

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
FALL 2016

LSHV 422-30 CINEMA AND AMERICAN VALUES CRN 12851 ROOM: ICC
SEPTEMBER 7 –DECEMBER 7, 2016, WEDNESDAYS 6:30-9:30pm
PROFESSOR PERCY NORTH (northp@georgetown.edu)

This course will address major issues and ideas that characterize the revolutionary nature of American cinema from its beginning in the early 20th century to the present. Methods will be introduced for approaching the study of cinematic art as cultural history. Seminal works will be examined in the context of historical events as key texts for the interpretation of cultural values. Each class will include an historical introduction, a student presentation, and a discussion of the cultural values in the film viewed.

COURSE EVALUATION: Grades will be based on class participation and presentation, blogs, and essays. Each of the four sections will receive equal weight (25% each). Attendance and participation in all class discussions is, therefore, crucial.

FILM BLOG: This will consist of an analysis of the cultural values that you perceive in the films seen in class. Your analysis should include at least two pages per discussion and include information from the class reading. The last entry should include a summation tracing a recurrent theme.

ESSAY: Each student is required to write a research paper of 20 to 30 pages on an American Auteur or director of note with a significant cinematic style. In the paper the student will explore the meaning of the director's body of work, its public reception, and its representation of cultural values. Explain how the cultural values reflect the ethos of the period in which the auteur is working. Watch as many of their films as possible. A list of possible choices for paper topics is appended.

CLASS PRESENTATION: Each student will give a brief 15 minute (maximum) discussion of major social issues concerning a decade of your choice. The dates for these will be established at the beginning of the first class.

ALL PAPERS ARE DUE BY DECEMBER 7, 2016.

HONOR CODE

MALS and DLS students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the Honor Code Pledge stated below: *In pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor system: To be honest in any academic endeavor: and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

DISABILITIES STATEMENT:

If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

TEXTS: Brady, L. & Cohen, M. *Film Theory, & Criticism*, (Oxford U. Press), 7th edition, 2009
Cook, D. *History of Narrative Film*, (Norton), 5th edition, 2016.
Sklar, R. *Movie-Made America*, (Knopf/Vintage), 1994.

LECTURE SCHEDULE: VIEWING AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

SEPTEMBER 7: INTRODUCTION: THE SILENTS

From “flickers” to bourgeois entertainment

FILMS: *THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY*, E.S. Porter, 1903

READING: Cook, chapter 01; Sklar, chapters 1-3; W.Benjamin. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1938 in Brady & Cohen

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

The past as a mirror with contemporary implications

The symbolism and representation of the West

SEPTEMBER 14: THE BIRTH OF NARRATIVE FILM AND THE SHAPING OF HISTORY

FILM: *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*, D. W. Griffith, 1915

READING: Cook, chapter 03; Sklar, chapter 4; Eisenstein, *Dickens, Griffith, and Film Today*, 1944, Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film*, 1991, Diawara, *Black Spectatorship*, 1988 in Brady & Cohen

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

The use and misuse of history and cultural hegemony and racial antagonism

Technical innovations

Lasting influence: The impact of *The Birth of a Nation*

SEPTEMBER 21: DOCUMENTARIES MAKING THE WORLD A SMALLER PLACE

FILM: R. Flaherty, *NANOOK OF THE NORTH*, 1922

READING: Cook, chapter 06; Sklar, part 2; E. Panofsky. *Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures*, 1934/47 in Brady & Cohen

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

Visions of the 'Other'

Documentary evidence of the global village

SEPTEMBER 28: VISIONS OF THE MODERN WORLD

Chaplin's “Little Tramp” as social commentary

FILM: *MODERN TIMES*, C. Chaplin, 1936

READING: Cook, chapter 07, Sklar, chapter 6, Sarris, *Notes on the Auteur Theory*, 1962; Perez, *The Material Ghost*, 1998 in Brady & Cohen

ISSUES TO ADDRESS;

Introduction of sound (dialogue?)

Film as polemic

Humanism vs. technology

The “Little Tramp” as Everyman

OCTOBER 5: DEATH OF THE AMERICAN SOUL

FILM: *CITIZEN KANE*, O. Welles, 1941

READING: Cook, chapter 10, Sklar, part 3; Bazin, *What is Cinema?* 1950-5
in Braudy & Cohen

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

Celebrity as metaphor and the political business of America

Film as biography – fact vs. fiction

The character of America

Exploration of media

New film techniques and the use of symbolism

OCTOBER 12: THE SPECTATOR AS VOYEUR

FILM: *REAR WINDOW*, A. Hitchcock, 1954

READING: Cook, chapter 12; Sklar, chapters 15-16
Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure & Narrative Cinema*, 1975; Modleski, *Hitchcock and
Feminist Theory: the Master's Dollhouse*, 1988 in Braudy & Cohen

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

The spectator as voyeur

Community social obligations

Sexual roles and their implications

OCTOBER 19: THE RISE OF YOUTH CULTURE

FILM: *EASY RIDER*, D. Hopper, 1969

READING: Cook, chapter 20; Sklar, chapters 17-19

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

Social alienation

The violence of modern life

The dark side of American culture

Rebellion as escape, the renegade as hero

OCTOBER 26: ANXIETY IN THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

FILM: *ANNIE HALL*, W. Allen, 1977

READING: Cook, chapter 20; Sklar, chapter 20

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

Cinema as subject and metaphor

Changing sexual relations in the Age of Aquarius

Neurosis as character

NOVEMBER 2: CINEMA FOR A MULTICULTURAL AMERICA:

THE EMERGENCE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CINEMA

FILM : *DO THE RIGHT THING* , S. Lee , 1989

READING: Cook, chapter 20; last chapter of Sklar, part 5

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

Racial tension and conflict
Morality, ethics, and ambivalence

NOVEMBER 9: ETHNICITY, CROSS CULTURALISM AND BREAKING THE CODE

FILM: *LONE STAR*, J. Sayles, 1996

READING: Cook, chapter 21

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

Place as character
Subversion of cultural stereotypes
The Ideal of American character
The West as metaphor

NOVEMBER 16: LIFE IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

FILM: *LOST IN TRANSLATION*, S. Coppola, 2003

READING: Cook, chapter 21; Friedberg, *The End of Cinema*, 2000, in Braudy & Cohen

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

The feminine gaze
Cross cultural confusion and alienation
Making sense of dislocation

NOVEMBER 23: NO CLASS

ASSIGNMENT: Watch Robert Altman's *Nashville*, 1975

WRITE AN EXTENDED BLOG ABOUT IT. Emphasize its current relevance.

NOVEMBER 30: CINEMA GOES RETROSPECTIVE

FILM: *HAIL CAESAR*, J. & E. Coen, 2016

READING: Cook, chapter 21; Allen, *The Impact of Digital Technologies*, 2002,
in Braudy & Cohen

ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

For The love and meaning of Cinema
Historical precedents with current implications
Social anxiety
Religion as confession

DECEMBER 7: SUMMATION OF COURSE - DISCUSSION OF NEW DIRECTIONS

****PAPERS DUE****