

CTVA 310. HISTORY OF AMERICAN CINEMA—Fall 2009.

A survey of the major filmic tendencies and creative approaches of (and the critical and theoretical responses to) the American motion picture industry during the sound era (ca. 1928-present); the screening of selected films.

Office Hours: Armer Theater (MZ100)—Tuesday @6:30PM; Wednesday @3:00PM and 6:30PM; Thursday @3:00PM. Please e-mail in advance for appointments. John.e.schultheiss@csun.edu — Department of Cinema and Television Arts. For a schedule of all Cinematheque screenings: www.cinematheque.csun.edu => “Monthly Screening Schedules”

REQUIRED READING:

For copies of this syllabus: <http://www.ctva.csun.edu/AcademicsSyllabi.html>

1. Michael Wood. *America in the Movies*
2. Budd Schulberg. *What Makes Sammy Run?*
3. CTVA 310. *History of American Cinema: Readings*

*These *Readings* are available for downloading @: <http://www.ctva.csun.edu/OverviewBios/Schultheiss.html>
(listed on left side of page under Office Hours).

ASSIGNMENT VALUES: 13 Weekly Examinations.

NOTE: Attendance at *five* Cinematheque events will permit the dropping of the two lowest examination scores—*excluding* the examination on *What Makes Sammy Run?*, which must be taken and counted. (See criteria below.) Simply sign attendance sheets. For a schedule of all Cinematheque screenings, go to: www.cinematheque.csun.edu => “Monthly Screening Schedules.”

GUIDELINES FOR THE ARMER THEATER

- There is ABSOLUTELY NO EATING OR DRINKING in the Armer Theater.
- DO NOT bring ANY food or drink (including water) in the theater—especially GUM!
- DO NOT put your feet on the backs or armrests of the seats.
- Please refrain from any talking or conversations during the screenings.
- Turn off ALL cell phones and electronic devices—NO text messaging during class.
- Violators of any of the above guidelines will be asked to leave the theater.
- Please be considerate of all who occupy this holy space.
- =>No form of wheeled personal transportation (skateboard, skates, scooter, etc.) is allowed in the Armer Theater. As a courtesy, we will make a holding area available for the storage of these items should a student insist on bringing them. However, items are left in this holding area at the student's risk. The Armer Theater, CTVA, and the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication assume no responsibility for their security.

27 Aug 09. Introduction — Articles of Faith — The Hollywood Ideology [Preston Surges, *Sullivan's Travels*]

Thematic Proposition: The American Individualist/Existential Theme [Literary Antecedents: Herman Melville, “Bartleby the Scrivener,” Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*; Film Extracts]

READING: Wood, *America in the Movies*— Chapter II: pp. 24-50 (“America First”).

3 Sep 09. Thematic Proposition: The American Individualist/Existential Theme [Film Extracts]

READING for today's examination: Wood, *America in the Movies*— Chapter II: pp. 24-50 (“America First”).

EXAMINATION=> Post-Lecture EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film extracts.

10 Sep 09. Studio Hollywood

Shadows in Paradise: Hitler's Exiles in Hollywood [Documentary] (2008. w Sara Lukinson d Peter Rosen)

READING for today's Examination: *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #1—“HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: ART, INDUSTRY, AUDIENCE” [Note in your reading: Key historical figures, studio profiles, evolution of genres].

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EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material.

17 Sep 09. MASCHINWERK: The Cinema of Fritz Lang

M (1931. w Thea von Harbou, Fritz Lang d Fritz Lang)

READING for today's Examination: *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #2—“Fritz Lang (Masters of the American Cinema)” [Note in your reading: “Melodrama,” “Expressionism,” “Film Noir”].

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(listed on left side of page under Office Hours).

EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film.

24 Sep 09. THE WAY OF THE WORLD: The Cinema of Ernst Lubitsch
One Hour with You (1932. *w* Samson Raphaelson *d* Ernst Lubitsch)

READING for today's Examination: *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #3—“The ‘European’ Model: Hollywood Cinema”; Reading #4—“Ernst Lubitsch (Masters of the American Cinema)” [Note in your reading: “Comedy of Manners” vs “Boulevard Farce”].

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(listed on left side of page under Office Hours).

EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film.

1 Oct 09. THE INDIVIDUALIST MYSTIQUE: The Cinema of Frank Capra
It Happened One Night (1934. *story* Samuel Hopkins Adams *w* Robert Riskin *d* Frank Capra)

READING for today's Examination: *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #5—“Frank Capra (Masters of the American Cinema)” [Note: Structuralism—“Federalism vs. Populism”].

EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film.

8 Oct 09. LEAVES OF GRASS: The Cinema of John Ford
The Long Voyage Home (1940. *play* Eugene O'Neill *w* Dudley Nichols *d* John Ford)

READING for today's Examination: *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #6 “John Ford (Masters of the American Cinema)” [Note: Structuralism—“Wilderness v. Civilization”].

EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film.

15 Oct 09. THE CULT OF PERSONALITY: The Cinema of Howard Hawks
The Big Sleep (1946. *novel* Raymond Chandler *w* William Faulkner, Leigh Brackett, Jules Furthman *d* Howard Hawks)

READING for today's Examination: *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #7 “Howard Hawks (Masters of the American Cinema)” [Note: “Screwball comedy,” “Action film,” Hawks’s screenwriters—Ben Hecht, William Faulkner]; *America in the Movies*—Chapter V: pp. 97-125 (“The Intrepidation of Dreams”).

EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film.

22 Oct 09. Thematic Proposition: The Myth of Success [“Nice Guys Finish Last (Dead)”]
The Bad and the Beautiful (1952. *story* George Bradshaw *w* Charles Schnee *d* Vincente Minnelli)

READING for today's Examination: *America in the Movies*—Chapter IV: pp. 75-96 (“Nice Guys Finish Last”); *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #3A “The Politics of Compromise in Hollywood.”

EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film.

29 Oct 09. Thematic Proposition: The Myth of Success—What Makes Sammy Run?
Film Extracts

READING for today's Examination: Entire novel—*What Makes Sammy Run?* by Budd Schulberg

EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this novel and the content of the film extracts.

5 Nov 09. AMERICA AMERICA: The Cinema of Elia Kazan
Streetcar Named Desire (1951. *play* Tennessee Williams *w* Oscar Saul, Tennessee Williams *d* Elia Kazan)

READING for today's Examination: *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #8 “Elia Kazan (Masters of the American Cinema)” [Note: “Marxism,” Evolution of “the Method,” “Blacklist”]; *America in the Movies*—Chapter III: pp. 51-74 (“The Blame on Mame”).

EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film.

12 Nov 09. FILMS OF CONSCIENCE: The Cinema of Fred Zinnemann
From Here to Eternity (1953. *novel* James Jones *w* Daniel Taradash *d* Fred Zinnemann)

READING for today's Examination: *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #9 “Fred Zinnemann (Masters of the American Cinema)” [Note: “Social Realism”].

EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film.

19 Nov 09. THE THRILL OF DISCOVERY: The Cinema of Robert Altman
Gosford Park (2001. *story* Robert Altman, Bob Balaban *w* Julian Fellowes *d* Robert Altman)

READING for Examination: *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #10 “Robert Altman (Masters of the American Cinema)” [Note: “Modernism,” “Aleatory Structure”].

EXAMINATION=> Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film.

3 Dec 09. PARADISE LOST: The Cinema of Stanley Kubrick
Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964. *novel* Peter George *w* Stanley Kubrick, Terry Southern, Peter George *d* Stanley Kubrick)

READING for today's Examinations: *History of American Cinema: Readings*—Reading #11 “Stanley Kubrick (Masters of the American Cinema)”; *America in the Movies*—Chapter VI: pp. 126-145 (“Ceremonies of Innocence”).

EXAMINATION => Post-Screening EXAMINATION on this reading material and the content of the film.

GRADING POLICY

The final course grade will be determined by selecting the best scores achieved from the following assignments:

1. **13 Weekly Examinations**, graded with the following scale: 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, 59-below = F.
2. **Attendance at the Cinematheque Events.** Attendance at **five additional** events or screenings at the Cinematheque (at the Alan and Elaine Armer Theater, Manzanita Hall 100) during the current season has an extra-credit or make-up examination benefit. For a schedule of all Cinematheque screenings: www.cinematheque.csun.edu => “Monthly Screening Schedules”

***EXTRA-CREDIT POLICY:** Attendance at *five* Cinematheque events will permit the dropping of the two lowest weekly examination score—*excluding* the *What Makes Sammy Run?* examination, which must be taken and counted. **There are NO make-up examinations.** Therefore, if an examination is missed, the additional five Cinematheque screenings necessarily become the essential mechanism to compensate for that missed examination; otherwise, a “zero” for the missed examination will be calculated into the final course grade. (Attendance will be scrupulously taken on these occasions. Be sure to sign the attendance sheet.) ***IN ADDITION:** all students availing themselves of the extra-credit option must submit—on the date that the final examination has been scheduled (or before)—a listing of the five screenings attended; so carefully keep a log of these screenings throughout the semester.

A SIDEBAR ON GRADING. The final course grade (plus/minus evaluation) is based on the quantity of grade-appropriate work successfully completed. The instructor is intensely aware of the minimum “C” requirement for one’s continuation in the CTVA major. Much contentious discussion usually ensues when one is awarded a “C-” in the course—including a supplication to roll the grade over into the “C” category, since surely this has been a close call and why not give the benefit of the doubt in the spirit of humanistic charity anyway? In actual fact, the granting of the “C-” has already been the result of scrupulous deliberation and humanistic charity, and has already received the benefit of the doubt in order to protect the student from an even lower grade. Please do not petition to have a “C-” grade raised to a “C”.

TOPICS FOR OPTIONAL EXTRA CREDIT CRITICAL ESSAYS

The following are OPTIONAL extra credit assignments. If undertaken, the resulting critical essays must conform to the following guidelines:

Critical essay topics or theses must be selected from the following list. The analytical emphasis of the critical papers—*five to seven pages in length*—must focus on the syllabus films screened in class. The *rigid* deadline for the submission of the essays to the CTVA office (MZ195) is **10 December 2009**, but early submissions will be able to take advantage of a revision policy that allows for re-writing.

Masters of American Cinema TOPICS. All of the following critical essay topics *require* the quotation from and the integration of relevant concepts from *The Masters of American Cinema* readings as the context for the discussion of each topic. A knowledge and implementation of the *assigned reading*—not of additional or extraneous research material—must be demonstrated in your essays. The syllabus film being discussed must be analyzed in specific, concrete detail. Avoid generalities.

1. *The Cinema of Ernst Lubitsch.* Identify, explain, and discuss those elements, aspects, or components of *One Hour with You* (1932) that manifest or demonstrate those concepts discussed and defined in the reading as “The Lubitsch Touch,” “The Comedy of Manners and the French Well-Made Play,” and “The Lubitsch Heroine.”
2. *The Cinema of Frank Capra.* Identify, explain, and discuss those elements, aspects, or components of *It Happened One Night* (1934) that manifest or demonstrate those concepts discussed and defined in the reading as “The Populist Ethic” and “The Capra Hero.”
3. *The Cinema of John Ford.* Identify, explain, and discuss those elements, aspects, or components of *The Long Voyage Home* (1940) that manifest or demonstrate those concepts discussed and defined in the reading as “Ford the Stylist.”
4. *The Cinema of Fritz Lang.* Identify, explain, and discuss those elements, aspects, or components of *M* (1931) that manifest or demonstrate those concepts discussed and defined in the reading as “German Expressionism,” “The Crime Melodrama and Film Noir,” and “Lang the Stylist.”

5. *The Cinema of Elia Kazan*. Identify, explain, and discuss those elements, aspects, or components of *Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) that manifest or demonstrate those concepts discussed and defined in the reading as “Individual vs. Society” and “The Method.”

6. *The Cinema of Fred Zinnemann*. Identify, explain, and discuss those elements, aspects, or components of *From Here to Eternity* (1953) that manifest or demonstrate those concepts discussed and defined in the reading as “Social Realism,” “Individualism Reconsidered,” “Character as Fate,” and “The Zinnemann Heroine.”

7. *The Cinema of Robert Altman*. Identify, explain, and discuss those elements, aspects, or components of *Gosford Park* (2001) that manifest or demonstrate those concepts discussed and defined in the reading as “The Modernist Sensibility,” “Environments and Behaviors,” and “Chance Structures.”

America in the Movies TOPICS. All of the following critical essay topics *require* the quotation from and the integration of relevant concepts from Michael Wood’s *America in the Movies* as the context for the discussion of each topic. A knowledge and implementation of the *assigned reading*—not of additional or extraneous research material—must be demonstrated in your essays. The syllabus film being discussed must be analyzed in specific, concrete detail. Avoid generalities.

8. **Define** the so-called “individualist/existential” theme as manifested in selected films screened in class. The ideas engaged in this essay would be compatible with the “charms of isolation” concept developed in Michael Wood’s “America First” chapter in *America in the Movies*.

9. **Discuss** *What Makes Sammy Run?* (novel) **or** *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952, film) within the context of the thematic assumptions of Michael Wood’s “Nice Guys Finish Last” (Chapter IV, *America in the Movies*).

10. **Analyze** *The Big Sleep* (1946) within the context of Michael Wood’s “Intrepidation of Dreams” (Chapter V, *America in the Movies*). Discuss the film in such a way that you specifically demonstrate, through concrete filmic examples, an understanding of the attributes, sensibilities, and ideology of the *film noir* genre.

11. **Analyze** *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964) from the perspective of confirming or denying Michael Wood’s assertions in “Ceremonies of Innocence” (Chapter VI, *America in the Movies*) regarding Hollywood’s attempts to “provide a text in social history.”

12. **Employing** criteria from the reading and from those discussed in class that define the concepts or approaches of the so-called classic studio era of the American cinema, discuss those which have endured and proved valid (or those which have *not* endured and which have *not* proved valid) for the contemporary Hollywood cinema of the 2000s. All assertions and conclusions must be supported by specific film examples. (For this topic, film examples that have not been screened in class—obviously those made in the 2000s—may be used.)

Directions and Philosophy for the Critical Essays. Students should write often in a film analysis course. Writing helps all viewers to figure out what they know and don’t know. It is unlikely any person would be able to analyze any film in depth without writing. *Writing is thinking*. Deficiencies in one’s writing—which traduce the rules of usage, the elementary principles of composition, word choice, or style—will have a harmful effect on the course grade. The qualities of good writing—which reflect the guidelines of, for example, *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk and E.B. White; or *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* by Timothy Corrigan—are essential to a positive class achievement.

These essays could be conceived as both reading and viewing assignments; i.e., the papers should serve equally to demonstrate as careful an examination of the reading material as they do a close scrutiny of the film text. This can be accomplished by *quoting* from assigned reading and citing concepts—by author, primary source (plays, novels), essay titles, page numbers—and connecting these concepts to specific moments and situations in a film(s), or relating them to a particular thesis which you have created to explore a specific interdisciplinary theme.

Note on *plagiarism*. Be sure to acknowledge any material that is not your own. Verbatim quotations are to be enclosed within quotation marks. Plagiarism is more than simply taking the *words* of others and presenting them as your own; it is also taking the *ideas* of others and presenting them as your own. If you use another author’s words or ideas, you must cite the source in the paper.

ESSENTIAL PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE WRITING OF PAPERS

- Each paper will be *typed and double-spaced—and of sufficient length, typically four to six pages*—to defend and support, with intellectual cogency and research integrity, the thesis statement asserted.
- The essays will be evaluated on the basis of clarity, logic, and organization. Identify all *research material* (the use of which is encouraged) by appropriate quotation marks and citation of sources. All statements of substance must be supported by concrete, explicit illustrations from the films under discussion. Avoid generalities. (See extended Grading Criteria below.)
- Keep a protection copy of all papers submitted.
- Do not use binders or covers or other extraneous wrapping; simply staple the typed pages in the upper left-hand corner.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR THE TAKE-HOME ESSAY QUESTIONS AND CRITICAL PAPERS

The felicities of individual writing style will always influence the final, subjective judgment, but the following are general CRITERIA relevant to an evaluation of the essays:

“A” & “B” PAPERS

Substantially exceeds minimum standards: it is clear from the structure and development of the essay that the ultimate number of pages produced is the result of a logical pursuit of an explicit thesis that has been

defended and supported by documented evidence, and not the result of a literal observance of the minimum specified requirements.

Characteristics: copious quotations from the reading, complete and lucid definition of terms, extended and logical development of themes and ideas under scrutiny, consistent use of detailed examples from the films or works under discussion, abundant evidence that the reading is being integrated and supplementary research sources are being employed--a rich, extended, textured, and nuanced presentation.

"C" PAPER

Meets minimum standards: a passing, acceptably competent fulfillment of the assignment.

Characteristics: spare quotations, limited employment of the reading assignment, abbreviated definition of terms, superficial development of themes or concepts, skeletal discussion of allied topics or implications, little documentation or support of generalities or assertions through the use of examples from the films or works under discussion, no indication that additional reading was accomplished or research sources were consulted, a generally thin and barren presentation.

"N/A" [not acceptable]

Does not satisfy minimum class standards: a paper clearly incompatible with literate communication.

Characteristics: extensive and pervasive mechanical, grammatical, spelling, syntactical, structural errors; sloppiness, clearly no attempt at proofreading or revision; non-responsiveness to the content, directions, or guideline requirements of the assignment.

NOTES: Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services agreement each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. Students who are approved for test taking accommodations must provide a proctor form to their faculty member signed by a counselor in the Center on Disabilities prior to making testing arrangements. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110. Staff can be reached at (818) 677-2684.

Screening Policy. The Armer Theater and the CSUN Cinematheque observe the protocols and the aesthetic standards of institutions worldwide devoted to film studies by not altering the visual nature and presentation of the original work of art. Accordingly, films are screened without close-captioning or artificially imposed visual material; without enhanced lighting for sign language. Accommodation for those who need it will be provided by making available to them a DVD of the required title for separate viewing.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- The ability to identify, define, and apply major critical methodologies to specific film texts;
 - The ability to identify and discuss thematic and business patterns in the American motion picture industry;
 - The ability to understand and apply traditional literary terms and concepts to relevant filmic moments and dramaturgical situations;
 - The ability to formulate concrete thesis statements and paragraphs, as part of an overall construction of an essay of "academic criticism," as defined by criteria in the course syllabus;
- The capacity to relate to and recognize social patterns and historical continuities in the specific film texts screened as part of the course syllabus and the Cinematheque program.