

AH 390.01 History of Film  
Fall 2017  
Tuesdays 1:00–3:45pm  
Parkway 200  
3 credits

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Office and hours: Parkway Theatre before and after class, and by appointment.  
GTI: Daniel Helfer (dhelfer@mica.edu)

### Course Description

An overview of film history. Among the topics covered are the prehistory of cinema in the 19th century; the early emergence of narrative and documentary forms; the growth of silent film as a popular art form; the influence of Soviet montage and German expressionism; the conversion to sound cinema; the rise of such movements as the French New Wave, the American avant-garde, and revitalized Asian cinema; and such contemporary trends as “indie” cinema, digital filmmaking, and computer animation.

### Course Objectives

- Students will sharpen their critical skills through intensive study of historically important films and careful reading of books and essays on the history and theory of international cinema.
- Students will cultivate skills for discerning major themes, ideas, and tropes of modern visual and verbal expression through the analysis of paradigmatic moving-image works and discussion of related historical, theoretical, and critical texts.
- Students will learn to integrate different modes of understanding related to modern artistic phenomena—historical, sociological, psychological—and will acquire proficiency in bringing these to bear on cinematic and critical texts.
- Students will further their ability to communicate ideas and opinions cogently and effectively in both written and spoken form.

### Required Books

Wheeler Winston Dixon. *Short History of Film*, 2nd Ed. Rutgers University Press, 2013.

Richard Schickel. *Double Indemnity*. British Film Institute, 1992.

James Baldwin. *The Devil Finds Work*. Vintage International, 2011.

\* Additional readings are available on Canvas if a link is not already provided in the schedule.

### Course Requirements

- Attendance and participation (20%)
- Response papers, 1–2 pages each (25%)
- Quizzes (20%)
- Final paper, 8–10 pages (35%)

## **Attendance and Participation**

Students must be on time to all classes and are responsible for any classes missed. Attendance will be taken at the end of each class. I will return films to the Decker Library after each class, and you will be expected to catch up on any material missed, though there will be no make-up quizzes. You are permitted two unexcused absences, no questions asked, after which, the third absence will result in a full letter grade reduction from the final grade, and the fourth absence will result in failing the class. Students who cannot regularly attend the class sessions should drop the course. Participation predominately involves in-class discussion of films and readings.

## **Response Papers**

The response papers are due in phases, with one paper due roughly every three weeks. You can choose to respond to any of the three weeks in each phase, but the paper must be submitted after the screening and by 5 p.m. on Friday of the chosen week. The deadlines for the papers are as follows:

- Weeks 1–3: September 15
- Weeks 4–6: October 6
- Weeks 7–9: November 3
- Weeks 10–12: November 17
- Weeks 12–15: December 8

Response papers should be treated as semiformal and should be typed, double spaced, with 12-point font, 1-inch margins, and submitted via Canvas as a Word or text file. Your writing style and voice should also reflect serious engagement with the readings and screenings. For each week, I have included additional readings that I encourage you to read and include in your response, though this is not required. I will grade your responses and return them by the following class period.

## **Quizzes**

There will be six unannounced quizzes throughout the semester, each with four questions focusing on the readings. This means that each question will be worth one percent of the final grade, so please do take the readings seriously and be prepared for class. The lowest score among the six quizzes will be dropped.

## **Final Paper**

Throughout the semester we will be reading a number of primary sources in the form of manifestos and other calls to influence, alter, and expand film style. For the final paper, you will be asked to craft your own manifesto, as it were, using at least two film movements or approaches discussed in class as exemplars or foils for your chosen approach to film form, style, or politics. No additional research is necessary, but I do encourage you to take a look at the additional, recommended readings for your chosen topics. Your paper should do more than simply advocate—and it will need to in order to reach the required 8–10 pages: it should analyze, evaluate, critique, compare, contextualize, and argue. The first part of the assignment will be a 1-page proposal due on November 21 on Canvas before class. The complete paper will be due on Canvas by 5 p.m. on Friday, December 15.

## Schedule

### Week 1: 8/29 Early Cinema, Variety Programs, and "Life"

#### Reading

- Dixon and Foster, "The Invention of the Movies," 1–21.
- Further reading and research: Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde"; Guy-Blaché, "Women's Place in Photoplay Production" (1914); Prikryl, "Alice's Wonderlands: On Alice Guy Blaché" <https://www.thenation.com/article/alices-wonderlands-alice-guy-blache/>

#### Screening

- Edison films: *Dickson Experimental Sound Film* (W. K. L. Dickson & William Heise, USA, 1894, 17s); *The Kiss* (Heise, USA, 1896, 18s); *Serpentine Dances* (Heise, USA, 1895, 45s); *Sandow* (Dickson & Heise, USA, 1896, 38s); *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, USA, 1903, 11m)
- Lumière films: *La Sortie des usines Lumière [Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory]* (Louis Lumière, France, 1895, 46s); *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat [The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat]* (1896, 50s); *Repas de bébé [Baby's Dinner]* (1895, 45s); *L'Arroseur arrosé [The Sprinkler Sprinkled]* (1895, 45s)
- "Star" films: *Le Voyage dans la lune [A Trip to the Moon]* (Georges Méliès, France, 1902, 15m)
- Gaumont films: *La Course à la saucisse [The Race for the Sausage]* (Alice Guy, France, 1907, 4m) *Le Récit du colonel [The Colonel's Account]* (Louis Feuillade, France, 1907, 4m)
- Pathé color stencil films: *Eccentric Waltz* (1903, France, 2m); *Le Faune* (1908, France, 4m)
- Animation: *Miest Kinomatograficheskovo Operatora [The Cameraman's Revenge]* (Ladislav Starevich, Russia, 1912, 13m)

**Discussion:** prehistory of cinema; camera technology; spectacle; astonishment; early trick films; reproducing "life"; the Skladanowsky brothers' Bioscop films

### Week 2: 9/5 US Film Industry, First Feature Films, and Silent Comedy

#### Reading

- Dixon and Foster, "The Birth of an American Industry," 22–52
- Further reading and research: Sklar, "Chaos, Magic, Physical Genius, and the Art of Silent Comedy," 104–121; Chaplin, "A Rejection of the Talkies" (1931)

#### Screening

- Thrillers and crime dramas: *The Lonely Villa* (D. W. Griffith, USA, 1909, 8m); *Suspense* (Phillips Smalley & Lois Weber, USA, 1913, 10m)
- Comedy: clips from Mack Sennett and Harold Lloyd; *Easy Street* (Charlie Chaplin, USA, 1918, 19m); *Sherlock Jr.* (Buster Keaton, USA, 1924, 45m)

**Discussion:** industry consolidation; silent comedy; important film producers: The Biograph Company, Keystone Film Company, Hal Roach Studios; formation of the major studios: Universal Pictures, Paramount Pictures, Fox Film Corporation, United Artists, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

### Week 3: 9/12 First European Avant-Gardes

#### Reading

- Dixon and Foster, "Early French Cinema," 53–65; "Early German Film, 78–85
- Marinetti et al., "The Futurist Cinema" (1916); Dulac, "Aesthetics, Objects, Integral Cinégraphie" (1926); Buñuel, "Preface: *Un Chien Andalou*" (1928); recommended: The Surrealist Group, "Manifesto of the Surrealists Concerning *L'Age D'Or*" (1930)

### **Screening**

- Italian Futurism: clips from *Thais* (Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Italy, 1917, 35m)
- German Expressionism: clips from *The Student of Prague* (Paul Wegener, Germany, 1913, 83m); *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, Germany, 1920, 75m); *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, Germany, 1922, 84m)
- French Impressionism: *La Souriante Madame Beudet* [*The Smiling Madame Beudet*] (Germaine Dulac, France, 1923, 26m)
- Dadaism: *Entr'acte* (René Clair, France, 1924, 22m); *Ballet Mécanique* (Fernand Léger & Dudley Murphy, France, 1924, 19m); *Anemic Cinema* (Marcel Duchamp, France, 1926, 7m)
- Surrealism: *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel, France, 1929, 21m)

**Discussion:** cinema as an art form; the lost films of futurism; Griffith's influence; experimentation with mise-en-scène; *photogénie*, cinematic *trucages*

FIRST RESPONSE PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN 5 P.M. ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

### **Week 4: 9/19 Soviet Montage**

#### **Reading**

- Dixon and Foster, "Russia," 70–78
- Vertov, "We: Variant of a Manifesto" (1922), "The Birth of Kino-Eye" (1924); Eisenstein, "Beyond the Shot" (1929); Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov, "A Statement on Sound" (1928)

#### **Screening**

- Clips from *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, USSR, 1925, 75m); *October: Ten Days That Shook the World* (Eisenstein, USSR, 1928, 104m); *Zemlya [Earth]* (Alexander Dovzhenko, USSR, 1930, 26m)
- *Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, USSR, 1929, 68m)

**Discussion:** the Kuleshov effect; Eisenstein's theory of montage of attractions; the Odessa steps sequence; Dovzhenko's rhythmic montage; Vertov's *Kino-Pravda*, *Cine-Eye*, and influence on later documentary realism and *cinéma vérité*

### **Week 5: 9/26 Classical Hollywood Cinema**

#### **Reading**

- Dixon and Foster, 89–136; *Trouble in Paradise* PCA files
- Further reading and research: MPPDA Motion Picture Production Code; Mashon and Bell, "Pre-Code: Hollywood Before the Censors" <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/deep-focus/pre-code-hollywood>; Mayer, "Dorothy Arzner: Queen of Hollywood," <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/dorothy-arzner-queen-hollywood>

#### **Screening**

- Clips from *Sunrise* (F. W. Murnau, USA, 1927, 95m); *Baby Face* (Alfred E. Green, USA, 1933, 71m); *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, USA, 1932, 93m)
- *Trouble in Paradise* (Ernst Lubitsch, USA, 1932, 82m)

**Discussion:** the coming of sound; the studio system; the star system; the Production Code Administration (PCA); PCA files for *Trouble in Paradise*; fallen woman films; gangster cycle

### **Week 6: 10/3 French Poetic Realism and Film Noir**

#### **Reading**

- Schickel, *Double Indemnity*, 9–68

- Further reading and research: “How the French Birthed Film Noir” <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/deep-focus/french-film-noir>

**Screening**

- Clips from *Port of Shadows* (Marcel Carné, France, 1938, 91m)
- *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, USA, 1944, 107m)

**Discussion:** film genre; continuity editing system; three-point lighting system; chiaroscuro lighting

SECOND RESPONSE PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN 5 P.M. ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6

**Week 7: 10/10 War Documentary and Italian Neorealism**

**Reading**

- Dixon and Foster, *Documentary*, 152–153; *Germany and Italy*, 153–161; *Soviet Wartime Cinema*, 162–163; *Italian Neorealism*, 168–170
- Further reading and research: “The Roots of Neorealism” <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/deep-focus/roots-neorealism>

**Screening**

- Propaganda films: clips from *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, Germany, 1935, 120m); *Why We Fight: Prelude to War* (Frank Capra, USA, 1942, 52m)
- War newsreels: *German Troops March Into Austria* (British Pathé, UK, 1938, 2m); *Monster Victory Parade Cheered by 2,500,000 in New York* (Movietone News, USA, 1945, 2m)
- Rossellini’s war trilogy: *Paisan* (Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1946), episode 1, 25m; clips from *Rome Open City* (1945) and *Germany Year Zero* (1948)
- Postwar documentary: clip from *Le sang des bêtes* [*Blood of the Beasts*] (Georges Franju, France, 1949, 20m); *Nuit et brouillard* [*Night and Fog*] (Alain Resnais, France, 1956, 32m)

**Discussion:** expository documentary; handheld cameras; new microphones and tape recorders; nonprofessional actors; on-location shooting

10/17 NO CLASS—FALL BREAK

**Week 8: 10/24 Postwar Art Cinema**

**Reading**

- Dixon and Foster, “Japanese Filmmakers During World War II,” 161–162; “Postwar Challenges to the Movies,” 170–173, 178–187; “Japan,” 203–206

**Screening**

- Clips from *And God Created Woman* (Roger Vadim, France, 1956, 95m); *The Seventh Seal* (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1957, 96m); *Rashomon* (Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1950, 88m); *Tokyo Story* (Yasujirō Ozu, Japan, 1953, 136m)
- *Ugetsu* (Kenji Mizoguchi, Japan, 1953, 94m)

**Lecture:** Dan Helfer on camera movement and emotion

**Discussion:** the Paramount decision; the Blacklist; youth films; influx of foreign films to US market; changing standards of sex and violence; European art film directors; postwar Japanese cinema

**Week 9: 10/31 The French New Wave and Left Bank Cinema**

**Reading**

- Dixon and Foster, “France,” 225–233, “The French New Wave,” 239–255; “The Auteur Theory,” 187–195

- François Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" (1954); Jean-Luc Godard, "Le mépris" (1963), from *Godard on Godard*
- Further reading and research: Andrew Sarris "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962"; Pauline Kael, "Circles and Squares"; Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Critical Distance [On *Contempt*]" <https://www.jonathanrosenbaum.net/2017/07/critical-distance/>

### **Screening**

- Clips from *Les quatre cents coups* [*The 400 Blows*] (François Truffaut, France, 1959, 99m); *À bout de souffle* [*Breathless*] (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1960, 90m); *Cléo de 5 à 7* [*Cléo from 5 to 7*] (Agnès Varda, France/Italy, 1962, 90m)
- *Le mépris* [*Contempt*] (Jean-Luc Godard, France/Italy, 1964, 101m)

**Discussion:** *Cahiers du cinéma*; rejection of the "cinema of quality"; jump cuts; influence from US directors: Ford, Hawks, Hitchcock; breakdown of the PCA; international coproductions; auteur theory

THIRD RESPONSE PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN 5 P.M. ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3

## **Week 10: 11/7 Third Cinema**

### **Reading**

- Dixon and Foster, "Latin America and Cinema Novo," 291–293; "Africa," 299–301
- Solanas and Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World" (1969); Hondo, "What Is the Cinema for Us?" (1979)

### **Screening**

- Clips from *Touki Bouki* (Djibril Diop Mambéty, Senegal, 1972); *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968); Primary (60 min.)
- *The Battle of Chile, Part 1: The Insurrection of the Bourgeoisie* (Patricio Guzmán, Chile, 1975, 96m)

**Discussion:** third cinema; history of political cinema; cinéma vérité; direct cinema

## **Week 11: 11/14 Black American Cinema**

### **Reading**

- James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work*
- Further reading and research: Feminists in the Media, "Womanifesto" (1975); bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators"

### **Screening**

- *Killer of Sheep* (Charles Burnett, USA, 1978, 80m)
- *Illusions* (Julie Dash, USA, 1982, 30m)

**Discussion:** Oscar Micheaux, Sidney Poitier; Melvin Van Peebles; Blaxploitation; Spike Lee

FOURTH RESPONSE PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN 5 P.M. ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17

## **Week 12: 11/21 Hong Kong Cinema**

### **Reading**

- Dixon and Foster, "The Asian Action Film," "Taiwan," and "The Fifth Generation in China," 336–339
- Further reading and research: Bordwell, "All Too Extravagant, Too Gratuitously Wild," 1–17, and "Enough to Make Strong Men Weep: John Woo," 98–105, from *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment*
- Peter Brunette, "In the Mood for Love," from *Wong Kar-wai*

### **Screening**

- *A Better Tomorrow* (John Woo, Hong Kong, 1986, 95m)
- Clips from *In the Mood for Love* (Wong Kar-Wai, Hong Kong, 2000, 98 m)

**Discussion:** history of Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and mainland Chinese cinemas; popular cinema as art

FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE BEFORE CLASS ON NOVEMBER 21  
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY, NOVEMBER 22–26

### **Week 13: 11/28 Dogme '95 and the "Death of Cinema"**

#### **Reading**

- Dixon and Foster, "The Dogme Movement," 348–350
- Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, "Dogme '95 Manifesto and Vow of Chastity" (1995)
- Further reading and research: Smail, "The Male Sojourner, the Female Director, and Popular European Cinema: The Worlds of Susanne Bier"

#### **Screening**

- *Open Hearts* (Susanne Bier, Denmark, 2002, 104m)

**Discussion:** historical context of Dogme; centenary of cinema; digital cinema; end of cinema debates

### **Week 14: 12/5 Film and Popular Music**

#### **Reading**

- Dixon and Foster, "England," 316–319
- Knight and Wojcik, "Overture," from *Soundtrack Available: Essays on Film and Popular Music*, 1–5; Bute, "Light\*Form\*Movement\*Sound" (1941)
- Further reading and research: Johnson, "Perverse Angle: Feminist Film, Queer Film, Shame"

#### **Screening**

- Music videos from Lacey Duke and Diane Martell
- *Morvern Callar* (Lynne Ramsay, UK/Canada, 2002, 97m)

**Discussion:** contemporary British film; the long history of pop music and film: Edison's phonograph and kinetoscope parlors, popular sheet music in the silent era, Hollywood musicals, pop music documentaries of the 1960s, hip hop in Spike Lee's films

FIFTH RESPONSE PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN 5 P.M. ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

### **Week 15: 12/12 Slow Cinema**

#### **Reading**

- Recommended: Flanagan, "Towards an Aesthetic of Slow in Contemporary Cinema" [http://www.16-9.dk/2008-11/side11\\_inenglish.htm](http://www.16-9.dk/2008-11/side11_inenglish.htm); Daly and Le Cain, "Waiting for the Prince—An Interview with Béla Tarr" <http://sensesofcinema.com/2001/feature-articles/tarr-2/>
- Further reading and research: "The Tarkovsky Legacy" <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/deep-focus/tarkovsky-legacy>

#### **Screening**

- *Werckmeister Harmonies* (Béla Tarr & Ágnes Hranitzky, Hungary, 2000, 145m)

**Discussion:** cinematics; contemporary fast cinema; slow auteurs: Michelangelo Antonioni, Chantal Ackerman, Andrei Tarkovsky, Jia Zhangke

FINAL PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN 5 P.M. ON FRIDAY DECEMBER 15

## Academic Policy Statements

### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Learning Resource Center at 410-225-2416, in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations.

### **Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)**

Students are responsible to follow health and safety guidelines relevant to their individual activities, processes, and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan and attend EHS training. Students are required to purchase personal protection equipment appropriate for their major or class. Those students who do not have the proper personal protection equipment will not be permitted to attend class until safe measures and personal protection are in place.

### **Plagiarism**

Each discipline within the arts has specific and appropriate means for students to cite or acknowledge sources and the ideas and material of others used in their own work. Students have the responsibility to become familiar with such processes and to carefully follow their use in developing original work.

*Policy.* MICA will not tolerate plagiarism, which is defined as claiming authorship of, or using someone else's ideas or work without proper acknowledgement. Without proper attribution, a student may NOT replicate another's work, paraphrase another's ideas, or appropriate images in a manner that violates the specific rules against plagiarism in the student's department. In addition, students may not submit the same work for credit in more than one course without the explicit approval of all of the instructors of the courses involved.

*Consequences.* When an instructor has evidence that a student has plagiarized work submitted for course credit, the instructor will confront the student and impose penalties that may include failing the course. In the case of a serious violation or repeated infractions from the same student, the instructor will report the infractions to the department chair or program director. Depending on the circumstances of the case, the department chair or program director may then report the student to the appropriate dean or provost, who may choose to impose further penalties, including expulsion.

*Appeal process.* Students who are penalized by an instructor or department for committing plagiarism have the right to appeal the charge and penalties that ensue. Within three weeks of institutional action, the student must submit a letter of appeal to the department chairperson or program director, or relevant dean or provost related to the course for which actions were taken. The academic officer will assign three members of the relevant department/division to serve on a review panel. The panel will meet with the student and the instructor of record and will review all relevant and available materials. The panel will determine whether or not to confirm the charge and penalties. The findings of the panel are final. The panel will notify the instructor, the chairperson, division, the student, and the Office of Academic Affairs of their findings and any recommendations for change in penalties.

### **Title IX Notification**

Maryland Institute College of Art seeks to provide an educational environment based on mutual respect that is free from discrimination and harassment. If you have encountered sexual harassment/misconduct/assault, please know that there are multiple ways to report it and you are



encouraged to do so ([www.mica.edu/equal\\_opportunity](http://www.mica.edu/equal_opportunity)). Additionally, in order to meet our commitments to equity and to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, faculty and staff members are required to report disclosures of sexual violence made to them by students, except when prior notice regarding a specific classroom assignment or discussion is provided. If you require academic accommodations due to an incident involving sexual harassment or discrimination, please contact Student Affairs at 410.225.2422 or Human Resources at 410.225.2363.

**Students with Extended Illness or Cause for Legitimate**

Absence In the case of extended illness or other absences that may keep the student from attending a class for more than three meetings, undergraduate students must contact the Student Development Specialist in the Division of Student Affairs. The Student Development Specialist will then work with the student to determine the cause and appropriateness of the absences and subsequently notify instructors as necessary. Graduate students must contact the instructor, program director, and the Office of Graduate Studies. Students in art education or professional studies programs must contact the Dean for the Center for Art Education or the Associate Dean for Open Studies, respectively. The appropriate administrator will facilitate a conversation with relevant faculty to determine whether the student can achieve satisfactory academic progress, which is ultimately at the sole discretion of the faculty member.