

COURSE OUTLINE

Art 125
Motion Picture History and Culture

I. Catalog Statement

Art 125 is an introduction to the history of cinema from the perspective of its influence on popular culture, as well as the reverse influence of historic events and cultural shifts upon the creation of cinematic art. Other topics will include the assimilation of major artistic movements within the art of cinema, and the development of a film theory dialectic.

Units – 3.0

Lecture Hours - 3.0

Prerequisite: None.

II. Course Entry Expectations

Skill Level Ranges: Reading 6; Writing 5; Listening/Speaking 5; Math 1.

III. Course Exit Standards

Upon successful completion of the required coursework, the student will be able to:

1. identify examples of film history;
2. analyze the cultural significance of the films studied within their historical context;
3. utilize the specialized vocabulary of film making.

IV. Course Content

Total Contact Hours = 48

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| A. Early Cinema | 3 hours |
| 1. The origins of motion picture display, Edison, Lumiere, etc. | |
| 2. Vaudeville venues and Nickelodeons | |
| 3. Cultural influences on subject matter | |
| 4. Public criticism and formation of the National Board of Censorship | |
| B. The Development of Narrative Cinema | 3 hours |
| 1. Early 'story films' – Edwin S. Porter, Georges Melies | |
| 2. Storytelling expands: the first feature-length films | |
| 3. The creation of movie palaces and their cultural impact | |

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| C. Art and Industry: The Birth of Studios | 3 hours |
| 1. Film industry pioneers – Edison Trust vs. independents | |
| 2. Major centers of film production | |
| 3. Independents move west to Hollywood | |
| 4. Emergence of the ‘star system’ and Hollywood culture | |
| 5. Former independents become the major Hollywood studios | |
| 6. Thomas Ince introduces mass production – the ‘studio system’ | |
| D. Politics and Social Issues in Early Cinema | 6 hours |
| 1. Use of cinematic propaganda by Lenin in Bolshevik Revolution | |
| 2. Documentary filmmaking – <i>Nanook of the North</i> | |
| 3. Racism in D. W. Griffith’s <i>Birth of a Nation</i> | |
| 4. Early fascist sentiment in Italian Cinema – Pastrone’s <i>Cabiria</i> | |
| 5. World War I propaganda – DeMille’s <i>Joan the Woman</i> and Chaplin’s <i>The Bond</i> | |
| E. Cinema in the Twenties | 3 hours |
| 1. Relaxed morality, flappers, the ‘jazz age’ and sex in cinema | |
| 2. Prohibition and the gangster film | |
| 3. Constructivism and Russian cinema – Eisenstein’s <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> | |
| 4. German expressionism – Wiene, Murnau, Lang | |
| 5. Surrealistic cinema – Bunuel, Dali | |
| 6. The introduction of sound and its effect on narrative | |
| F. Cinema in the Thirties | 3 hours |
| 1. Crackdown on Hollywood “immorality” -- The Hays Office and the Motion Picture Production Code | |
| 2. American cinema and the Great Depression | |
| 3. Poetic realism in cinema – Chenal, Renoir | |
| 4. Nazi propaganda – Riefenstahl’s <i>Triumph of the Will</i> | |
| G. Cinema in the Forties | 3 hours |
| 1. World War II portrayed in film -- <i>Casablanca</i> | |
| 2. Propaganda efforts – <i>Why We Fight</i> | |
| 3. Hollywood and the war effort, war bond drive, USO, movie stars enlist | |
| 4. Popularity and cultural influence of cinema at an all time high | |
| 5. Realism replacing escapism – <i>The Best Years of Our Lives</i> | |
| 6. Post-war cynicism as reflected in Film Noir | |
| H. Cinema in the Fifties | 6 hours |
| 1. Television gaining prominence as cultural influence | |
| 2. Cold war ethos and nuclear scare, blacklisting | |
| 3. Italian neo-realism – Visconti, De Sica, Rossellini | |
| 4. Postmodernism and the French New Wave | |
| 5. Pioneers of film theory – Bazin, Arnheim, Cahiers Du Cinema | |
| 6. Flowering of international film – Japan, Sweden, England, India | |
| 7. Emergence of youth culture through cinema – <i>The Blackboard Jungle</i> , <i>Rebel Without a Cause</i> , <i>The Wild One</i> | |
| 8. Changing mores and the relaxing of the Production Code | |

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| I. Cinema in the Sixties | 3 hours |
| 1. Influence of the Civil Rights Movement | |
| 2. Breakdown of the Production Code and the establishment of ratings | |
| 3. Changing social mores reflected in cinema | |
| 4. Upheaval in film industry parallels social upheaval in late 60's | |
| 5. Emergence of the American New Wave in cinema | |
| J. Cinema in the Seventies | 3 hours |
| 1. American New Wave cinema reflects and challenges major cultural issues -- Bogdanovich, Nichols, Coppola, Altman, Polanski, Scorsese | |
| 2. Blockbuster films become cultural events in themselves – <i>Jaws</i> , <i>Star Wars</i> | |
| 3. Changes in the ratings system, mainstreaming of explicit sexual content | |
| 4. Escapism returns | |
| K. Cinema in the Eighties and Nineties | 3 hours |
| 1. Hollywood's continued pursuit of blockbuster 'event films' | |
| 2. Youth culture reigns supreme in cinematic content | |
| 3. Rise of independent filmmakers addressing deeper cultural issues | |
| 4. VCRs, Cable TV, multiplexes and the changing communal cinema experience | |
| 5. Resurgence of British cinema – <i>Chariots of Fire</i> , <i>My Left Foot</i> , <i>Gandhi</i> | |
| 6. Resurgence of biopics and historical epics – <i>Silkwood</i> , <i>Born on the Fourth of July</i> , <i>Reds</i> , <i>The Last Emperor</i> , <i>Schindler's List</i> , <i>Saving Private Ryan</i> , <i>Das Boot</i> | |
| 7. Success of female directors and the expansion of feminist consciousness | |
| L. The Last Ten Years | 3 hours |
| 1. Influence of war and terrorism in cinema | |
| 2. Using the internet and social media to enhance cinematic experience | |
| 3. Rising popularity and influence of Asian filmmakers | |
| 4. Desktop digital production techniques and internet distribution ability (YouTube) create new era of personal filmmaking | |
| 5. Documentary films gain significant interest – <i>Fahrenheit 9/11</i> , <i>March of the Penguins</i> , <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> | |
| M. Overarching Cultural Themes in Cinema | 6 hours |
| 1. Gender roles and feminism | |
| 2. Racial stereotyping and ethnic diversity | |
| 3. Authority/Society vs. the individual | |
| 4. Fate and determinism vs. free will and self-determination | |
| 5. Selfishness vs. personal sacrifice | |

V. **Methods of Presentation**

The following instructional methodologies may be used in the courses:

1. multi-media;
2. lectures and discussions.

VI. Assignments and Methods of Evaluation

1. Quizzes.
2. Writing assignments (i.e., Analyzing Film Themes).
3. Essay exams.
4. Mid-term exam.
5. Final exam.

VII. Textbooks

Gianetti, L. Flashback: A Brief History of Film. Current edition.
Boston: Pearson, 2010.
13th Grade Textbook Reading Level. ISBN: 978-0-205-69590-4.

Gianetti, L. Understanding Movies. Current edition.
Boston: Pearson, 2008.
13th Grade Textbook Reading Level. ISBN: 978-0-205-73754-3.

VIII. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the required coursework, the student will be able to:

1. understand the major developments of film history;
2. analyze the cultural significance of the films studied within their historical context;
3. analyze film critically through stylistic, narrative, and thematic analyses.