Please note: (160a is NOT a prerequisite for 160b)

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.

March 29        Introduction
                Hollywood History and Techniques of Film Analysis

March 31       Depression Redux
                The Grapes of Wrath (1940)

April 5         Just Entertainment?
                Sullivan’s Travels (1941)
                600-word paper due

April 7         Citizen Kane (1941)

April 12        Hollywood Goes to War
                Bataan (1943)
                600-word paper due

April 14        Casablanca (1942)

April 19        The Homefront
                Mrs. Miniver (1942)

April 21        Miracle of Morgan’s Creek (1944)

April 26        Film Noir
Double Indemnity (1944)

April 28
The Big Sleep (1946)

May 3
Reconversion
Mildred Pierce (1945)

May 5
Best Years of Our Lives (1946)

May 9
1400-word paper due at noon

May 10
Abnormalcy
Gentleman’s Agreement (1947)

May 12
Pinky (1949)

May 17
A Helluva Town
On the Town (1949)

May 19
Naked City (1948)

May 24
Hollywood Looks at Itself
Sunset Boulevard (1950)

May 26
Singin’ in the Rain (1952)

May 31
Hollywood and the Cold War
On the Waterfront (1954)

June 2
In-class exam

June 6
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. You must watch the film in advance of the class on it or you will be counted as absent even if you attend. 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:
There are mandatory weekly film screenings, time and location t.b.d. Films will also be on reserve in Millikan. 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.
Grading:
   Participation: 10%
   Quizzes: 10%
   Papers: 60%
   Final exam: 20%
Please note: You must receive a passing grade on all papers and the final to pass the course.

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.