

World Film History to 1945: CIMS 1010 910  
MW 12:00-3:50 EST, Synchronous Online

**Instructor: Joseph Coppola**  
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**Office Hours: (email for appointment)**

### Course Description

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This course surveys film and media history before 1945. Students will be introduced to a range of analytical skills and learn the basic vocabulary of film form across various modes and styles (narrative, documentary, and experimental). We will also develop methods for analyzing film and other media as art, economic industries, media technologies, and ideological apparatuses. Topics include the imbrication of film technology, migration, and race, the rise of classical Hollywood editing, the politics of Black film criticism, genre theory (the western, film noir, and romantic comedies), documentary film and *docufiction*, animated films, media censorship, and the introduction of sound. We will conclude with the rise of television and questions of medium specificity, or what makes cinema unique. In addition to rigorous textual analysis, we will also analyze seminal texts that contributed to the emergence of film and media theory.



## Online Structure

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Each class will be conducted via **synchronous Zoom** during the rostered time block (12:00-3:50 PM EST). The class time will usually be divided into sections. For example, a typical class will consist of lecture (where I offer historical material and introduce key terms via PowerPoint slides) punctuated by interactive breakout group exercises (via online break rooms). Put simply, each class will run as a hybrid lecture/seminar format.

There will also be **clip days** where I do not lecture. Instead, I will synchronously screen clips we have already watched or introduce new viewing material. During break out rooms, students will be divided into groups (break rooms) with the purpose of identifying and targeting key terms and aesthetic techniques. We will then reconvene as a class to discuss.

## Course Texts

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For your convenience, I have scanned all readings on our canvas site. Please consult the electronic syllabus (under the Canvas syllabus tab) for weekly reading/viewing requirements.

## Course content, stressors, and student wellness

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Cinema draws on the vast world for its material. I am sensitive to the possibility that certain types of images may be upsetting to people, but as this is different for each person, I encourage anyone in the class who is aware of being triggered by specific things to communicate with me so that we can try to make a plan together. Please also know that in this, as well as in other stressful situations, Penn has a wide range of support systems to help you navigate the challenges of student life. Many of them are listed here: <http://www.pennparents.upenn.edu/wellness-mental-health-resources>.

## Screenings

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No official screenings will be held for the class (although I will screen clips). Plan the viewing in advance and make sure you have seen the entire film carefully before we discuss it in class. Films will be available for streaming through Penn Library, others on YouTube. Please feel free to use your own streaming service of choice if you have it, and if you need help accessing the film, please contact me. **Please complete each film viewing prior to lecture that week.**

## Attendance, Participation, Class Demeanor

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This includes attending our online class and actively participating by evoking the readings and pushing discussions forward using the technical and theoretical language learned in discussion.

Please come to Zoom on time; if you are more than 10 min late, you will be marked absent. Avoid leaving the stream while the class is in progress unless absolutely necessary.

If you are unable to attend class for any reason, please send me (via email) a two-paragraph write-up of the main takeaways from the recorded lectures. Each course will be recorded and available on Canvas. What were the main arguments from lecture? What did we talk about, and in which order?

## Academic Integrity

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Students participating in this course agree to abide by Penn's Code of Academic Integrity: [http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai\\_codeofacademicintegrity.html](http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html). Please read this document carefully. Students violating this code will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Plagiarism most often happens when students are struggling in a course. If you are struggling, please come to office hours so we can discuss reading/viewing strategies.

## Assignments and Grading

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### Attendance and participation: 20%

- This includes attending our online class and actively participating by evoking the readings and pushing discussions forward using the technical and theoretical language learned in discussion. If you are ill, or have a family emergency, please notify me in advance of the class. Every absence should be accompanied by a two-paragraph write-up on the main takeaways from the recorded lectures (see Attendance, Participation, Class Demeanor).

### Midterm Examination: 40%

- The midterm will be comprised of three parts.
- **Clip Identification.** Cite the first and last name of the director as well as the production year. In a few paragraphs, perform a textual analysis of the scene. In other words, break down the key formal elements using the technical language learned in class. (20%)
- **Key Terms:** In two or three sentences, provide a succinct definition of a key term. Make sure to provide an example when necessary. (50%)
- **Part 3:** Write an essay based on the prompt. (of approximately 350 words) (30%)

### Final Examination: 40%

- Same format as the midterm examination.

A=94-100      B=80-83

A-=90-93      C+=77-80

B+=87-90      C=74-77

B=84-87      C- =70-73

## Schedule

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### When was Cinema Invented?

#### May 23rd

##### Films:

(I will screen in class. No required viewing beforehand).

*Sadow* (1894)

*Annabelle Serpentine Dance* (1895)

*Tables Turned on the Gardener* (1895)

*The Arrival of a Train* (1896)

*Demolition of a Wall* (1896)

##### Readings:

Film History, Chapter 1

Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde"

### The Rise of Classical Narrative and the Nickelodeon

#### May 25th

##### Film:

(I will screen in class. No required viewing beforehand).

Clips from *Hugo* (2011)

*A Trip to the Moon* (1902)

Clips from *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) and *Strangers on Train* (1951)

##### Readings:

Film History, Chapters 2 & 3

John Collier, “Cheap Amusements” (1896)

**NO CLASS: Memorial Day**

**May 30th**

**Alternatives to Classical Hollywood: German Expressionism**

**June 1st**

Film:

*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) (76 minutes, available for streaming via Penn Library)

I will screen in class: Clips from *Nosferatu* (1922), *Metropolis* (1927), Madonna’s “Express Yourself” (1989), and “The Influence of German Expressionist Cinema on the Films of Tim Burton.”

Reading:

Film History, Chapter 5

Thomas Elsaesser, “Caligari’s Family: Expressionism, Frame Tales and Master-Narratives”

**Revolutionary Film Narrative**

**June 6<sup>th</sup>**

Film:

*Within Our Gates* (1920) (79 minutes, available for streaming via Penn Library)

I will screen in class: clips from *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) and *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).

Readings:

Jacqueline Stewart, “We Were Never Immigrants: Oscar Micheaux and the Reconstruction of Black American Identity”

Film History, Chapter 6

S.M. Eisenstein, “The Montage of Attractions” (excerpt) (1923) and “The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram”

Dziga Vertov, “The Birth of Kino-Eye” (1924)

## **Midterm**

### **June 8th**

## **Japanese Cinema & Class Evaluations**

### **June 13th**

#### Film:

*Tokyo Story* (1953) (136 minutes, available for streaming via Penn Library)

I will screen in class: clips from *Ugetsu* (1953)

#### Reading:

Film History, Chapter 11

Joseph Anderson, “Spoken Silents in Japanese Cinema”

## **Slapstick Comedy & the Hays Code**

### **June 15th**

#### Film:

*Modern Times* (1936) (89 minutes, available for streaming via Penn Library)

I will screen in class: clips from *The Immigrant* (1917), *Shoulder Arms* (1918), *Safety Last* (1923), *Scarface* (1932), *I'm No Angel* (1933), and *It Happened One Night* (1934)

Reading:

Donald Crafton, "Pie and Chase"

Noël Carroll, "Notes on the Sight Gag"

Richard Maltby, "Censorship and Self-Regulation"

## Propaganda and Documentary Film

### June 20th

Film:

*Nanook of the North* (1922, 78 minutes, available for streaming via Penn Library)

I will screen in class: TBD

Reading:

Charles Musser, "Documentary"

John Grierson, "First Principles of Documentary"

Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism"

Fatimah Rony, "Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography: Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*

## World War II & Disney Animation

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### June 22nd

Film:

(I will screen in class. No required viewing beforehand).

Clips from *Casablanca* (1942), *SNAFU* (1943-1946), *The Three Caballeros* (1944), *Yankee Doodle Bugs* (1954), *Krazy Cat and Ignatz Mouse at the Circus* (1916), *Music Land* (1935), *Bambi* (1942)

Reading:

Thomas Doherty, "Government Work"

William Moritz, "Animation"

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**June 27th**

Study Day (NO CLASS)

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**June 29th**

Final Examination

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