World Film History to 1945  
(Summer 2019, Session I)

Course Description:

This course surveys the history of world film from cinema’s precursors to 1945. We will develop methods for analyzing films while examining the growth of film as an art, an industry, a social and cultural phenomenon, and a political instrument. The course is subdivided in three major sections. In the first part, we will begin by looking at the emergence of film technology and the formation of early film audiences. We will then consider the institutionalization of cinema, the rise to prominence of narrative film, and the birth of the film industry (looking primarily at Hollywood’s model). In parallel with the establishment of narrative cinema and the feature length format, we will also explore alternative film formats: non-narrative (experimental) and nonfiction (documentary) film and animation. In the central part of the course, we will turn to a number of national film industries that flourished after World War I, including German, Soviet, French, and Japanese cinemas. In the closing part of the course, we will focus on the response of international film industries to the imminence and later deflagration of WWII. Throughout the course, we will analyze different film genres and discuss a range of topics including African-American independent film during the silent era, animation, ethnographic and documentary film, censorship, and the coming of sound.

Focusing on some prominent films, we will introduce major currents and events in the history of world cinema, as we will keep in mind that film history, while a relatively young discipline, is not a coherent, grand story that can provide a linear explanation for the origins, development, and purpose of cinema, but rather a diverse set of historical arguments. Exploring the evolution of cinema means recognizing differences in various film cultures but also understanding connections between developments around the world. Placing films in the larger context in which they circulate, we will better understand the social and cultural impact of films and their relation to wider issues in politics, culture and art.
Required Readings:

- All readings for this course will be available on Canvas.

Recommended Texts:


Screenings:

There will be no official screenings arranged for this class. The selected films are widely available, so you should have no difficulty accessing them. It is your responsibility to view the film before the class discussion and be prepared to talk about it. Copies of the films on the syllabus are available at the Van Pelt Library, and access to most of the films will be provided through the library’s streaming platforms.

Assignments:

1. *Canvas Posts*. Write 1-2 paragraph(s) responding to one of the assigned prompts. Post your responses before 1 pm on the day of the class discussion. Support your answers through specific references to the films or assigned texts. (Late responses will not be counted towards your Canvas Posts grade.)

2. *Presentations*. Each student will be asked to prepare a 10-15 presentation on one of the assigned readings or films.

3. *Annotated Bibliography*. Refer to the appendix to learn more about this assignment.

4. *Final Audio Project*. This is related to the annotated bibliography. Expand the leading idea of your annotated bibliography and audio record a 5-minute presentation of your project. You will then share your audio clip with your peers through soundcloud.
Attendance and Participation:

Attendance and participation in class is extremely important to succeed in this course. Complete the readings and viewings ahead of the class they scheduled for and bring hard copy of the readings to class meetings. Be prepared to discuss both readings and films. If you have to miss a class, contact your peers for information and complete the work you have missed before the next class meeting. More than 2 missed classes will result in a very low final grade or failure.

Class Policies: Laptops and other electronic devices for note taking are not allowed. Using a phone or texting during class or while we’re showing a clip is absolutely not allowed. Doing any of these will result in your grade being lowered for a whole letter grade.

Special Note about This Course: Please be advised that the screenings on occasion contain representations of violence or sexuality. If you do not wish to work on this material, this course might not be indicated for you.

Grading:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canvas Posts</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography (includes the audio project)</td>
<td>35%</td>
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Schedule

**Tuesday, May 28: Introduction**
Laurent Mannoni, “Dark Rooms and Magic Mirrors”
André Gaudreault and Phillippe Marion, “A Medium Is Always Born Twice…”

**Thursday, May 30: Film before Cinema and the Early Years**
David A. Cook, “Optical Principles”
Robert Sklar, “Cinema, Society, and Science”
Robert Sklar, “Early Cinema”

**Film:** *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), Georges Méliès
**Tuesday, June 4:** The Birth of the Film Industry and the Rise of Narrative Film
Ruth Vasey, “The World-Wide Spread of Cinema”
Jacqueline Stewart, “We Were Never Immigrants: Oscar Micheaux and the Reconstruction of Black American Identity”

*Film: Within Our Gates (1920), Oscar Micheaux*

**Thursday, June 6:** Alternative Film Forms (Documentary, Experimental Film, Animation)
Donald Crafton, “Tricks and Animation”
Charles Musser, “Documentary”
A. L. Rees, “Cinema and the Avant-Garde”

*Films: The Cameraman’s Revenge (1912), Ladislaw Starewicz; Rain (1929), Joris Ivens; An Andalusian Dog (1929), Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí*

*The topics for the annotated bibliographies are due on June 8*

**Tuesday, June 11:** Weimar Cinema/German Expressionism
Thomas Elsaesser, “Germany: The Weimar Years”
Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler* (excerpt)

*Film: The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920), Robert Wiene*

**Thursday, June 13:** Soviet Cinema and the Theory of Montage
Robert Sklar, “Soviet Cinema”
Sergei Eisenstein, “The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram”
Dziga Vertov, “The Birth of Kino-Eye”

*Film: Man with a Movie Camera (1929), Dziga Vertov*

**Tuesday, June 18:** The Introduction of Sound
Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, “The Introduction of Sound”
Michel Chion, “Projections of Sound on Image”
Donald Crafton, “Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle and Narrative in Silent Comedy”

*Film: Modern Times (1936), Charlie Chaplin*
**Thursday, June 20: Propaganda Film/Nazi Cinema**
Robert Sklar “Documentary, Propaganda, and Politics”
Eric Rentschler, “Germany: Nazism and After”
Susan Sontag, “Fascinating Fascism”

**Film:** *The Triumph of the Will* (1934), Leni Riefenstahl

**Tuesday, June 25: Developments in the 30s Europe**
Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, “France: Poetic Realism, the Popular Front and the Occupation”
Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, “Socialism, Fascism, and Democracy”
Martin O’Shaughnessy, “Silencing the War All the Better to Hear It: Renoir’s *La Grande Illusion* (1937)”

**Film:** *The Grand Illusion* (1937), Jean Renoir

**Thursday, June 27: The Hollywood Studio System (1930-1945)**
Elisabeth Bronfen, “Lubitsch’s War: Comedy as Political Ploy in *To be or Not to Be*”

**Film:** *To Be or Not to Be* (1942), Ernst Lubitsch

**Tuesday, July 2: Other Studio Systems (Japan)**
Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, “Other Studio Systems”
Daisuke Miyao, “Ozu and the Aesthetics of Shadow: Lighting and Cinematography in *There Was a Father*”

**Film:** *There Was a Father* (1942), Yasujiro Ozu

*The annotated bibliographies are due on June 30*

*The audio recordings are due on July 3*
Cine 101: Film History to 1945

Annotated Bibliography Assignment

This assignment is due on Sunday, June 30.

Writing an annotated bibliography is a great preparation for a research project. Just collecting sources for a bibliography is useful, but when you have to write annotations for each source, you're forced to read each source more carefully. You begin to read more critically instead of just collecting information. At the professional level, annotated bibliographies allow you to see what has been done in the literature and where your own research or scholarship can fit. A solid annotated bibliography also helps you formulate a thesis, by helping you gain a good perspective on what is being said about your topic. By reading and responding to a variety of sources on a topic, you'll start to see what the issues are, what people are arguing about, and you'll then be able to develop your own point of view.

Make sure that you choose a relatively narrow topic; you may focus on a single film, a director, or a specific film movement or national tradition that we have covered in class (until 1945). Your sources should be all serious academic studies, no film reviews, blogs, etc. You may read more and look at more, but prepare an annotated bibliography of 5 sources.

Don’t forget the title of your topic. Also, include a brief introductory statement which explains/introduces your topic and your main finding or thesis.

An annotated bibliography includes a summary and evaluation of or reflection on each of the sources. While the sources will depend on your project or focus, all your annotations should achieve the following:

**Summary:** What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics/films are covered? If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say?

**Assessment:** After summarizing a source, you need to evaluate it. Is it a useful source? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? Does it present/approach your topic in a new way? What is the goal of this source?

**Reflection:** Once you’ve summarized and assessed a source, you need to ask how it fits into your research. Was this source helpful to you? How does it help you shape your argument? How can you use this source in your research project? Has it changed how you think about your topic?