

Catherine Jurca
Office: 311 Dabney
cjurca@hss.caltech.edu

En/F 160b
Introduction to Classical Hollywood Film: 1940 - 1957

This course explores Hollywood films and filmmaking during a tumultuous period in the film industry's history, from the last days of the Depression, through the extraordinary boom of World War II, to the postwar bust and decline of the studio system. It covers some of the basic techniques and vocabulary of film analysis, as we learn to think of films as texts with distinctive formal properties. We also consider general strategies of filmmaking at a time when the ever-changing domestic and world situation made the movie-going public's tastes and needs less predictable than ever. Topics include: the star system; the emergence and evolution of particular genres (the combat film, film noir, the social problem film); the disappearance of the postwar audience; the Cold War. At the end of the course students can expect to have acquired an understanding of how a significant body of films functioned as both commercial and aesthetic artifacts and a sense of their place in American culture during the "Golden Age" of Hollywood.

Jan 6	Introduction A Brief History of Hollywood and Basics of Film Analysis
Jan 8	Depression Redux The Grapes of Wrath (1940)
Jan 13	Just Entertainment? Sullivan's Travels (1941) 600-word paper due in class
Jan 15	Citizen Kane (1941)
Jan 20	Hollywood Goes to War Casablanca (1942)
Jan 22	Bataan (1943) 600-word paper due in class
Jan 27	Mrs. Miniver (1942)
Feb 3	Film Noir Double Indemnity (1944)
Feb 5	The Big Sleep (1946)
	Reconversion

Feb 10	Mildred Pierce (1945)
Feb 12	Best Years of Our Lives (1946)
Feb 16	1400-word paper due at noon
Feb 17	Gentleman's Agreement (1947)
Feb 19	Hollywood Looks at Itself Sunset Boulevard (1950)
Feb 24	Singin' in the Rain (1952)
Feb 26	Hollywood and the Cold War On the Waterfront (1954)
March 3	Hollywood Independents The Sweet Smell of Success (1957)
March 5	A Face in the Crowd (1957)
March 10	in-class final exam
March 20	1400-word paper due at noon

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance:

Class attendance is mandatory. You will not pass this course if you miss more than three classes. An exception may be made if you are a senior who is interviewing with grad schools or employers. You will need to write an addition 500-word paper for every class you miss over three. You must clear your absences with me in advance. The course will be conducted primarily as a lecture and discussion. As a courtesy to the professor and your classmates, please arrive on time.

Films:

You must watch all films in advance of the class discussion. Two copies of each film are on reserve in Millikan (occasionally additional copies are available in the ASCIT collection). **THEY MUST BE RETURNED TO THE FRONT DESK OF MILLIKAN. DO NOT TAKE THEM TO SHERMAN-FAIRCHILD OR DABNEY. DO NOT DROP THEM IN THE RETURN BIN OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY.**

Please note: Laptops, ipads, etc. are not permitted in class (too much emailing and websurfing...I'm on to you!!).

Grading:

Participation: 15%

Short papers: 15% (these must be turned in on time)

Long papers: 45% (extensions must be requested in advance, no comments)

Final exam: 25%

Please note: You must receive a passing grade on all components of the course to pass.

A WORD ABOUT PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is the wrongful use of another person's ideas by representing them as one's own. Plagiarism occurs when the general thoughts of another person and/or specific sentences and passages from another writer's work are appropriated without proper attribution in the form of a footnote or endnote. Plagiarism applies to unattributed material that is lifted from unpublished as well as published work and material from the internet. Plagiarism is an insult to everything that higher education stands for. Don't do it. No one who has plagiarized a paper has ever passed one of my courses.