

HRS/History 169 fall 2009 CSUS R. Cooper

Hollywood and America
call numbers HRS 81494, History 86016

Tuesday, Thursday 3.0-4.15 Mendocino 4004 (MND 4004)

Richard Cooper

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and by appointment

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Chronological survey of American films and their cultural significance from the 1890s to the present. Focus on films produced in Hollywood, the contexts in which they were created and the impact of Hollywood as a geographical and mythical place in the development of American culture. Cross listed as HRS and HIST 169; only one may be counted for credit. 3 units.

SCOPE

The course will cover the movie business in the United States and its films, from its beginning in the 1890s to at least the 1970s.

The emphasis will be on how movies were made, and how they both expressed and influenced the values and conflicts of American society.

Particular issues to be addressed include:

- 1) The conflict between the movies and middle-class respectability.
- 2) The influence of technological change on movies.
- 3) The advantages and disadvantages of the studio system.
- 4) How movies shaped the image of American society and the American past.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To survey the historical development of American movies and the film industry.

To evaluate the way movies expressed and also influenced the values of American culture.

To appreciate why and how some films were outstanding among the mass-produced thousands of American movies.

To develop critical thinking and writing skills through analysis of movies and what people have said about them.

HOW THE COURSE WORKS

The heart of the course will be the discussion of the assigned readings. Before we take up a particular assigned reading, I will provide questions, on the SacCT website, as the basis for discussion. I will ask, in advance, for volunteers for the scheduled discussion, but since everyone is required to do a specified number of discussion assignments, the only thing that is voluntary is the date for the discussion. Students will be graded on how well they discuss the assigned reading in class.

Since history is about asking questions about the past, students should also generate their own questions. These should be raised during the discussions.

Because discussion is crucial, it is weighted as 40% of the total grade.

Clips from various movies will be shown in class as texts to be discussed.

One complete film will be shown in class, *The Red Badge of Courage*, in connection with Lillian Ross's book, *Picture*.

Other films may be assigned to view outside class.

One short paper is required on how specific films have portrayed the American Civil War and the Southern society and the racial conflict which were at the heart of it. The paper must be no more than four

pages of text, typed, with footnotes and a separate bibliography, all in Chicago style.

The tests will be essay tests and will be comprehensive. They will consist of questions about interpretations of the material covered.

The two tests and the final examination must be written in ink, in a clean, small blue book. I will drop the lower grade of the two tests. The final examination is not optional. There will be no make-ups.

REQUIREMENTS

Read the assigned texts

Participate in the specified number of assigned discussions

Take one of the two tests

Write the required paper

Take the final examination

GRADES will be computed as follows:

Class discussion	40%
Paper	20%
Better of two tests	20%
Final examination	<u>20%</u>
	100%

WHAT YOU NEED TO START WITH

To be able to read 100 pages once a week

To be able to write a 500 word essay in 75 minutes

EXPECTATIONS

What I expect from you:

Be punctual for every class.

Come to class ready to ask and answer questions of substance on the assigned readings.

Give your undivided attention to this course during the class, which implies no multitasking. Turn off cell phones.

What you may expect from me:

I will be punctual for every class.

I will give each student a fair share of my attention.

I will prepare you for your tests.

I will grade your work according to its quality rather than the effort you put into it.

I will try to make you perform at your best.

PLAGIARISM

Academic dishonesty will be punished by a grade of zero on the particular assignment, or by failure in the course.

See the Student Tutorial on how not to plagiarize:
<http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353>

Note the following from the University Policy Manual on Academic Honesty, Policy & Procedures:

Students are responsible for:

1. Understanding the rules that preserve academic honesty and abiding by them at all times. This includes learning and following the particular rules associated with specific classes, exams, and course assignments. Ignorance of these rules is not a defense to a charge of academic dishonesty.

2. Understanding what cheating and plagiarism are and taking steps to avoid them. Students are expected to do this whether working individually or as part of a group.

3. Not taking credit for academic work that is not their own.

DISABILITY

If you have a disability and require accommodations, you need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, (916) 278-6955. Please discuss your accommodations needs with me after class or during my office hours early in the semester.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Robert Sklar, *Movie-made America; a cultural history of American movies*, revised and updated (Vintage, 1994)
Lillian Ross, *Picture* (various editions)

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Louis Giannetti, *Understanding movies*

Richard B. Jewell, *The golden age of cinema; Hollywood 1929-1945*

Drew Casper, *Postwar Hollywood, 1946-1962*

Bruce Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War*

DISCLAIMER

Much in this syllabus, including the schedule, is subject to change.

WARNING ABOUT E-MAIL

Do not send me e-mail through the message function of SacCT. Send messages to my campus e-mail address, rcooper@saclink.csus.edu.

Keep it short; get to the point. I may delete messages over a few lines long without reading them. Indicate which class you are in and what your name is.

SCHEDULE HRS/Hist 169.02 fall 2009

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
1	Introduction	Early films discussion
2	Sklar, chapter 1 moving pictures	S2 nickelodeons S3 Edison
3	S4 Griffith <i>Battle,</i> <i>Birth of a Nation,</i> <i>Intolerance</i>	S5 dawn of Hollywood
4	S6 silents	S7 comedy <i>City Lights</i>
5	S8 protecting the young	S9 the studios <i>The Studio System</i>
6	Review #1	Test #1
7	S10 censors	S11 Golden Age <i>Top Hat</i>
8	S12 myths	S13 overseas <i>Gone with the Wind</i>
9	S14 money	S15 war <i>Casablanca</i>
10	Ross, <i>Picture</i>	<i>Red Badge of Courage</i>
11	Review #2	Test #2
12	S16 television <i>North by Northwest</i>	S17 collapse <i>Graduate</i>
13	S18 personal film S19 revival	Thanksgiving no class
14	S20 Age of Reagan	S21 memory <i>Glory</i>
15	S22 independence	Review #3
	Final examination Dec. 15, 3.0-5.0 PM	

Grade scale

numbers to letters:

93.3-100 = A

90.0-93.2 = A-

86.7-89.9 = B+

83.3-86.6 = B

80.0-83.2 = B-

76.7-79.9 = C+

73.3-76.6 = C

70.0-73.2 = C-

66.7-69.9 = D+

63.3-66.6 = D

60.0-63.2 = D-

0 - 59.9 = F

Letter grades converted to numbers:

A+ = 98

A = 95

A- = 92 and so forth

F's may be from 0 to 59.9