Introduction to Classical Hollywood Cinema: the 1930s

Description: This course introduces students to Hollywood films and filmmaking, from the advent of sound film in the late 1920s through the beginning of World War II. It covers basic techniques and vocabulary of film analysis, as we learn to think of films as texts with distinctive formal properties, while attending to the special features of Hollywood filmmaking in particular. Topics covered include: the economic history of the film corporations, the phenomenon of stardom, genre (the musical, melodrama), technical achievements (sound, color), the Production Code, and the impact of the Depression on movies and audiences. At the end of the course students can expect to have acquired an understanding of how a significant body of films functioned as aesthetic, commercial, and cultural artifacts during the “Golden Age” of Hollywood.

Sept 30  Introduction: A Brief History of the American Film Industry

Oct 2    Basics of Film Analysis

Oct 7    The Coming of Sound and the Studio System
         THE JAZZ-SINGER (1927)
         600-word paper due in class

Oct 9    APPLAUSE (1929)

Oct 14   Fallen Women
         POSSESSED (1931)
         600-word paper due in class

Oct 16   RED-HEADED WOMAN (1932)

Oct 21   Warner Bros. and the Forgotten Man
         THE PUBLIC ENEMY (1931)
         600-word paper due in class

Oct 23   42ND STREET (1933)

Oct 28   Creating the Couple in the Era of the Production Code
         THE THIN MAN (1934)
         600-word paper due in class

Oct 30   THE GAY DIVORCEE (1935)

Nov 4    Weepies
         THE LITTLEST REBEL (1935)

Nov 6    STELLA DALLAS (1937)
Nov 11 Hollywood Looks at Its Audience
MAKE WAY FOR TOMORROW (1937)

Nov 13 THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD (1938)

Nov 18 FOUR DAUGHTERS (1938)

Nov 20 This American Life
MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON (1939)

Nov 25 THE WIZARD OF OZ (1939)

Dec 2 and 4 class rescheduled for historic theater tour; in-class exam

Dec 15 1600-word paper due

PLEASE NOTE:

--Class attendance is mandatory. You will not pass this course if you miss more than three classes (this includes the theater tour). The course is conducted primarily as a discussion. Participation accounts for 15% of your grade. As a courtesy to the professor and your classmates, please arrive on time.

--You are responsible for watching movies before the class in which they are to be discussed. Two copies of every film are on reserve at Millikan. THEY MUST BE RETURNED TO THE FRONT DESK OF MILLIKAN. DO NOT RETURN THEM TO SHERMAN-FAIRCHILD OR DABNEY. DO NOT DROP THEM IN THE RETURN BIN OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY.

--Laptops, ipads, etc. are not permitted in class (waaaay too much emailing and websurfing…I’m on to you!!).

--You must complete and receive a passing grade on all written assignments to pass the course.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

Participation: 15%

Four Short Papers: 30% (must be turned in on time)

One Long Paper: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

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. Plagiarized work is handed over to the BOC immediately. No one who has committed plagiarism in one of my courses has passed it.