

# MJS-2040: AMERICAN CINEMA

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## Cuyahoga Community College

**Viewing: MJS-2040 : American Cinema**

**Board of Trustees:**

March 2018

**Academic Term:**

Fall 2019

**Subject Code**

MJS - Media and Journalism Studies

**Course Number:**

2040

**Title:**

American Cinema

**Catalog Description:**

American film history from its beginnings to the present day. American film as an expression of American society and popular culture. Topics include: classical Hollywood cinema; the studio system; the star; genre studies of the western, comedy, musical, combat films, and film noir; Hollywood in the age of television; the film school generation; and into the 21st century.

**Credit Hour(s):**

3

**Lecture Hour(s):**

3

## Requisites

**Prerequisite and Corequisite**

ENG-1010 College Composition I or ENG-101H Honors College Composition I.

## Outcomes

**Course Outcome(s):**

Analyze classic films to determine the genre of the film, providing specific examples from the film that meet the characteristics of the specified genre, identifying elements of classical Hollywood cinema style, and discussing how American social and cultural tensions are expressed in the film.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

Written Communication: Demonstrate effective written communication for an intended audience that follows genre/disciplinary conventions that reflect clarity, organization, and editing skills.

**Objective(s):**

1. Discuss Hollywood film as popular culture, including the economics of this art form.
2. Examine the role of genre in American film history and recognize how popular genres express American social and cultural tensions.
3. Recognize elements of classical Hollywood cinema style.
4. Describe the Hollywood studio system.
5. Analyze the star as it relates to American film.
6. Compare and contrast the characteristics of various film genres such as the western, American comedy, the musical, war films, film noir and/or others.

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**Course Outcome(s):**

Analyze the history of American film, including comparing classical Hollywood style to modern trends, and evaluating the impact of television and the film school generation on the film industry.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

Written Communication: Demonstrate effective written communication for an intended audience that follows genre/disciplinary conventions that reflect clarity, organization, and editing skills.

**Objective(s):**

1. Examine film during the transitional period of the 1960s and early 1970s, when the film school generation became a prominent force in making movies.
  2. Examine American film history from its beginning to the present day.
  3. Compare and contrast classical Hollywood style today, recent and current filmmakers, and trends in the 21st century.
  4. Discuss Hollywood's response during the age of television.
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**Methods of Evaluation:**

1. Discussions
2. Written Film Reviews (Film Criticism Writing)
3. Film Viewing and Structural Analysis
4. Exams/Quizzes
5. Participation
6. Academic Research Paper

**Course Content Outline:**

1. Emergence of Cinema in America
  - a. Developing systems: society and technology
  - b. Mass Production, mass consumption
  - c. Spectacle and storytelling: from Porter to Griffith
  - d. Presenting the Movie Palace
2. Narration
  - a. National style
  - b. Equilibrium and disruption
  - c. Characters and goals
  - d. High artifice, invisible art
  - e. Circular pattern
  - f. Journey to a new place
  - g. Modernist narration
  - h. Segmentation
  - i. Other nontraditional narratives
3. Cinematic Style
  - a. Film form and character development
  - b. Mis-en-scene
  - c. The camera
  - d. Lighting
  - e. Sound
  - f. Editing from scene to scene
  - g. Editing within scenes
4. Studio System in the U.S.
  - a. Manufacturing dreams
  - b. Majors and Minors
  - c. Studio production: story idea to ad campaign
  - d. Studio style
  - e. Collapse: the end of the studio era
5. Star System in Film Industry
  - a. Mechanics of stardom
  - b. Star and culture: a historical survey
6. Silent Melodrama
  - a. Origins
  - b. Types
  - c. Social vision
  - d. Griffith and Vidor

- e. Escape and Transcendence
- f. Sound and Melodrama
- 7. Musical
  - a. Narrative to Musical Number
  - b. Integration of Narrative and Musical Number
  - c. Musical forms
  - d. Transformation of space
  - e. Stylistic registers
  - f. The opereta
  - g. The Astaire-Rogers Musical
  - h. The Integrated Musical
  - i. Ideology and the Musical
- 8. Comedy
  - a. Laughter and Culture
  - b. Short History of American Screen Comedy
- 9. War Cinema
  - a. World of Extremes
  - b. Breaking Rules
  - c. Masculinity in the War Film
  - d. Crossovers: War and Genre
  - e. Public Opinion: Propaganda and the Combat Film
  - f. Race, Ethnicity, and the War Film
  - g. Conflicted: The Psychic Violence of War
  - h. The 1991 Gulf War and World War II Redux
  - i. The Iraq War
- 10. Film Noir (American Dark Crime-Drama)
  - a. Made in the USA
  - b. Film Noir: Genre, Series, or Mode
  - c. Noir Aesthetics, Themes and Character Types
  - d. Noir Stylistics: Shift in perspective
  - e. Noir and the Production Code
  - f. Origins of Film Noir
  - g. Women in Film Noir
  - h. Critique of Populism
- 11. Making of West (American Westerns)
  - a. Frontiers: History and Cinema
  - b. The Literary West
  - c. Adaptation: When east Meets West
  - d. Landscape and Conflict
  - e. Contemporary Visions, Enduring Myths
- 12. Horror and Science Fiction
  - a. Horror vs. Science Fiction
  - b. What it Means to Be Human
  - c. Search for Knowledge
  - d. Self and Other
  - e. Sources of Cultural Anxieties
  - f. Genres of Science Fiction
  - g. History of Horror
  - h. History of Science Fiction
- 13. Cold War Era Cinema
  - a. Origins: Communism, Hollywood and the American Way
  - b. Inquisition: HUAC, McCarthy and the Hollywood ten
  - c. The Cold War Onscreen
  - d. Aftermath
- 14. Age of Television in America
  - a. Big Decline: Lost Audience
  - b. Recreation in Postwar America
  - c. Fewer, Bigger, Wider, Deeper

- d. War with Television, Peace with Its Revenues
- e. Spectacles
- 15. The 1960s Cinematography
  - a. The Kennedy Era
  - b. Projections: Women on the Screen
  - c. Youth Films: Activism as Lifestyle
  - d. "Solving" the Race Problem
  - e. Money, Films, and Changing Morality
  - f. Blaxploitation and Beyond
  - g. Rejuvenation
- 16. Film School Generation in American Cinema
  - a. Directors as Stars
  - b. Young Directors and the Box Office
  - c. References, Meaning, and Postmodernism
  - d. Comfort, comics, and Nostalgia
  - e. The Brat Pack
  - f. The Reagan Years
  - g. Another Generation
- 17. 21st Century American Film
  - a. Contradictions
  - b. Reaganite Cinema
  - c. Reimagining Traditional Institutions
  - d. Countercurrents
  - e. Into the 21st Century

## Resources

Belton, J. (2017) *American Cinema, American Culture*, New York: McGraw Hill.

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Giannetti, Louis Eyman, Scott. *Flashback, A Brief History of Film*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2009.

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Mast, Gerald Kawin, Bruce F. *A Short History of the Movies*. 11th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2010.

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Thompson, Kristin Bordwell, David. *Film History, An Introduction*. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 2009.

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Newcomer, Ron. *Moments in Film*. 1st ed. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 2006.

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Belton, John. *Study Guide to Accompany American Cinema/American Culture*. 5th ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 2017.

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Lucia, Cynthia (ed), Roy Grundmann (ed.), and Art Simon (ed.). *American Film History: Selected Readings, 1960 to the Present*. New Jersey: John Wiley Sons, 2016.

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Lewis, Jon (ed.) and Smoodin (ed.). *The American Film History Reader*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York : Routledge, 2015.

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## Resources Other

### Suggested classic films:

1. **Westerns:** *High Noon, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, The Searchers, The Shootist, Stagecoach, The Magnificent Seven*
2. **Romantic comedies:** *The Awful Truth, Bringing Up Baby, His Girl Friday, Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, The Philadelphia Story*
3. **Film Noir:** *Double Indemnity (1944), The Maltese Falcon, The Postman Always Rings Twice (1946), Scarlet Street, Shadow of a Doubt, Taxi Driver*
4. **Combat films:** *All Quiet on the Western Front, Sergeant York, Bataan, The Deer Hunter, From Here to Eternity, Platoon, Saving Private Ryan*
5. **Musicals:** *Swing Time, 42nd Street, Singin' in the Rain, West Side Story, My Fair Lady, New York New York, All That Jazz*

6. **Recommended films from the 1950's and 1960's:** *Rear Window* (directed by Alfred Hitchcock), *The Apartment*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *A Patch of Blue*, *Some Like It Hot*, *North by Northwest*, *Frenzy*, *Tea and Sympathy*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *The Graduate*.
7. **Recommended films by film school generation directors:** **Martin Scorsese:** *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, *GoodFellas*, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, *The Color of Money* **Steven Spielberg:** *E.T.*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Catch Me If You Can*. **Brian DePalma:** *Sisters*, *Scarface*, *Carrie* **Francis Ford Coppola:** *The Godfather, Parts 1, 2, & 3*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* **George Lucas:** *American Graffiti*, *Star Wars*

**Recommended websites:**

1. [www.ablongman.com/mast9e](http://www.ablongman.com/mast9e) Links to directors, studios, and classic movies.
2. [www.mhhe.com/cinema2](http://www.mhhe.com/cinema2) (<http://www.mhhe.com/cinema2/>) McGraw-Hill Global Education Holdings, LLC. 2018. Instructor Resource: Quizzes, glossary of terms, links to other useful sites.
3. [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) (<http://www.imdb.com>) 2018. Excellent resource. Provides information about cast and crew and links to movie reviews.
4. [www.mrqe.com/lookup](http://www.mrqe.com/lookup) (<http://www.mrqe.com/lookup/>) MRQE, 2010. Links to many print and Internet sources. Especially helpful for researching older films.
5. [www.critics.com](http://www.critics.com) (<http://www.critics.com>) Critics, Inc., 2018. Good site for more recent films. Provides links to fifteen reviews for each film. Also, provides a critical consensus on the success of the film.
6. [www.metacritic.com](http://www.metacritic.com) (<http://www.metacritic.com>) CMS Interactive Inc, 2018. Summarizes movie reviews with links to the full review.
7. [www.afi.com](http://www.afi.com) (<http://www.afi.com>) American Film Institute website. 2018.
8. [www.filmsite.org](http://www.filmsite.org) (<http://www.filmsite.org>) American Movies Classic Company LLC, 2018. Detailed summaries of landmarks in classic Hollywood American films.
9. [www.learner.org/exhibits/cinema/](http://www.learner.org/exhibits/cinema/) (<http://www.learner.org/exhibits/cinema/>) provides a tutorial on how Hollywood films are made. Annenberg Foundation, 2017.

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