History of Film

AH 390-01
Dr. David Sterritt
djsterritt@gmail.com
Brown 320
Tuesdays 9-11:45 a.m./Fridays 4-6:45 p.m.
GTI: Max Shuster – mshuster@mica.edu

Course description:

This course offers an overview of film history. Among the topics covered are the prehistory of cinema in the 19th century; the early emergence of narrative and documentary forms; the growth of silent film as a popular art form; the influence of Soviet montage and German expressionism; the conversion to sound cinema; the rise of such movements as the French New Wave, the American avant-garde, and revitalized Asian cinema; and such contemporary trends as indie cinema, digital filmmaking, and computer animation. This course meets twice a week and attendance at both classes is required. Prerequisite: AH 201.

Required books [available at MICA bookstore]


Additional Reading [available online]

For reading assignments that are available online, see the list of URLs at the end of the course schedule. (For the individual assignments see the course schedule immediately below.)

Course schedule:
**Part 1: The Beginnings**

**Week 1: August 28 & 31 – France, United States, 1889-1919.**

**Topic:** The prehistory of cinema. Early gizmos. Early films.


**Reading:** Dixon & Foster, 1-52

**Screening #1:**

*Monkeyshines, no. 1*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1889
*Monkeyshines, no. 2*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1889
*Dickson Greeting*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1891
*Newark Athlete (with Indian Clubs)*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1891
*Men Boxing*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1891
*Blacksmithing Scene*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1893
*The Barber Shop*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1893
*Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze, January 7, 1894*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1894
*Athlete with Wand*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1894
*Sandow*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1894
*Boxing Cats (Prof. Welton’s)*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1894
*Annabelle Butterfly Dance*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1894
*Cockfight, no. 2*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1894
*Dickson Experimental Sound Film*, Dickson and Heise, USA, 1894 or 1895
*Annabelle Serpentine Dance*, Heise, USA, 1895
*Annabelle Serpentine Dance*, [American Mutoscope Company] USA, 1896
*The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots*, Clark and Heise, USA, 1895
*The John C. Rice–May Irwin Kiss*, Heise, USA, 1896
*Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory*, Lumière, France, 1895
*Arrival of a Train at la Ciotat*, Lumière, France, 1896
*Repas de bébé* Lumière, France, 1895
*The Sprinkler Sprinkled*, Lumière, France, 1895
*Dragoons Crossing the Sâone*, Lumière, France, 1896
*Promenade of Ostriches, Paris Botanical Gardens*, Lumière, France, 1895
*Childish Quarrel*, Lumière, France, 1896
Lion, London Zoological Garden, Lumière, France, 1896
Demolition of a Wall, Lumière, France, 1896
Transformation by Hats, Comic View, Lumière, France, 1895
Carmaux: Drawing Out the Coke, Lumière, France, 1896
Poultry-Yard, Lumière, France, 1895
Snowball Fight, Lumière, France, 1897
Card Party, Lumière, France, 1896
New York: Broadway at Union Square, Lumière, France, 1896
Electrocuting an Elephant, Smith or Porter, USA, 1903
Feeding the Doves, Heise and White, USA, 1896
Pan-American Exposition by Night, Porter and Smith, USA, 1901
The Gay Shoe Clerk, Porter, USA, 1903
The Great Train Robbery, Porter and Smith, USA, 1903
Coney Island at Night, Porter, USA, 1905
Three American Beauties, Porter and McCutcheon, USA, 1906
Laughing Gas, Porter and Dawley, USA, 1907
A Trip to the Moon, Méliès, France, 1902

Screening #2
The Birth, the Life and the Death of Christ, Guy-Blaché, 1906
A Fool and His Money, Guy-Blaché, France, 1912
Making an American Citizen, Guy-Blaché, France, 1912
True Heart Susie, D.W. Griffith, USA, 1919

Part 2: The Golden Age of Silents and the Advent of Talking Pictures

Week 2: September 4 & 7 – Germany, France, Hollywood, 1920-25
Lecture and discussion: Sturm und Drang, the Romantic Movement, and the celebration of irrationality in art. Modern psychology and impressionism in painting, music, and film. Physical comedy and the silent screen.
Reading: Robinson, Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari
Screening #1
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Wiene, Germany, 1920
Screening #2
The Smiling Madame Beudet, Dulac, France, 1923
Seven Chances, Keaton, USA, 1925

Week 3: September 11 & 14 – Soviet Union, United States, 1925-41

**Lecture and discussion:** Marxism and movies. The Kuleshov Workshop and the Kuleshov effect. Eisenstein and dialectical montage: contrast, conflict, and contradiction from shot to shot. Independent production and minority filmmakers.

**Reading:** Helen Grace, “*Battleship Potemkin.*” [URL below]
Dixon & Foster, 53-88

**Screening #1**
- *Battleship Potemkin*, Eisenstein, USSR, 1925
- *Chess Fever*, Pudovkin & Shpikovsky, USSR, 1925

**Screening #2**
- *The Girl from Chicago*, Micheaux, USA, 1932
- *The Blood of Jesus*, Spencer Williams, USA, 1941

**Part 3: Hollywood and the Studio System**

**Week 4: September 18 & 21 – Hollywood, 1939-40**

**Topic:** The studio system. The classical narrative style.

**Lecture and discussion:** Story over style: invisible editing, inconspicuous camerawork, three-point lighting, the 180-degree rule, shallow focus, alternating dialogue. Color. Fantasy. Hitchcock’s special place in Anglo-American cinema. Film noir.

**Reading:** Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*
Robin Wood, “*Rebecca*: The Two Mrs. de Winters” [URL below]
Leonard Leff, “*Rebecca.*” [URL below]

**Screening #1**
- *The Wizard of Oz*, Fleming, USA, 1939

**Screening #2**
- *Rebecca*, Hitchcock, USA, 1940.

**Week 5: September 25 & 28 – Hollywood, 1941-43**

**Topic:** Welles’s fabulous flop. Screwball comedy.


**Reading:**
Mulvey, *Citizen Kane*
Dixon & Foster, 89-136

**Screening #1**  
*Citizen Kane*, Welles, USA, 1941

**Screening #2**  
*The More the Merrier*, Stevens, USA, 1943

**Week 6: October 2 & 5 – Hollywood, 1955**

**Topic:** Noir, horror, and the legacy of expressionism.  
**Lecture and discussion:** American film in the post-World War II years. Film noir. The actor as director. The critic as screenwriter. Literary adaptation: from page to screen.  
**Reading:** Callow, *The Night of the Hunter*

**Screening #1**  
*The Night of the Hunter*, Laughton, USA, 1955

**Screening #2**  
“Charles Laughton Directs *The Night of the Hunter*” [USA, 2002]

**Week 7: October 9 & 12 – Hollywood, 1957-64**

**Topic:** Shifting priorities in American film  
**Lecture and discussion:** Competing with television. The decline of the studio system. New formats and processes: CinemaScope, Cinerama, Todd-AO, 3-D, stereophonic sound. Hollywood censors start losing their grip. Changing attitudes toward race and violence in cinema.  
**Reading:** Turner Classic Movies, “*Island in the Sun*” [URL below]  
   Bosley Crowther, “*Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte.*” [URL below]  
   Dixon & Foster, 171-202

**Screening #1**  
*Island in the Sun*, Rossen, USA, 1957

**Screening #2**  
*Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte*, Aldrich, USA, 1964

**Part 4: Key Developments in International Film**

**Week 8: October 19 – Italy, 1946**

**Topic:** Neorealist film in theory and practice.  
**Lecture and discussion:** European society in the post-World War II years. Opposing the “white telephone film.” Zavattini articulates the rules. Neorealist pioneers: De Sica, Rossellini, Visconti, Fellini, Antonioni.  
**Reading:** Bert Cardullo, “Bert Cardullo on *Shoeshine.*” [URL below]  
   Dixon & Foster, 169-171
Screening #1
   No class on October 16
Screening #2
   Shoeshine, De Sica, Italy, 1946 – 93’)

Week 9: October 23 & 26 – France, 1959-67
Topic: Auteur theory and the Nouvelle Vague.
Lecture and discussion: Cahiers du cinéma, the politique des auteurs, and new directions in film criticism. The caméra-stylo and personal cinema. Sarris and American auteurism. Pioneers: Godard, Chabrol, Truffaut, Rohmer, Rivette. Realism + style = New Wave cinema.
Reading: Richard Armstrong, “Claude Chabrol.” [URL below]
         Terrence Rafferty, “Les Cousins: The Nature of the Beast”
         [URL below]
         Dixon & Foster, 187-195
Screening #1
   Les Cousins, Chabrol, France, 1959
Screening #2
   La Chinoise, ou plutôt à la chinoise, Godard, France, 1967

Week 10: October 30 & November 2 – Spain and Mexico, 1944-73
Topic: Spanish-language cinema.
Lecture and discussion: Fernández puts Mexican movies on the international culture map. Buñuel and surrealism. Erice and political allegory.
Reading: Dominique Russell, “Luis Buñuel.” [URL below]
         [URL below]
         Adrian Danks, “Come Towards the Light: The Films of Victor Erice.” [URL below]
         [URL below]
         Dixon & Foster, 208-9
Screening #1
   María Candelaria, Fernández, Mexico, 1944
   Simon of the Desert, Buñuel, Mexico, 1965
Screening #2
   The Spirit of the Beehive, Erice, Spain, 1973

Week 11: November 6 & 9 – West Germany, 1975-86
**Topic:** Das Neue Kino.

**Lecture and discussion:** Uncovering the past in divided Germany after the Hitler and Holocaust years. Fassbinder’s brief, prodigious career. Herzog and ecstatic truth.

**Reading:** Darragh O'Donoghue, “The Third Generation.” [URL below]
[David Sterritt] “The Ecstasy of Truth” [URL below]
Dixon & Foster, 302-10.

**Screening #1**  
*The Third Generation*, Fassbinder, West Germany, 1975

**Screening #2**  
*Stroszek*, Herzog, West Germany, 1977  
*Portrait Werner Herzog*, Herzog, West Germany, 1986

**Week 12: November 13 & 16 – Japan, 1960-1964**

**Topic:** Japanese cinema.

**Lecture and discussion:** Japanese aesthetics. Japanese culture in the postwar era. Major figures: Kurosawa, Ozu, Mizoguchi, Naruse, Shindô, Imamura, Ōshima.

**Reading:** Phillip Lopate, “When a Woman Ascends the Stairs: They Endure” [URL below]  
Chuck Stephens, “Onibaba: Black Sun Rising” [URL below]  
Dixon & Foster, 203-6, 190-1, 336-41.

**Screening #1**  
*When a Woman Ascends the Stairs*, Naruse, Japan, 1960

**Screening #2**  
*Onibaba*, Shindô, Japan, 1964

**Week 13: November 20 – Experimental Film**

**Topic:** Avant-Garde cinema.

**Lecture and discussion:** Nonnarrative film. The New American Cinema. Radical aesthetics.

**Reading:** Dixon & Foster, 179-87.

**Screening #1**  
*By Night with Torch and Spear*, Cornell, USA, ca. 1940s  
*The Wonder Ring*, Brakhage, USA, 1955  
*Murder Psalm*, Brakhage, USA, 1980  
*Mothlight*, Brakhage, USA, 1963 – 3  
*The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Brakhage, 1981  
*The Dante Quartet*, Brakhage, USA, 1987  
*Chinese Series*, Brakhage, USA, 2004
Report, Conner, USA, 1967
Take the 5:10 to Dreamland, Conner, USA, 1976
Valse Triste, Conner, 1977
His Eye Is on the Sparrow, Conner, USA, 2006
Mario Banana (No. 1), Warhol, USA, 1964

**Screening #2**
No class on November 23.

**Topic:** The British New Wave.
**Lecture and discussion:** Kitchen-sink aesthetics. The Angry Young Men. Film and literature. Working-class cinema.
**Reading:** Neil Sinyard, “This Sporting Life: The Lonely Heart” [URL below]
Dixon & Foster, 264-271

**Screening #1**
Room at the Top, Clayton, UK, 1959

**Screening #2**
This Sporting Life, Anderson, UK, 1963

**Week 15: December 4 & 7 – India, 1958-1995.**
**Topic:** Bollywood and Indian art film.
**Lecture and discussion:** Traditions of Indian cinema. Film and music. Major figures: Ray, Sen, Nair, Kapur, Mehta, Kaul.
**Reading:** Gopalan, **Bombay**
Helen Goritsas, “Satyajit Ray.” [URL below]
Philip Kemp, “The Music Room: Distant Music.” [URL below]

**Screening #1**
The Music Room, Ray, India, 1958

**Screening #2**
Bombay, Ratnam, India, 1995

**Part 5: Summing Up and Drawing Conclusions**

**Week 16: December 11 & 14 – United States, 1984-2001**
**Topic:** American indies.
**Lecture and discussion:** Independent film. The actor as auteur. New directions in animation.
**Reading:** Ray Carney, “Excerpts from a discussion of Love Streams.”
[URL below]
Screening #1
Love Streams, Cassavetes, USA, 1984

Screening #2
Waking Life, Linklater, USA, 2001

URLs for online reading assignments:


Robin Wood, “Rebecca: The Two Mrs. de Winters.” The Criterion Collection Current (19 November, 2001)
http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/170-rebecca-the-two-mrs-de-winters

Leonard Leff, “Rebecca.” The Criterion Collection Current (1 July 1990)
http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/814-rebecca

Turner Classic Movies, “Island in the Sun”


http://www.eurekavideo.co.uk/moc/catalogue/shoeshine/essay


Darragh O’Donoghue, “*The Third Generation.*” *Senses of Cinema* (5 June 2011)  

http://www.moviemaker.com/magazine/issues/59/herzog.html

Phillip Lopate, *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs: They Endure* *The Criterion Collection Current* (19 February 2007)  


http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/626-this-sporting-life-the-lonely-heart


http://people.bu.edu/rcarney/cassfilms/lstreams.shtml

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**Course requirements:**
Students must attend all class sessions, complete all reading assignments in a timely way, and participate actively in class discussions.

In addition, each student must keep a journal during the course, comprising two to three pages per week. This is the equivalent of a short paper each week, in which you respond to that week’s course material: the reading, the film, the lecture, and the class discussion. Journals must be printed by computer, not written by hand. Additional rules and guidelines for the journal are given below.

Grading schedule: **Journals are due in two installments. Entries for the first seven weeks must be submitted on October 12. They will be returned to you on October 27 with a midterm grade. Entries for the remaining weeks are due in class on December 14. No journal entry is required for our last class on December 14, since journals are due on that day.**

Attendance and Participation:
Attendance will be taken. It is your responsibility to get to class on time. Unexcused absences or excessive lateness will result in a lower final grade. If you know you will be absent on a future date, let me know in advance. Absences will be excused only if you provide verification (documentation of a legitimate reason: illness, family emergency, etc.) as to why the class was missed. You must catch up with work missed due to absences, excused or otherwise. This includes all films that have been screened in class; if you miss something, you must watch it on your own. (All film material for this course is on reserve in the Media Resources Collection for re-viewing or catching
You should participate fully in class discussions, since part of your final grade will reflect class participation.

Journals must be submitted on the dates given above unless a later date is arranged because of special circumstances. Handing in a journal late because of unforeseen circumstances requires verification (documentation of a legitimate reason: illness, family emergency, etc.) as to why the due date was missed.

**Journal rules and guidelines:**

The journal must contain two to three pages on each week’s subject matter, demonstrating knowledge of the pertinent film material, topics considered in class discussions, and subjects covered in the reading assignments. You are encouraged to view additional relevant films outside class and include references to them in your journal entries. This is not a diary – it is an academic journal, meant to record what you are learning and thinking with regard to the course on a weekly basis. You are welcome to include material suggested by reading and film viewing outside class, but such material must be relevant to this course.

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**Additional information**

**Academic integrity:**

Academic integrity -- the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception -- is an educational objective of this institution. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or submitting work previously used without informing the instructor, and tampering with the academic work of other students.

A student charged with academic dishonesty will be given oral or written notice of the charge by the instructor. If students believe they have been falsely accused, they should seek redress through informal discussions with the instructor, department head, dean, or campus executive officer. If the instructor believes the infraction is sufficiently serious to warrant the referral of the case to the Office of Conduct Standards, or if the instructor decides to give a final grade of F in the course because of the infraction, the student and faculty will be afforded formal due-process procedures.
Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using someone else’s words or ideas without acknowledgment. Submitting work containing plagiarism is grounds for failure of an assignment or failure of the course. Repeat offenses will be brought to the attention of the department chair. To be responsible when summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting, include a citation like:

*** I read in yesterday’s New York Times that…
*** As Simone de Beauvoir famously asserts: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (p. 34).
*** My roommate Pete noticed that…
*** If it’s common knowledge and your own idea, you do not need quotations. The yellow of the Lance Armstrong bracelet suggests bravery.

Document your citations in a bibliography or “works cited” page at the end of your paper and follow standard guidelines such as MLA or Chicago manual style. Familiarize yourself with these guidelines in Diana Hacker’s A Pocket Style Manual, and always check with your instructor before turning in questionable work. You may also check on these and other language-related issues with one of the helpful tutors in the Writing Center, (410) 225-2418. The Writing Center has copies of the Hacker manual as well.

ADA Compliance Statement

Classroom: Health and Safety Guidelines

Health and Safety
It is the responsibility of faculty and students to practice health and safety guidelines relevant to their individual activities, processes, and to review MICA’s Emergency Action Plan and attend EHS training. It is each faculty member’s responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, faculty are to act in accordance with all safety compliance, state and federal, as employees of this college and are expected to act as examples of how to create art in a way to minimize risk, and reduce harm to themselves and the environment. Faculty
must identify, within each art making process, and require personal protection equipment use, by each student for each class, when applicable. Students are required to purchase personal protection equipment appropriate to their major. Those students who do not have the proper personal protection equipment will not be permitted to attend class until safe measures and personal protection is in place.

Classroom: ADA Compliance

Learning Resource Center ADA Compliance Statement
Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Learning Resource Center at 410-225-2416, in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://www.mica.edu/LRC

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