range (69-60):** Below average work; misses one or more central aspects of the assignment; inadequate focus and/or development; awkwardly written; requires extensive rewriting.

**F range (< 60):** Unacceptable work; fails to meet the requirements of the assignment; incomplete or irrelevant material; lack of focus or development.

### *Course Materials*

- Lewis, Jon. *American Film: A History*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2008. Print. (AF)
- Mintz, Steven and Randy W. Roberts, eds. *Hollywood's America: Twentieth-Century America through Film*. 4th ed. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. Print. (HA)

### *Course Schedule (subject to change)*

#### **Week 1: An International Medium Is Born**

**Wed., Aug. 25** Introduction to the course

**No Screening**

**Fri., Aug. 27** Lewis, "Pre-Cinema" (AF 5-16)  
Clips: Dickson, *Fred Ott's Sneeze* (1894); Lumière, *Arrival of a Train at la Ciotat* (1895); Heise, *The Kiss* (1896)

#### **Week 2: The Silent Era**

**Mon., Aug. 30** Lewis, "Major Filmmakers in Early American Cinema" (AF 27-41)  
Clips: Porter, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903)

**Wed., Sep. 1** Lewis, "A Studio Industry Is Born" (AF 45-53)  
May, "Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and the New Personality" (HA 52-62)  
Clips: Griffith, *The New York Hat* (1912); Henabery, *His Majesty the American* (1919)

**No Screening**

**Fri., Sep. 3** Lewis, "Moviemaking and Moviemakers" (AF 53-63)  
Niderost, "*The Birth of a Nation*" (HA 43-51)  
Introduction to Response Papers  
Clips: Griffith, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915)

#### **Week 3: The Genius of the System**

**Mon., Sep. 6** No classes: Labor Day

**Wed., Sep. 8** Lewis, "The Golden Age of Film Comedy" (AF 74-89)  
Clips: Keaton, *Sherlock, Jr.* (1924); Chaplin, *The Gold Rush* (1925)

**Screening** Del Ruth, *The First Auto* (1927)

**Fri., Sep. 10** Lewis, "Technical Innovations" (AF 92-102)  
Clips: Murnau, *Sunrise* (1927); Crosland, *The Jazz Singer* (1927)

#### **Week 4: Hollywood, Genre, and the Great Depression**

**Mon., Sep. 13** Lewis, "The Studio System" (AF 102-10) and "Censorship" (AF 110-18)  
Clips: Goulding, *Grand Hotel* (1932); Sherman, *She Done Him Wrong* (1933)

**Wed., Sep. 15** Lewis, "Genre and Studio Hollywood" (AF 118-45)  
Clips: Browning, *Dracula* (1931); Bacon, *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (1933)

**Screening** Capra, *It Happened One Night* (1934)

**Fri., Sep. 17**                    **Response Paper #1 due**  
 Klein, "Laughing through Tears" (HA 75-81)  
 Roffman and Purdy, "Gangsters and Fallen Women" (HA 82-90)  
 Clips: Hawks, *Scarface* (1932); von Sternberg, *Blonde Venus* (1932)

**Week 5: World War II and Hollywood's Golden Age**

**Mon., Sep. 20**                    Lewis, "1939-1941" (AF 149-61)  
 Pauly, "*Gone with the Wind* and *The Grapes of Wrath*" (HA 91-99)  
 Clips: Fleming, *Gone with the Wind* (1939); Welles, *Citizen Kane* (1941)

**Wed., Sep. 22**                    Lewis, "A World at War" (AF 161-68) and "Genre in Wartime  
 Hollywood" (AF 168-80)  
 Clips: Capra, *Why We Fight* (1943-45); Wilder, *Double Indemnity* (1944)

**Screening**  
**Fri., Sep. 24**                    Curtiz, *Casablanca* (1942)  
 Lewis, "Transcending Genre" (AF 180-91)  
 Roberts, "You Must Remember This" (HA 133-41)  
 Clips: Minnelli, *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944)

**Week 6: Adjusting to Postwar America**

**Mon., Sep. 27**                    Lewis, "Reinventing Hollywood" (AF 194-200)  
 Hey, "Ambivalence and *On the Waterfront*" (HA 187-97)  
 Clips: Kazan, *On the Waterfront* (1954)

**Wed., Sep. 29**                    Lewis, "Genre" (AF 201-09)  
 Introduction to Paper #1  
 Clips: Tourneur, *Out of the Past* (1947)

**Screening**  
**Fri., Oct. 1**                        Wilder, *The Seven Year Itch* (1955)  
 Lewis, "Transcending Genre, Transcending Hollywood" (AF 209-28)  
 Clips: Wilder, *Sunset Boulevard* (1950); Welles, *Touch of Evil* (1958)

**Week 7: Cold War Anxieties**

**Mon., Oct. 4**                        Samuels, "The Age of Conspiracy and Conformity" (HA 198-206)  
 Clips: Siegel, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956)

**Wed., Oct. 6**                        Lewis, "Industry Shakeup" (AF 235-47)  
 Clips: Preminger, *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955)

**Screening**  
 Ray, *Rebel without a Cause* (1955)

**Fri., Oct. 8**                        **Response Paper #2 due**  
 Lewis, "Genre" (AF 247-58)  
 Slotkin, "Gunfighters and Green Berets" (HA 207-18)  
 Clips: Benedek, *The Wild One* (1953); Sturges, *The Magnificent Seven*  
 (1960)

**Week 8: Moving toward a New Hollywood**

**Mon., Oct. 11**                        Conferences for Paper #1

**Wed., Oct. 13**                        **Paper #1 due**

**Screening**  
 Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960)

**Fri., Oct. 15** Lewis, "Transcending Genre, Transcending Hollywood" (AF 258-72)  
Clips: Negulesco, *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953); Gordon, *Pillow Talk* (1959)

### **Week 9: Hollywood Renaissance**

**Mon., Oct. 18** No classes: Fall Recess

**Wed., Oct. 20** Maland, "*Dr. Strangelove*" (HA 243-54)  
Clips: Kubrick, *Dr. Strangelove* (1964)

**Screening** Nichols, *The Graduate* (1967)

**Fri., Oct. 22** Lewis, "Two Key Films" (AF 272-79)  
Clips: Penn, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967); Siegel, *Dirty Harry* (1971)

### **Week 10: Vietnam and the Crisis of American Power**

**Mon., Oct. 25** Lewis, "Reinventing Hollywood" (AF 283-89) and "Major Films and Filmmakers" (AF 289-301)

Clips: Hopper, *Easy Rider* (1969); Coppola, *The Godfather* (1972)

**Wed., Oct. 27** Lewis, "Major Films and Filmmakers" (AF 301-22)

Clips: Friedkin, *The Exorcist* (1973); Scorsese, *Taxi Driver* (1976)

**Screening** Allen, *Annie Hall* (1977)

**Fri., Oct. 29** Lewis, "American Genre Cinema" (AF 327-42)  
Introduction to Paper #2  
Clips: Carpenter, *Halloween* (1978)

### **Week 11: Mergers and Blockbusters**

**Mon., Nov. 1** Lewis, "American Genre Cinema" (AF 342-49)

Leab, "The Blue Collar Ethnic in Bicentennial America" (HA 264-71)

Clips: Parks, *Shaft* (1971); Pakula, *Klute* (1971); Avildsen, *Rocky* (1976)

**Wed., Nov. 3** Lewis, "A New Corporate Hollywood" (AF 353-58) and "Genres and Trends" (AF 359-72)

Clips: Spielberg, *Raiders of the Lost Arc* (1981); McTiernan, *Die Hard* (1988)

**Screening** Spike Lee, *Do the Right Thing* (1989)

**Fri., Nov. 5** No class

### **Week 12: Auteurs and Independents**

**Mon., Nov. 8** **Response Paper #3 due**

Lewis, "Auteur Filmmakers" (AF 372-87)

Clips: Lynch, *Blue Velvet* (1986); Stone, *Natural Born Killers* (1994)

**Wed., Nov. 10** Lewis, "Independents and Independence" (AF 387-99)

Clips: Bigelow, *Point Break* (1991); Tarantino, *Reservoir Dogs* (1992)

**Screening** Scott, *Thelma and Louise* (1991)

**Fri., Nov. 12** Kotsopoulos, "Gendering Expectations" (HA 309-28)

Clips: Lyne, *Fatal Attraction* (1987)

**Week 13: Fin de Siècle Anxieties**

- Mon., Nov. 15**      **Paper #2 due**  
Introduction to Research Paper
- Wed., Nov. 17**      Lewis, "The New New Hollywood" (AF 403-10)  
Clips: Wachowski, *The Matrix* (1999)
- Screening**      Spielberg, *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)
- Fri., Nov. 19**      Bodnar, "Saving Private Ryan and Postwar Memory in America" (HA 329-39)  
Clips: Bay, *Pearl Harbor* (2001); Polanski, *The Pianist* (2002)

**Week 14: Workshop**

- Mon., Nov. 22**      Workshop for Research Paper
- Wed., Nov. 24**      No classes: Thanksgiving Recess
- No Screening**
- Fri., Nov. 26**      No classes: Thanksgiving Recess

**Week 15: Cinema in the Age of New Media**

- Mon., Nov. 29**      Pham, "The Asian Invasion (of Multiculturalism) in Hollywood" (HA 340-53)  
Clips: Woo, *Rush Hour* (1998); Lee, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000)
- Wed., Dec. 1**      Lewis, "Films and Filmmakers" (AF 410-20)  
Clips: Fincher, *Fight Club* (1999); Shyamalan, *Signs* (2002)
- Screening**      Lee, *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)
- Fri., Dec. 3**      Lewis, "Films and Filmmakers" (AF 420-25)  
Clips: Moore, *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004)

**Week 16: The End?**

- Mon., Dec. 6**      Dixon, "Twenty-Five Reasons Why It's All Over" (handout)  
Clips: Van Sant, *Psycho* (1999); Ellis & Halaby, *Snakes on a Plane* (2006)
- Wed., Dec. 8**      Conferences for Research Paper
- No Screening**
- Fri., Dec. 10**      **Research Paper due by noon (leave in box on my office door--308A Palmer)**