

FILM 300
FILM AND MEDIA HISTORY

BULLETIN INFORMATION

FILM 300 – Film and Media History (3 credit hrs)

Course Description:

Surveys the development of cinema and related media from the 1820s to the present. Attention to the relations among key technological, cultural, and industrial changes, their causes, and consequences.

SAMPLE COURSE OVERVIEW

What motivates media change? Is it a primarily technological process, as we so often hear? How have different forms of mass media--print, film, radio, television, the World Wide Web--historically interacted? Does our present differ in encouraging a “convergence” of media forms, as some scholars maintain? What has it meant for large numbers of strangers to share media experiences? Who controls or regulates these experiences and how do “they” do it? Does our present, as many commentators claim, differ in the degree of global interconnectedness it affords? To answer these questions this course surveys the historical development of cinema in relation to the audiovisual mass media of the past two centuries. It begins with Benedict Anderson’s influential argument about the political and economic power of print and moves quickly to the 1820s, when print publication was the definitive mass medium and Charles Babbage’s design for the difference engine anticipated the modern computer. From there, the course examines the rise and global expansion of the motion picture industry, the emergence and transformation of radio and television broadcast networks, the development of video and computer games, and the present of web and mobile media. No semester-long course could comprehensively survey the styles, technologies, and institutions that participated in this broad and deep history. Accordingly, this course focuses on critically important examples and key moments of transformation. This is not, however, only a course about how current media landscape came about. It is also a course about how media histories are written. Through a series of special designed research exercises, students will learn media history by writing it.

ITEMIZED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of FILM 300, students will be able to:

1. Use the principles of historical thinking to assess the relationship between the contemporary global media and their forebears.
2. Use principles of historical thinking to understand human societies, specifically through the history of mass media from Gutenberg to the present.
3. Define and summarize continuities and major changes in the ways audio-visual mass media, broadly considered, have addressed audiences from the fifteenth century to the present.

4. Define and summarize major stylistic, technological, and industrial events, developments, and themes in the history of audio-visual mass mediation, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.
5. Define and summarize key arguments distinguishing national media audiences from local and global audiences.
6. Define and summarize the role governments and corporations have played in development of various forms of audio-visual mass media.
7. Identify and describe a few key alternatives to mainstream media.
8. Practice basic skills in researching media histories.

SAMPLE REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS

No currently available textbook surveys the rich multimedia history we will investigate in this course. Accordingly, we will rely on an online course reader comprising the articles and book chapters listed in the Course Outline as *secondary source* reading. Students are responsible for reading these works before class and bringing assigned reading to class in print or electronic form on the day indicated.

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS AND/OR EXAMS

1. **Required Screenings:** We will screen key examples from media history at the assigned screening time. These screenings of *primary sources* are a requirement of the course. If you cannot attend the screenings, do not take the class. We will watch films that some may find objectionable due to representations of violence, nudity, sexuality, and other controversial subjects. If you have any concerns about such matters, please talk to me immediately.
2. **Preparation & Participation:** The Preparation & Participation portion of the final grade is based on the quality and frequency of your participation. You must come to class prepared to discuss reading and viewing assigned for that day. This means that you will have a printed or electronic copy of the reading with you and that you will be prepared either to ask a question about it or to explain why you thought some aspect of it to be important.
3. **Research Exercises:** Students will practice the interpretation of primary and secondary sources in film/media history by writing four short (3-5 page) papers. Detailed instructions and guidelines for evaluation will be distributed separately.
4. **Weekly Quizzes:** An online quiz each Tuesday will allow students to test their understandings of the preceding week's lectures and their comprehension of assigned reading material.
5. **Final Exam:** There will be a comprehensive final exam, also taken online.

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS

Week 1: Introduction: Mediation, Historiography

Day 1 What is "Film and Media History"? Introduction to key concepts and problems: relationship between history and historiography; "mediation" as distinct from "communication"; technology and change, "film & ?"; national, global, and local or regional communities connected by media

No screening this week

Day 2 Visit to the Hollings Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Survey of two millennia of media history by means of primary source examples from the collections: cuneiform tablets to, manuscripts, incunabula, mass market novels, uses of half-tone screen process in newspapers, etc.; emphasis on the development of the codex and the transition from manuscript to print.

Secondary source reading: Benedict Anderson, "Cultural Roots," "The Origins of National Consciousness," *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991) 9-46.

Week 2: Print, Photographs, Telegraphs, and Logic Mills

Day 3 Discussion of Hollings visit and Anderson's model: distinction between "religious/dynastic" communities and national communities; role of print in development of modern democratic nation-states as "imagined" communities (18th and 19th centuries); definition of "print capitalism"; common criticisms of Anderson's model.

No screening this week

Day 4 Illustrated lecture on development of photography, telegraphy, and mechanical computing technologies through the 1900s; major events and figures (e.g., Niépce, Talbot, Fenton, Cameron, Daguerre, Babbage, Lovelace, Kodak, Morse, Hollerith, Western Union). Discussion of interactions among media: do visual media, coded transmission, and computation alter the character of the "imagined community" described by Anderson?

Secondary source reading: Geoffery Batchen, "Electricity Made Visible," *New Media Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, ed. Wendy Chun (New York: Routledge, 2006) 27-44.

Week 3: Popular Entertainments and Urban Modernity

Day 5 Illustrated lecture on entertainment context of early cinema; 17th - 19th century precursors (magic lantern and phantasmagoria, panorama and diorama, morgues, theatrical melodrama, exhibitions and fairs); brief history of urban modernity; how film and media studies has described this phenomenon; technological and industrial requirements for "cinema"; arguments about "invention" of cinema--no singular moment of invention. Discussion of historiographical problem of cinema's emergence: "first wave" vs. revision histories; when are "the movies" "the movies" and how would we know?

Secondary source reading: André Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction* (U of Illinois P, 2011), 1-8, 16-31, 48-61.

Required Screening of Primary Sources: Before the Nickelodeon (d. Musser, 1982, 60 min.) [includes Great Train Robbery, excerpts (1903), Corbett Fitzsimmons Fight, May-Erwin Kiss—Vitascope, Spanish-American War Scenes @ Eden Musée, Carrie Nation Films, Capture of the Biddle Brothers, Finnish of Bridget McKeen, Terrible Teddy the Grizzly King, The Samson-Schley Controversy, President McKinley Funeral, Execution of Solgazcs, Elephants Shoot the Shoots and Fire and Ladder Films]; Selected Edison films including: Blacksmithing Scene (1893), The Barber Shop (1893), Athlete with Wand (1894), Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze (1894), Sandow (1894), Carmencita

(1894), The Boxing Cats (1894), Caicedo with Pole (1894), Annabelle Butterfly Dance (1894); Selected Lumière brothers films including: Leaving the Factory (3 versions), Neuville-Su-Saone: Debarking at the Congress of Photographers in Lyon , Le Repas du bebe [A Baby's Meal]; L'arroseur arrosé [The Sprinkler Sprinkled aka Watering the Gardener], Card Game, L'Arrivee d'un train [Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat], Demolition d'un mur [Demolition of a Wall]; Les Voyages dans la lune [Trip to the Moon] (France, 1902, 10 min. d. Méliès); Rescued by Rover (Hepworth Mfg. Co., 1905, 6 min.); The Policeman's Little Run (Pathé, d. Zecca, 1907, 6 min.)

Day 6 Visit Caroliniana Library for workshop on primary sources used in Research Exercise #1(RE1); general introduction to Caroliniana printed materials, manuscripts, and visual materials collections.

Secondary Source Reading: Desirée J. Garcia, "Subversive Sounds: Ethnic Spectatorship and Boston's Nickelodeon Theaters, 1907-1914," *Film History* 19.3 (2007): 213-227.

Week 4: Instituting the Feature Film

Day 7 Discussion of short films from last week's screening--what kinds of histories might we create based on these primary sources? Illustrated lecture on cinema's stylistic and industrial development through WWI: major figures and events; predominance of French manufactures & relation to national community; nickelodeon phenomenon; importance of serials internationally; "serial queen" phenomenon and changing gender roles worldwide.

Secondary Source Reading: Monica Dall'Asta, "Italian Serial Films and 'International Popular Culture'" *Film History* 12.3 (2000) 300-07.

Required Screening of Primary Sources: Hazards of Helen: Escape on the Fast Freight (d. Hurst / Holmes, 1915, USA, 13 mins.), Hypocrites (d. Weber, 1915, USA, 49 mins.), Who Pays? (d. Harvey, Horkheimer, King, 1915, USA, 35 mins.)

Day 8 Discussion of screening: what characterizes them as group? Do they look like "the movies" you know--why or why not? Illustrate lecture: why Birth is not the first feature film and is less important than subsequent histories made it seem, but still worth talking about; major figures and events in the development of film style, exhibition, and distribution to 1917; overview of film censorship and regulation. Discussion of landmark 1915 Mutual decision.

Secondary Source Reading: Lee Grieveson, "Not Harmless Entertainment: State Censorship and Cinema in the Transitional Era," *American Cinema's Transitional Era*, ed. Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp (Berkeley: U of California P, 2004) 265-84.

RE1 Motion Picture Exhibition in Columbia, SC 1904-1919, Due via Bb by end of this week. This assignment has two parts. In the end, you will write a double-spaced essay of 1200-1600 words that uses primary sources (maps, city directories, local newspapers, and photographs) to explain what changed and what stayed the same about the movie-going experience in Columbia from 1904 to 1919.

Week 5: Corporate Cinema and Global Consumer Culture

Day 9 Discussion: lessons from multiple possible histories produced for RE1. Illustrated lecture: major events and figures in development of "Hollywood" through 1927;

development of the star system; vertical integration of the industry; mature corporate organization of production and exhibition.

Secondary Source Reading: Mark Lynn Anderson, "The Early Hollywood Scandals and the Death of Wallace Reid," *Twilight of the Idols: Hollywood and the Human Sciences* (U of California P, 2011) 15-48.

Required Screening of Primary Source: *It* (d. Badger 1927, USA, 72 min.)

Day 10 Discussion of *It*: an example of "the movies"? Why or why not? Illustrated lecture: "Hollywood" in global context; reasons for U.S. dominance after WWI, MPPDA and PCA--industrial self-censorship and public relations bodies designed to make U.S. cinema "appeal to as many people as possible while offending as few people as possible" (Vasey); how to think about alternatives to Hollywood: Weimar cinema vs. German Expressionism as alternative historiographical paradigms.

Secondary Source Reading: Ruth Vasey, "Introduction," "The Open Door," *The World According to Hollywood* (Exeter: U of Exeter P, 1997).

Week 6: The Multi-Media Conglomerate 1

Day 11 Illustrated lecture: overview of major figures and events involved in the transition to sound worldwide; why *The Jazz Singer* (1927) is not the first sound film and why it's important anyway; argument against technological determinism; importance of finance capital and conglomeration to sound transition; sound and international distribution. Discussion of conceptual and practical problems involved in transition to sound though the mid-1930s (via Steiner and Sabaneev).

Secondary Source Reading: Max Steiner, "Scoring the Film" (1937); Leonid Sabaneev, "The Aesthetics of the Sound Film" (1935)

Required Screening of Primary Source: *King Kong* (d. Cooper, 1933, USA, 104 min.)

Day 12 Discussion of *King Kong*--where does it fit in histories of sound, conglomeration, style, what is the imagined audience? (Note film's relationship to histories of documentary and African-American film production). Illustrated lecture: major events, figures in development of US radio networks; federal regulations; "sponsored films experiment" as example of media interaction; commercial and governmental uses of radio--what has been meant by the term "propaganda"?; development of a "point to mass" broadcast system. Discussion of national community imagined by radio--how related to that of print and film?

Secondary Source Reading: Steve J. Wurtzler, "Making Sound Meaningful: Commerce, Culture, Politics," *Electric Sounds* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007) 169-228.

RE2: Reception Research Due at the End of the Week. In this exercise you are asked to evaluate critically four different types, or genres, of sources commonly used in investigations of a film's historical reception: reviews, gossip columns, celebrity profiles, and the *Film Daily Yearbook*. Your examination should result in a double-spaced paper of 1200-1600 words.

Week 7: Cinema and the State: 1933-1948

Day 13 Illustrated lecture: the Soviet case: montage vs. Stalin's favorite film; fiction vs. documentary films; state sponsorship of documentaries in Europe and US--major figures (e.g., Flaherty, Grierson, Lorentz, Ivens, Riefenstahl) and events though 1945.

Secondary Source Reading: Brian Winston, "Triumph of the Will" History Today 47.1 (Jan. 1997) 24-28. Jamie Miller, "Soviet Cinema, 1929-41: The Development of Industry and Infrastructure," Europe Asian Studies 58.1 (2006) 103-124.

Required Screening of Primary Source: La Habanera (d. Sirk, 1937, Ger., 98 min.)

Day 14 Discussion of screening: how, if at all, does La Habanera differ from a Hollywood film? Illustrated lecture: arguments about melodrama and its social function; similarities between Hollywood and film industries of Third Reich, Soviet Union, Fascist Italy.

Secondary Source Reading: Eric Rentschler, "Astray in the New World" The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and its Afterlife (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996) 125-45.

Week 8: Cinema and the State: 1933-1948 (Cont'd)

Day 15 Illustrated lecture: organized labor in the US film industry before and after WWII, how Hollywood supported the war effort, post-war restructuring of industry, blacklist and Waldorf Statement--interaction of political and economic forces; how to face a hostile committee; Paramount consent decree; nation-building and US administration of Japanese film production under SCAP.

Secondary Source Reading: Jon Lewis, "How the Blacklist Saved Hollywood" Hollywood v. Hard Core How the Struggle Over Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry (New York: New York UP, 2000) 11-49.

Required Screening of Primary Source: Crossfire (d. Dmytryk) 1947, US, 86 min)

Day 16 Discussion of Crossfire (social problem film targeted by HUAC) and Lewis's interpretation of film. Illustrated lecture: Hollywood style in the 1940s, major figures, how to think about the history of film style.

Week 9: The Screen Comes Home: TV, Home Movies, Sponsored Media

Day 17 Illustrated lecture: history of television from late nineteenth century to the 1960s (multiple approaches), technical difference between mechanical and electronic TV, why '50s the "Golden Age"--regulatory and socio-economic factors, comparison between development of radio and TV networks, ideology of "liveness."

Secondary Source Reading: Robert Vianello, "The Power Politics of 'Live' Television" Journal of Film and Video 38 (Summer 1985): 26-40.

Workshop on TV research assignment due next week and *Primary Source Screening:* Camel Caravan News (NBC, 3 Aug. 1954), "Business Manager" I Love Lucy (CBS, 4 Oct. 1954)

Day 18 Discussion of primary source screening and Spigel essay: did TV alter the "imagined community" of film and radio? Temporal and spatial reorganization of American social life. Does "television" still exist? Illustrated lecture: brief history of home movies and sponsored films, their socio-economic causes and consequences, and neglect (until recently) by film historians.

Secondary Source Reading: Lynn Spigel, "The Suburban Home Companion: Television and the Neighborhood Ideal in Postwar America," Sexuality and Space (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural, 1992) 184-217. Recommended: Kay Mills, "Introduction," Changing Channels: The Civil Rights Case that Transformed Television (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2004) 3-13.

Week 10: Market Differentiation: Art Cinema and Exploitation Films in Context

Day 19 Illustrated lecture: major developments in US film industry of 50s-60s; package unit system, conglomeration, exhibition changes (e.g., the drive-in on the way to the multiplex), audience segmentation, color systems, widescreen.

Secondary Source Reading: Russell Merritt, "Crying in Technicolor: How Hollywood Coped When Technicolor Died" *NFSA Journal* 3.2/3 (2008): 1-15.

Primary Source Screening: *La Strada* (d. Fellini, 1954, It., 108 min.)

Day 20 Discussion of *La Strada*--a different type of film? Illustrated lecture: when, how, and to what end has cinema been called an "art"? Problem of defining "neorealism" (a style? a politics?), problem of "art cinema," international dimensions of art cinema (example of *Rashomon*); Miracle case (reversal of 1915 Mutual decision); rise of ratings system in US; art vs. obscenity--perennial favorite.

Secondary Source Reading: Barbara Wilinsky, "'A Thinly Disguised Art Veneer Covering a Filthy Sex Picture': Discourses on Art Houses in the 1950s" *Film History* 8.2 (1996): 143-58.

RE3: Early TV, due by the end of the week. This paper asks you to compare an evening of TV in Columbia in 1954 with that same evening in New York City. What did the similarity and/or difference mean for the broadcast audience?

Week 11: Counter-Media?

Day 21 Illustrated lecture: Key oppositional cinemas of 60s and 70s; relation of style, distribution, exhibition to social movements; Langlois Affair; Third Cinema (as historiographical category vs. political manifesto). Discussion of key examples: Weekend, Hour of Furnaces (original exhibition strategy vs. YouTube); Jeanne Dielman, Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song.

Secondary Source Reading: Peter Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema: Vent d'Est" *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (NY: Columbia UP, 1986) 120-29; Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Hacia un Tercer Cine" *Tricontinental* 13 (1969): 107-32; "Towards a Third Cinema," in *Movies and Methods*, vol 1., ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976) 44-64.

Primary Source Screening: *La noir de . . . [Black Girl]* (d. Sembene, 1966, Fr./Sn.)

Day 22 Workshop on annotated bibliography; visit with reference librarian in Thomas Cooper Library. Discussion of *La noir de . . .* what kind of film is this? How related to decolonization of Senegal? To examples from previous class?

Week 12: Computers, Networks, and the Rise of the Video Game

Day 23 Illustrated lecture: what are the major events in the history of computing? of video-games? At what point do these histories intersect?; problem of technological determinism revisited; relationship between computer networks and broadcast networks--point to mass vs. point to point systems; what is an algorithm?

Secondary Source Reading: Mark Wolf, "The Video Game as a Medium" *The Medium of the Video Game* (Austin: UT Press 2001) 11-34.

Primary Source Video Game Lab (On Your Own):

Read about, watch the video about, and play Spacewar--about 10 mins. <http://pdp-1.computerhistory.org/pdp-1/>

Play a Flash version of PONG (1972) for at least 5 mins. There are several, this one works: <http://www.2flashgames.com/f/f-303.htm>

There were nine 1977 launch titles for the Atari 2600 (Air-Sea Battle, Basic Math, Blackjack, Combat, Indy 500, Star Ship, Street Racer, Surround, Video Olympics). Play one for 5 mins. Star Ship is here <http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/173128>

Play a Flash version of Lunar Lander (1979) for at least 5 mins. <http://moonlander.seb.ly>

Play Zork 1: The Great Underground Empire (1979) for at least 30 mins.

<http://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/188334> [I'm asking you to spend a bit more time with this because the interface will be unfamiliar. You'll need to get used to it before you can really understand how the game works.]

Play Super Mario Brothers (1985) for at least 15 mins. http://nintendo8.com/game/629/super_mario_brothers/

Day 24 Discussion of game lab: historiographical problems of continuity and rupture; comparison with development of prior media, development of gaming after 1985. Illustrated lecture: relationship between 60s and 70s conceptual/abstract art and video games.

Secondary Source Reading: Steven J. Kent, "Super Mario Nation" *The Medium of the Video Game* 35-48.

Week 13: The Multi-Media Conglomerate 2

Day 25 Illustrated lectures: major events and key examples in the transformation of media industries after 1980; competing definitions of "New Hollywood"; Fordism vs. Neo-Fordism, broadcasting vs. narrowcasting; global conglomeration and "synergy"; VCR and cable; blockbusters; new televisual styles.

Secondary Source Reading: Geoff King, "Introduction: Dimensions and Definitions of New Hollywood" *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*. 1-5 Shawn Shimpach, "Television in Transition" *Television in Transition* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 14-29

Primary Source Screening: "Partners in Crime" *Doctor Who* 4.2 (2008) and "The Impossible Astronaut" *Doctor Who* 6.1 (2011).

Day 26 Discussion of Dr. Who "reboot"--evidence of market strategy? Who is the "imagined community" of this show--global, national, some other set of demographics? Illustrated lecture: TV and globalization, co-production and localization strategies, "run-away" productions; role of tax incentives in the production of imagined communities.

Secondary Source Reading: Shimpach "Doctor Who" 14-29, 152-78.

Week 14: The Interface: A Look Back from the Present

Day 27 Discussion: do social media and mobile devices alter the communities imagined by prior forms of mediation? Do we still inhabit the national communities first imagined by print? What about the legacy of computing populations envisioned by Hollerith's tabulator? The complex management of rebellious and conformist impulses by mid-century melodrama? Etc.

Secondary Source Reading: Adriana de Souza e Silva and Jordan Frith, "Introduction" and "Interfaces to Public Spaces" *Mobile Interfaces in Public Spaces* (Routledge 2012) 1-49.

No Screening This Week.

Day 28 Review

RE4: Annotated Bibliography, due by the end of the week. Begin to develop an annotated bibliography for a hypothetical 15-page research paper on any course topic discussed in weeks 10 through 14.

FINAL EXAM according to University exam schedule