

**Advanced Social Studies: Film History**  
**Spring 2012, B Period Classroom: 210 Instructor: Eric de Lora**  
**Office Hours: Friday Lunch/212 E-mail: ericd@maybeckhs.org**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course traces the major developments in world cinema from its earliest beginnings in the 1890s to the present. The course is structured roughly chronologically and focuses on moments in cinema's development that are particularly relevant from a historical perspective, be it aesthetic, political, technological, cultural and/or economic. The course will acquaint you with the events, causes and consequences of film history and to foster the critical skills necessary for you to assess and advance your own arguments about that history. By the end of the semester, you should be able to identify and critically examine the primary texts and contexts of major film movements and trends, to describe the aesthetic, political, cultural, economic and technological catalysts that distinguished and helped to shape those movements and trends, and to compose your own credible, original historical discourse about film history.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. Foster critical reading skills and comprehension when studying challenging sources about events, history and culture relevant to film history.
2. Conduct research from written and documentary empirical evidence.
3. Examine evidence, synthesize, analyze, evaluate and cogently express findings.
4. Develop analytical writing skills demonstrating conceptual understanding and critical insights through expository writing.
5. Express and temper understanding and ideas in class discussion.
6. Develop college-level note-taking skills from lectures, written, film and interview sources.
7. Gain familiarity with the concepts and methods divergent worldviews use to understand and act in the world.
8. Increase awareness of the variety of diverse worldviews, gaining an appreciation of the differences and similarities as pertaining to film history.

**COURSE TOPICS**

**Week One:** Introduction: Film History and How It Is Done; Why Do We Care About Old Movies? What do Film Historians Do? An Approach to Film History; History as Story; The Invention and Early Years of the Cinema, 1880s-1904; Early Filmmaking and Exhibition; The International Expansion of the Cinema, 1905-1912; Film Production in Europe; The Struggle for the Expanding American Film Industry.

Films: Melies: *A Trip to the Moon* (1902)(YouTube). Les Freres Lumiere: *Actualities* (1968 doc)(YouTube). Porter: *The Great Train Robbery* (1903)(YouTube).

**Week Two:** The Problem of Narrative Clarity; National Cinemas, Hollywood Classicism and World War I, 1913-1919; The American Takeover of World Markets; Small Producing Countries; France in the 1920s: Major Postwar Genres; The French Impressionist Movement.

Films: Dreyer: *Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928)(YouTube, 8 parts). Bunuel: *Un Chien Andalou* (1928)(N).

**Week Three:** Germany in the 1920s: Genres and Styles of German Postwar Cinema; The Expressionist Movement; New Objectivity; Export and Classical Style; Soviet Cinema in the 1920s; Recovery under the New Economic Policy, 1921-1924; Increased State Control and the Montage Movement, 1925-1930; Other Soviet Films.

Films: Wiene: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919)(N). Eisenstein: *Battleship Potemkin* (1925)(N).

**Week Four:** The Late Silent Era in Hollywood, 1920-1928; Theater Chains and the Structure of the Industry; The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America; Studio Filmmaking; Films for African-American Audiences; The Animated Part of the Program; International Trends of the 1920s: The "International Style"; Film Experiments Outside the Mainstream Industry; Documentary Features Gain Prominence; Commercial Filmmaking Internationally. Films: Keaton: *Sherlock, Jr.* (1924)(N). Chaplin: *The Gold Rush* (1925)(N).

**Week Five:** The Introduction of Sound; Sound in the United States; Germany Challenges Hollywood; The USSR Pursues Its Own Path to Sound; The International Adoption of Sound; The Hollywood Studio System, 1930-1945; The New Structure of the Film Industry; Exhibition Practice in the 1930s; Continued Innovation in Hollywood; Genre Innovations and Transformations; Animation and the Studio System.

Films: Early Cartoons (YouTube). Disney: *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (from *Fantasia*)(1940)(YouTube). Wills: *Song of Freedom* (1936)(N).

**Paper I Due: March 5, 2012.**

**Week Six:** Other Studio Systems; Quota Quickies and Wartime Pressures: The British Studios; Innovation within an Industry: The Studio System of Japan; India: An Industry Built on Music; China: Filmmaking Caught between Left and Right; Cinema and the State: The USSR, Germany, and Italy, 1930-1945; The Soviet Union: Socialist Realism and World War II; The German Cinema under the Nazis; Italy: Propaganda versus Entertainment.

Films: Riefenstahl: *Triumph of the Will* (1935)(N).

**Week Seven:** France: Poetic Realism, the Popular Front and the Occupation, 1930-1945; The Industry and Filmmaking during the 1930s ; Poetic Realism; Brief Interlude: The Popular Front; Filmmaking in Occupied and Vichy France; Leftist, Documentary, and Experimental Cinema, 1930-1945; The Spread of Political Cinema; Government- and Corporate-sponsored Documentaries; The International Experimental Cinema.

Films: Reed: *The Third Man* (1949)(N).

**Week Eight:** American Cinema in the Postwar Era, 1946-1960; The Decline of the Hollywood Studio System; The New Power of the Individual Film; The Rise of the Independents. Classical Hollywood Filmmaking: A Continuing Tradition; Major Directors: Several Generations; Postwar European Cinema: Neorealism and its Context, 1945-1959; The Postwar Context; Film Industries and Film Culture; Italy: Neorealism and After; A Spanish Neorealism?

Films: DeSica: *The Bicycle Thief* (1948).

**Paper II Due: April 16, 2012.**

**Week Nine:** Postwar European Cinema: France, Scandinavia, and Britain, 1945-1959; French Cinema of the Postwar Decade; Scandinavian Revival; England: Quality and Comedy; Postwar Cinema Beyond the West, 1945-1959; General Tendencies; Japan; Postwar Cinema in the Soviet Sphere of Influence; People's Republic of China; India; Latin America.

Films: Kurosawa: *Rashomon* (1950)(Hard). Ozu: *Tokyo Story* (1953)(Hard).

**Week Ten:** Art Cinema and the Idea of Authorship; The Rise and Spread of the Auteur Theory; Authorship and the Growth of the Art Cinema; New Waves and Young Cinema, 1958-1967; The Industries' New Needs; Formal and Stylistic Trends; France: New Wave and New Cinema; Italy: Young Cinema and Spaghetti Westerns; Great Britain: "Kitchen Sink" Cinema; Young German Film; New Cinema in the USSR and Eastern Europe; The Japanese New Wave; Brazil: Cinema Novo.

Films: Lamorisse: *The Red Balloon* (1956)(N). Truffaut: *The 400 Blows* (1959)(Hard).

**Week Eleven:** Documentary and Experimental Cinema in the Postwar Era, 1945-Mid-1960s; Toward the Personal Documentary; Direct Cinema; Experimental and Avant-garde Cinema; 1960s: The Film Industry in Recession; The New Hollywood: Late 1960s-Late 1970s; Opportunities for Independents.

Films: Fellini: *8.5* (1963)(N).

**Week Twelve:** Politically Critical Cinema of the 1960s and 1970s; Political Filmmaking in the Third World; Political Filmmaking in the First and Second Worlds; Documentary and Experimental Film since the Late 1960s; Documentary Cinema; From Structuralism to Pluralism in Avant-garde Cinema.

Films: Sembene: *Black Girl* (1966). Dunning: *Yellow Submarine* (1968)(Hard).

**Week Thirteen:** New Cinemas and New Developments: Europe and the USSR Since the 1970s; Western Europe; Eastern Europe and the USSR; A Developing World: Continental and Sub-continental Cinemas since 1970; New Cinemas, New Audiences; African Cinema; Filmmaking in the Middle East; South America and Mexico: Interrupted Reforms and Partnerships with Hollywood; Brazil; India: Mass Output and Art Cinema.

Films: Nair: *Salaam Bombay* (1988).

**Week Fourteen:** Cinema Rising: Pacific Asia and Oceania since 1970; Australia and New Zealand; Japan; Mainland China; New Cinemas in East Asia; Toward a Global Film Culture; Hollywood; Regional Alliances and the New International Film; Diasporic Cinema; The Festival Circuit.

Films: Wong: *Happy Together* (1997).

**Week Fifteen:** Hollywood, Cable Television, and Home Video; Concentration and Consolidation in the Film Industry; Artistic Trends; A New Age of Independent Cinema; Video Piracy: An Alternative Distribution System; Fan Subcultures: Appropriating the Movies; Digital Technology and the Cinema; Digital Tools for Filmmaking; Distribution and Exhibition; New Media, Film, and Digital Convergence.

Films: Scorsese: *Hugo* (2011). Cameron: *Avatar* (2009). Spielberg: *Adventures of Tintin* (2011).

**Paper Due: June 8, 2012**

**Final Exam**

**EVALUATION**

Your final grade will come from:

25% In class participation and discussion;

25% Writing: study guides/film reviews.

25% Research/Project: 3 papers (18-20 pages total) or A short film project and a long paper (8-10 pages).

25% Final exam

## **MATERIALS & ASSIGNMENTS**

### **1. In class participation and discussion:**

This is a central element in this course. To share your astute insights and ask important questions are of vital importance in the class. Patience and listening skills are vital. Be sure to give yourself ample time to think about what you are reading and discussing. Reflection and recording of those thoughts are an important part of learning and growth. Especially as we watch and discuss the films weekly. Be prepared!

### **2. Writing:**

Our primary text will be *Film History: An Introduction (Second Edition)*. (Kristin Thompson & David Bordwell). 2002. We will read a large portion of the text. Your writings consist of two parts: 1) answers to specific questions on the study guides and thoughts that occur to you during each assignment and 2) written reviews of the films we will view in class together. (In all cases written work should be submitted in an electronic format. I suggest you keep/maintain an online folder specifically used for just this course. I will keep track of all submissions but it is always wise to keep copies of everything you send me, just in case I don't actually receive and record it. The folder can also be used for collecting and organizing your thoughts and writings on handouts, chapter responses, note-taking and research).

### **3. Research/Project:**

**Option 1: Part A: Two (2) short 5-6 page analysis papers** on a student-chosen topic relevant to film history (students will be encouraged to select their own topics about which they feel strongly and which they intend to provide convincing and compelling arguments). **Part B: One (1) large 8-10 page paper** concerning further study of a chosen focus from the political, economic, cultural or social issues relevant to film history. Students will be encouraged to find their own topic answering a central question that appeals to their own sense of inquiry and is determined by the instructor to be of suitable scope and focus. Central to the paper is critically thinking about the topic by answering several why questions pertinent to the subject, with the emphasis on ultimately coming to strong conclusion as to what the writer believes about the subject. Substantial bibliographic references (12-15 sources) will ensure that the writer has researched the topic adequately. The writer should submit drafts prior to the final paper for instructor review and to assure that adequate critical as well as reflective thinking has occurred relative to the topic.

**Option 2: Part A: A 5-7 minute film** written, directed, edited and scored (and completely produced) by you for presentation as a part of the Maybeck Short Film Festival at **Film & Arts Night, June 1, 9 PM, Maybeck High School**. The screen-play/storyboard should present in either outlined or detailed format the arc of your film as well as the visual and narrative elements necessary to communicate its message to the audience. It represents your vision of the story as well as the key components to realizing that vision in a digital format for an audience. It should be as thorough as necessary to that end. **Part B: One (1) large 8-10 page paper** concerning further study of a chosen focus from the political, economic, cultural or social issues relevant to film history (see criteria above).

### **4. Final Exam:**

We will have a comprehensive final exam at the end of the course in June. It will be three hours in length and consist of 2-3 essay questions, two short essays of one-two pages each and one longer essay of four to five pages from a choice of prompts to demonstrate mastery of the subjects in question. Begin studying and organizing your notes now.

## **PRACTICES** (Thanks to Dave Ramin for these thoughts.)

- I hope you feel welcome in this class and help make others feel welcome too. It should be an intriguing study – we will be encountering some serious issues. I hope you have a positive, rewarding and even exciting time this semester in our class. If not, please let me know. Never hesitate to talk with me before or after class, during office hours or any other time we can arrange. My email is at the top of this syllabus for you to use.
- Always remember: understanding something is not necessarily agreeing with it. With this in mind, our primary rule in class is: *Everyone, everything treated with RESPECT.*