

## COMM 360: Film History I: Beginning to 1945

This course examines the history of cinema as one of the most influential media of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We will study the aesthetic and technological developments of cinema from its birth until World War II, as well as examine the social and economic factors shaping its history. As a new medium, film opened up a wide range of possibilities for artistic expression, education, entertainment, and understanding of the world around us. As it developed, it acquired its own formal system, language, and traditions. We will trace the changing styles, techniques, content, and methods of filmmaking as an art form, as a form of popular media, and as an industry. Along the way, we will consider how cinema is enmeshed in its social and cultural context by looking at its economics, technology, ideology, and how audiences related to it. Though this course's scope is necessarily limited, we will look at as wide a range of films as possible—feature-length narratives as well as animated, documentary, experimental, and early shorts—and place them in their historical and cultural contexts. The goal of the course is to acquaint students with the contours of film history and, at the same time, to generate enthusiasm for this distant landscape upon which the familiar terrain of contemporary American film culture rests.

### Course Goals

By the end of this course, students should:

- Be familiar with the development of international film history during its first fifty years
- Understand and analyze the medium's connection to social and political history
- Identify how technological, economic, social and cultural factors transformed the medium
- Understand and analyze the relationship between US and international film industries
- Discuss how issues of class, race, gender, sexuality and nation have shaped film
- Develop critical reading and writing skills by engaging with a variety of readings, screenings, and class discussions.

### Requirements (total of 100 points)

Participation/attendance (including screenings)	10 points
Quizzes (total of 10, 2 points each)	20 points
Short Paper #1 (due 10/12)	10 points
Exam #1 (10/17)	25 points
Short Paper #2 (due 11/14)	10 points
Exam #2 (12/20, 2:45-4:45)	25 points

### Grading Scale

A: 94-100	B-: 80-83	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-93	C+: 77-79	D: 64-66
B+: 87-89	C: 74-76	F: 0-63
B: 84-86	C-: 70-73	

### Readings

There is one textbook for this course: David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film History: An Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2010). It is available for rent and purchase through the bookstore. All other readings will be on D2L as PDF files or links.

### Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory, and will be taken at the beginning of EVERY CLASS, including screenings. **If you are late, it is your responsibility to come up and make sure I've marked you down as present.** If you need to miss class for an emergency, let me know *in advance*. Absences will be excused on a case-by-case basis. You are allowed one unexcused absence, then after that each unexcused absence reduces your participation grade by half a point.

### Quizzes

Throughout the semester, at the beginning of class, I will give a short quiz that addresses the film we watched that week, and/or some basic aspect of the reading. Each of these quizzes is worth 2 points of your final grade (2 points for a satisfactory answer, 1 point for partial credit), and they **cannot be made up**. (There will be more than ten opportunities for quiz grades, though, and I will drop the lowest scores.)

### Short Papers

There will be two short papers throughout the semester, each 1000-1200 words. Guidelines for these will be posted on D2L and discussed in class.

### Midterm exam

Your midterm exam, which will consist of multiple choice, short answer, clip identification, and short essay questions, will be Wednesday, 10/15.

### Final exam

The format of your final exam will be similar to that of the midterm, and will take place during our exam period on Friday, 12/19 from 12:30-2:30pm.

### Requirements for Written Assignments:

Papers must be typed, in 12-point font, double-spaced, page-numbered, and stapled. I reserve the right to deduct points for violations of these requirements. Late papers drop by 10% for each 24 hours it's late, whether it's the weekend or a weekday (i.e., a 100-point paper one day late will be penalized 10 points before I grade it). Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for personal emergencies, but **ONLY** if you ask me **IN ADVANCE** of the actual due date.

### Class Environment

Students are expected to contribute to a respectful, productive learning environment. This includes being on time, being attentive, participating in class discussions, and being nice to everyone, regardless of their views. Technology is a big issue, but rest assured that it's pretty easy to tell whether a student is actually taking notes on a laptop or checking email/whatever. If you're going to use a laptop or tablet, please use it for class purposes, and please switch cell phones to silent. Also, no cell phone use in class, please. Any violation of the above will impact your attendance/participation grade.

### Guidelines for Assessing Participation Grades

- Tardiness; degree and frequency
- Not just frequency, but quality of comments. Is it evident that the student has done the readings and engaged with the material?
- Consideration and respect for other students and their points of view
- Engagement with the class (i.e., sleeping or excessive talking to others while the professor or another student is speaking)
- Technology use: disrespectful or reasonable?

### Disability Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way that I can. For more information, please visit the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here:

<http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>

### Statement of Academic Integrity

UW-Stevens Point values a safe, honest, respectful, and inviting learning environment. In order to ensure that each student has the opportunity to succeed, we have developed a set of expectations for all students and instructors. This set of expectations is known as the Rights and Responsibilities document, and it is intended to help establish a positive living and learning environment at UWSP. Click here for more information:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Pages/rightsandresponsibilities.aspx>

Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education in general and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is taken very seriously. Don't do it! The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. For more information, see the UWSP "Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures" section of the Rights and Responsibilities document, Chapter 14, which can be accessed here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

Also: if you use Wikipedia, or anything online, you have to CITE IT. I don't care whether you use MLA or Chicago style citations, but please be consistent. When in doubt, CITE THE SOURCE. I cannot stress this enough. Consequences for plagiarism are severe: again, see the above link to your Rights and Responsibilities document.

### Terms of Enrollment

This syllabus is a contract. By taking this class, you agree to the policies listed here. I reserve the right to change the syllabus, but only within reason, and with timely notification to students.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

#### **Week One: Introduction**

**Wednesday, 9/7:** Introduction, watch *The Artist* (2011, 100 min)

#### **Readings:**

- Smith, "Just a Movie"
  - B&T, "Film History and How it is Done"
  - Elza, Intro to Film handout (optional)
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#### **Week Two: Invention and Early Years of Film**

**Monday, 9/12:** Discuss *The Artist*; pre-cinematic devices and the invention of cinema

**Wednesday, 9/14:** Pre-cinematic devices and the invention of cinema, cont. Screening: Series Photography, 1877-1885; Edison Kinetoscope films, Lumière films

#### **Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 1 ("The Invention and Early Years of the Cinema, 1880s-1904")
  - Maxim Gorky, "Lumière," *Roger Ebert's Book of Film*, Roger Ebert, ed., (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1997), 342-344.
  - Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, Robert Stam and Toby Miller, eds., (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 229-235.
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#### **Week Three: The Cinema of Attractions and the Coming of Narrative**

**Monday, 9/19:** The cinema of attractions, early film genres, reception, and the beginnings of editing. Screening: short films from Méliès, Edison, others.

**Wednesday, 9/21:** International film industries and the development of narrative. Screening: short films from D.W. Griffith.

**Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 2 & 3 (“The International Expansion of the Cinema, 1905-1912”)
- William A. McKeever, “The Moving Picture: A Primary School for Criminals,” *Good Housekeeping*, vol. 51 (August, 1910), 184-186.

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**Week Four: International Expansion and the Rise of the Feature**

**Monday, 9/26:** Race, gender, genre, and the early feature. Clips from *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), and *Within Our Gates* (1919).

**Wednesday, 9/28:** International film industries and the development of narrative, cont. Screening: *The Cheat* (1915, 55 min).

**Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 3 (“National Cinemas, Hollywood Classicism, and World War I, 1913-1919”)
- Grace Kingsley, “That Splash of Saffron,” *Photoplay Magazine*, vol. 9, no. 4 (March, 1916), 139-141.
- Anna Siomopoulos, “The Birth of a Black Cinema: Race, Reception, and Oscar Micheaux’s *Within Our Gates*,” *The Moving Image*, vol. 6, no. 4, (Fall 2006), 111-118.

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**Week Five: German Expressionism**

**Monday, 10/3:** The development of narrative, cont. and German Expressionism

**Wednesday, 10/5:** Weimar cinema and post-war trauma. Screening: *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920, 71 min)

**Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 5 (“Germany in the 1920s”)
- Ernst Simmel, “War Neuroses and ‘Psychic Trauma,’” *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds., (Berkeley: U of CA Press, 1994), 7-8.
- Herbert Jhering, “An Expressionist Film,” *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 620-621.

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**Week Six: French Impressionism and Film Theory**

**Monday, 10/10:** German Expressionism, cont. and French Impressionism

**Wednesday, 10/12:** French Impressionism, cont. Screening: *Menilmontant* (1926, 37 min), other short films TBD (PAPER #1 DUE)

**Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 4 (“France in the 1920s”); Ch. 8, p. 158-165 (“Film Experiments Outside the Mainstream Industry”), Ch. 14, p. 290-295 (“The International Experimental Cinema”)
- Jean Epstein, “On Certain Characteristics of *Photogenie*” and “Magnification,” *French Film Theory and Criticism, vol. 1*, Richard Abel, ed., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. Press, 1988), 314-318, 235-240.

**Week Seven: French Impressionism, cont.**

**Monday, 10/17: EXAM #1**

**Wednesday, 10/19: NO SCREENING**

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**Week Eight: Soviet Montage and the Avant-Garde**

**Monday, 10/24:** Soviet film, politics, and the principles of montage.

**Wednesday, 10/26:** Soviet Montage, cont. Screening: *Battleship Potemkin* (1925, 75 min).

**Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 6 (“Soviet Cinema in the 1920s”)
  - Dziga Vertov, “The Cine-Eyes. A Revolution,” *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896-1939*, Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, eds., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 89-94.
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**Week Nine: Hollywood in the 1920s**

**Monday, 10/31:** The U.S. film industry in the 1920s

**Wednesday, 11/2:** Comedy and animation. Screenings TBD.

**Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 7 (“The Late Silent Era in Hollywood, 1920-1928”)
  - John Belton, “American Comedy,” *American Cinema/American Culture, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005), 180-192.
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**Week Ten: The Coming of Sound**

**Monday, 11/7:** The transition to sound.

**Wednesday, 11/9:** Sound, cont. Screening: *M* (Lang, 1931, 110 min)

**Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 9 (“The Introduction of Sound”)
  - Noel Carroll, “Lang and Pabst: Paradigms for Early Sound Practice,” *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, Elizabeth Weis and John Belton, eds., (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1985), 265-276.
  - Wesley C. Miller, “Sound Pictures: The Successful Production of Illusion,” *American Cinematographer*, vol. 10, no. 9, (December, 1929), 20-21.
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**Week Eleven: The Production Code**

**Monday, 11/14:** The Studio System, genre, and the Code (**PAPER #2 DUE**) Screening: *Thou Shalt Not: Sex, Sin, and Censorship in Pre-Code Hollywood* (Smith, 2008, 68 min)

**Wednesday, 11/16:** Screening: *Baby Face* (Green, 1933, 75 min)

**Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 10 (“The Hollywood Studio System, 1930-1945”)
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**Week Twelve: The Hollywood Studio System**

**Monday, 11/21:** The Hollywood Studio System and Production Code, cont.

**Wednesday, 11/23:** NO SCREENING; THANKSGIVING BREAK

**Readings:**

- Robert Sklar, “Golden Age of Turbulence and the Golden Age of Order,” *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 175-194.
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**Week Thirteen: The Studio System, cont.**

**Monday, 11/28:** Genre, studio directors, and the Golden Age of Hollywood, cont.

**Wednesday, 11/30:** Screening: *It Happened One Night* (Capra, 1935, 105 min)

**Readings:**

- Robert Sklar, “The Making of Hollywood Myths: Walt Disney and Frank Capra,” *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*, (New York: Vintage, 1975), 195-214.
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**Week Fourteen: Other Studio Systems**

**Monday, 12/5:** Filmmaking in France and the U.K.

**Wednesday, 12/7:** Screening: *Rules of the Game* (Renoir, 1939, 114 min)

**Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 11, p. 219-225 (“Other Studio Systems”), Ch. 13, p. 259-268 (“The Industry and Filmmaking During the 1930s” and “Poetic Realism”)
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**Week Fifteen: Cinema Goes to War**

**Monday, 12/12:** Europe and the U.S. on the brink of war

**Wednesday, 12/14:** Europe and the U.S. on the brink of war, cont.; clips from *Triumph of the Will* (1935), *Why We Fight* (1942-5), and wartime cartoons

**Readings:**

- B&T, Ch. 12, p. 248-253 (“The German Cinema Under the Nazis”), Ch. 14, p. 277-290 (Leftist, Documentary, and Experimental Cinemas, 1930-1945”)
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**Week Sixteen: Exam Week**

**Tuesday, 12/20:** Exam 2:45-4:45