

**COURSE SYLLABUS AND POLICIES**  
**GLS 561: Theater and Cinema: The Hollywood Studio Era**

*Screening and Lecture:* Tues 6:30-9:00 pm in MO 100  
*Discussion:* Thurs 3:30-5:30 pm in MO 101

Professor Todd Berliner  
Spring 2007

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces students to the aesthetics and history of American cinema from the beginning of talkies until the break-up of the studio system, about 1927 to 1960. We will study the qualities that define the Hollywood style during this period. We will consider, for instance, the American conventions of cinematography and editing, Hollywood *mise-en-scene*, lighting, space, performance, sound and music. We will examine Hollywood narrative form, the traditions of realism and expressionism, the role of film directors, the star system, and the place genre holds in Hollywood filmmaking. We will also look at the impact of events in the history of studio-era filmmaking, such as the advent of sound, color and widescreen film processes, the Hayes Production Code, and the studio system itself. We will not, however, cover these topics systematically. I find that lecturing on, say, “the Production Code Administration” encourages people to scribble notes and understand nothing. If instead we allow the particulars of particular movies to invite comment on these topics, you are less likely than you might otherwise be to come away with pat “knowledge” of matters about which one can only pretend to understand completely. That way of operating will work fine, except that members of the class can never know what they missed if they miss a class, and asking another student probably will not help: Those who attend the class in question are liable to have an understandable but invalid belief that “nothing happened.” Therefore, all members of the class must attend all of every class..

I don't know yet how we will use our Wednesday meetings, but I know that student presentations will begin most of those meetings. We will certainly concentrate on the movies *as movies*—as experiences for spectators—and, wherever we are, we will never be far from our central question and the only question about the cinema that I think much about: What is it about the movies people like that makes people like them?

**CLASS MEETINGS, SCREENINGS, AND FILMS**

Class meets twice each week: on Tuesday evenings, for film screenings and as much lecture as the period will allow, and on Thursdays for discussion.

Video copies (VHS tape, DVD, and/or laserdisc) of the movies we are studying are on 4-hour reserve in Randall Library. When you write your papers, you will need to see the movies again (and again). Many of the movies we are seeing are also available at video stores, Netflix, and the New Hanover County Public Library.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

Every other Thursday, students will bring to class an essay about one scene (or a series of shots) from the movie screened the previous Tuesday. Pick a scene that you want to understand better and that strikes you as interesting or unusual. Watch it closely and numerous times over to make points and observations worth discussing in class. Your essays need not be lengthy, but they should be truthful, vivid, insightful, focused on nuanced details from the film, and double spaced.

Group one will turn in papers in odd-numbered weeks and group two in even numbered weeks (see the syllabus for week numbers).

A final paper on anything pertinent to the course is due the last day of class. The length of the paper should be determined by how much you have to say and how efficient you are in saying it.

### **PRESENTATIONS**

Each student will make a 15- to 20-minute oral presentation to the class, using visual aids (Powerpoint, video, posterboard or handouts). Afterward, presenters will answer questions about their presentation. Finally, the class will critique each presentation to help presenters improve their presentation skills.

Students will present on whatever aspect or particular of the week's film or written texts they think worthy of discussion. But all presentations should advance a discrete point—a thesis—about the reading, film or week's topic. Don't lead a discussion. Don't just give us background or trivia about the movie. Your job is to teach the class something productive in particular.

Sign up for presentations by January 18. I will place the sign-up sheet next to my office door immediately following the first class: first come—first pick of movies. There is a vcr, dvd player, computer (with Powerpoint), and a laptop connection in MO 101.

### **OFFICE HOURS, EMAIL, AND CONTACTING ME**

I will hold office hours Tuesdays 3:30-4:30 pm or by appointment. My campus mailbox is located in the Film Studies Department office (LH 116). My office phone number is 962-3336. Email is the best way to reach me: [berlinert@uncw.edu](mailto:berlinert@uncw.edu).

Students in the course must be reachable by email. If you don't like your campus email address, which I already have, send me another.

### **READINGS**

All of the readings for the class may be downloaded in PDF format from the Randall library course reserve website: <http://library.uncw.edu/>. Print out and bring each week's readings with you to class on the days the readings are listed in the schedule.

Each of you should also obtain a copy of David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, which will help you understand some of the general film concepts that this class will sometimes take for granted. The campus bookstore has copies of it.

## GLS 561: Theater and Cinema: The Hollywood Studio Era Schedule

*Screening and Lecture* (150 min.): Tuesday 6:30-9:00 pm in MO 100 (Bryan Auditorium)

*Discussion* (120 min.): Thursday 3:30-5:30 pm in MO 101

Notes:

- When a film is listed, we are seeing it on the day indicated in the schedule.
- Readings must be read before the class period for which they are assigned.
- Turn off your cellular phones before class.

### WEEKS 1-2: GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM, HORROR AT UNIVERSAL, AND THE TRANSITION TO TALKIES

1 Jan 11 Thur Introductory Stuff. *Frankenstein* (1931, 71 min., Universal, dir. James Whale)

2 16 Tues *Sunrise* (1927, 97 min., Fox, dir. F. W. Murnau)

17 Wed *Last Day to Add or Drop*

18 Thur **Reading:** Thompson.Bordwell.Sound.pdf

### WEEK 2-3: AMERICAN COMEDY, THE STUDIO SYSTEM AND THE STAR SYSTEM OF THE 1930s.

#### Week 3: Charlie Chaplin; Studio Production and Exhibition

3 23 Tues *City Lights* (1931, 87 min., UA/Charles Chaplin, dir. Charles Chaplin).

25 Thur Clips from *Duck Soup* (1933, 68 min., Paramount, dir. Leo McCarey).

**Reading:** 1) Balio.exhibition.pdf, 2) Belton.narration.pdf

#### Week 4: Screwball Comedy and the Star System

4 30 Tues *The Philadelphia Story* (1940, 112 min, MGM, dir. George Cuckor)

Feb 1 Thur **Reading:** 1) Balio.stars.pdf, 2) Belton.style.pdf

### WEEK 5: FRANK CAPRA AND CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD NARRATION

5 6 Tues *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939, 130 min, Columbia, dir. Frank Capra).

8 Thur **Reading:** Bordwell.ClassicalHollywood.pdf

### WEEKS 6-8: THE WESTERN AND THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIO SYSTEM, 1930-1960

6 13 Tues *Stagecoach* (1939, 99 min., UA/Walter Wanger, dir. John Ford).

15 Thur **Reading:** Thompson.Bordwell.1930-1945.pdf

7 20 Tues *Red River* (1948, 134 min. UA/Monterey, dir. Howard Hawks).

22 Thur **Reading:** schatz.western2.pdf

8 27 Tues *The Searchers* (1956, 119 min., Warner/C. V. Whitney, dir. John Ford).

Mar 1 Thur **Reading:** Thompson.Bordwell.1945-1960.pdf

5-9 *Spring Break!*

### WEEK 9: THE HOLLYWOOD MUSICAL AND FILM PERFORMANCE

9 13 Tues *Singin' in the Rain* (1952, 102 min. MGM, dir. Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen).

15 Thur **Reading:** Feuer.musical.folkart.pdf

**WEEK 10: MARLON BRANDO AND 'THE METHOD'**

- 10 20 Tues *On the Waterfront* (1954, 108 min., Columbia Pictures, dir. Elia Kazan)  
22 Thur **Reading:** Naremore.Brando.pdf

**WEEKS 11-14: FILM NOIR**

**Week 11: Crime Films, Film Regulation, and The Hayes Production Code**

- 11 27 Tues *Double Indemnity* (1944, 107 min. Paramount, dir. Billy Wilder).  
29 Thur **Reading:** 1) Koppes.regulation.pdf; 2) production.code.pdf

**Week 12: The 'B Movie'**

- 12 Apr 3 Tues **Screening (Double Feature):** *Detour* (1945, 68 min, PRC, d. Edgar G. Ulmer) and  
*Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, 80 min. Allied Artist/Walter Wanger, d. Don  
Siegel).  
**Reading:** Kerr.b-noir.pdf  
5 Thur *Easter Break*

**Week 13: The Big Caper Film**

- 13 10 Tues *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950, 112 min., MGM, dir. John Huston).  
12 Thur **Reading:** Kaminsky.caper.pdf.

**Week 14: The End of Noir**

- 14 17 Tues *Touch of Evil* (1958, 112 min., U-I, dir. Orson Welles).  
19 Thur **Reading:** place.peterson.visualnoir.pdf

**WEEK 15: ALFRED HITCHCOCK AND MORE HORROR**

- 15 24 Tues *Psycho* (1960, 109 min, Shamley/Alfred Hitchcock, dir. Hitchcock)  
26 Thur **Reading:** cook.hitchcock.pdf

## References for Electronic Reserve Readings

- 1) **Thompson.Bordwell.Sound.pdf**  
Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, "The Introduction of Sound," *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 193-200.
- 2) **Balio.exhibition.pdf**  
Tino Balio, "Feeding the Maw of Exhibition," *Grand design: Hollywood as a modern business enterprise, 1930-1939* (New York: Scribner, 1993) pp. 73-107.
- 3) **BeltonNarration.pdf**  
Belton, "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narration," *American Cinema/American Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 21-31.
- 4) **BeltonStyle.pdf**  
Belton, "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Style," *American Cinema/American Culture*, 41-59.
- 5) **Balio.stars.pdf**  
Balio, "Selling Stars," *Grand Design*, pp. 142-177.
- 6) **Bordwell.ClassicalHollywood.pdf**  
David Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures" in Philip Rosen, ed. *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 17-34.
- 7) **Thompson.Bordwell.1930-1945.pdf**  
Thompson and Bordwell, "Hollywood Studio System, 1930-1945," *Film History*, 213-238.
- 8) **SchatzWestern2.pdf**  
Thomas Schatz, "The Western" in *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 45-80.
- 9) **Thompson.Bordwell.1945-1960.pdf**  
Thompson, Bordwell, "American Cinema in Postwar Era, 1945-1960," *Film History*, 325-52
- 10) **Feuer.musical.folkart.pdf**  
Jane Feuer, "Mass Art as Folk Art," *The Hollywood musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) pp. 1-22.
- 11) **Naremore.Brandopdf**  
James Naremore, "Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront*," *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 213-235.
- 12) **Koppes.regulation.pdf**  
Clayton R. Koppes, "Regulating the Screen: The Office of War Information and the Production Code Administration," in Thomas Schatz *Boom and Bust: The American Cinema in the 1940s* (New York: Scribner, 1997) 262-281.
- 13) **production.code.pdf**  
"The Motion Picture Production Code" in Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, Second Edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003) 593-597.
- 14) **Kerr.b-noir.pdf**  
Paul Kerr, "Out of What Past? Notes on the B *film noir*" in Alain Silver and James Ursini, *Film Noir Reader* (New York: Limelight Edition, 1996) 107-27.
- 15) **Kaminsky.caper.pdf**  
Stuart M. Kaminsky, "Variations on a Major Genre: The Big Caper Film" *American Film Genres* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1974) 100-129.
- 16) **place.peterson.visualnoir.pdf**  
J. A. Place and L. S. Peterson, "Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir" in Silver and Ursini, *Film Noir Reader*, 65-76.
- 17) **cook.hitchcock.pdf**  
David A. Cook, "Alfred Hitchcock" *A History of Narrative Film*, Third Edition (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996) 323-41.

## Resources For Writing About Film

Randall library has a webpage devoted to film studies research resources:  
<http://library.uncw.edu/web/research/subjects/film/index.html>.

*FIAF International Film Archive Database* is a comprehensive electronic reference database for recent scholarly articles on film, and you will find it useful when you write your papers, especially your research paper. Randall Library subscribes to it, and you can reach it from university computers (or from your home computers, once you establish a password) in library's alphabetic list of research databases.

To view a film's credits and production information (for example, to obtain the names of the actors, characters, writers, cinematographers, etc.), you can look up the movie on the *Internet Movie Database* at <http://uk.imdb.com/>.

What follows is a list of books that pertain to this class. Randall library has all of them.

History of the American Cinema Series (vols 3-7):

- Richard Koszarski, *An evening's entertainment: the age of the silent feature picture, 1915-1928* (New York: Scribner, 1990)
- Donald Crafton, *The talkies: American cinema's transition to sound, 1926-1931* (New York: Scribner, 1997)
- Tino Balio, *Grand design: Hollywood as a modern business enterprise, 1930-1939* (New York: Scribner, 1993)
- Thomas Schatz, *Boom and bust: the American cinema in the 1940s* (New York: Scribner, 1997)
- Peter Lev, *Transforming the screen, 1950-1959* (New York: Scribner, 2003)
  
- Tino Balio, *The American film industry* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976)
- David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The classical Hollywood cinema: film style & mode of production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.)
- Ian Alexander Cameron, *The Book of film noir* (New York: Continuum, 1992.)
- Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye, *The book of westerns* (New York : Continuum, 1996.)
- David A. Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, Third Edition (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996)
- Jane Feurer, *The Hollywood musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982)
- Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood studio system* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.)
- Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, Second Edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003)
- James Naremore, *More than night: film noir in its contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.)
- James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988)
- Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood genres: formulas, filmmaking, and the studio system* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981.)
- Thomas Schatz, *The genius of the system: Hollywood filmmaking in the studio era* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.)
- Alain Silver and James Ursini, ed. *Film Noir Reader* (New York: Limelight Edition, 1996)
- Janet Staiger, ed. *The studio system* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995)
- David Thomson, *The whole equation: a history of Hollywood* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005)