

**ENGLISH 414A / A01  
FILM HISTORY 1895-1950**

“Inventing a Modern Medium and Its Audience”

CRN 22552  
Spring Semester 2010  
M-W 4:30-6:00 PM / W 6:00-8:00 PM  
Clearihue D126

Dr. Lincoln Shlensky  
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Course Web site: [www.practa.com](http://www.practa.com)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Students enrolled in this course will receive a general introduction to the history of film as an international medium from the late nineteenth century through the immediate post-World War II period. Through the interpretation and analysis of assigned films screened inside and outside of the classroom, the course will offer a broad survey of cinematic forms and an understanding of visual rhetorical modes in their artistic, industrial, and historical contexts. Assigned readings from the textbook will elaborate on formal, social, thematic and technical elements that contributed to the advancement of film as a popular medium and the development of cinema’s audiences. The course will concentrate on the history of film aesthetics, the social context in which these aesthetics developed, and the specific innovations of some of the major filmmakers associated with specific film forms. Students will gain knowledge of film history and formal developments through screening and re-

screening films, reading assigned material, writing analytical prose, consistently attending lectures and participating in class discussion, and taking and reviewing detailed preparatory and lecture notes. Evaluation will take the form of short essays, a research term paper, and a final exams.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

David A. Cook, *A History of Narrative Film, Fourth Edition*. W. W. Norton; 4 edition (January 1, 2004). ISBN-10: 0393978680.

**COURSE GRADES**

Final course grades will be determined as follows (as a percent of the final grade):

- 1) CLASS PREPARATION & PARTICIPATION: 10%
- 2) FOUR SHORT SCENE-ANALYSIS ESSAYS (choose four from the six listed in syllabus; 500 words each): 40%
- 3) RESEARCH TERM PAPER (2000 words): 30%
- 4) FINAL EXAM: 20%

Grades will be assigned according to the following English Department guidelines:

A+	90-100	B-	65-69
A	85-89	C+	60-64
A-	80-84	C	55-59
B+	75-79	D	50-54
B	70-74	F	0-49

For more specific information about my grading criteria, see my document “Assessment Criteria for Student Research Essays” at [www.practa.com](http://www.practa.com) » Assignments.

Note: Students will be given adequate notification should it become necessary to

alter the schedule of assignments or reduce the number of assigned readings. Evening film screenings will be arranged to suit the most students; those unable to attend will need to make arrangements with the library to screen films at a different time.

Students with bona fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodation. If you require such accommodation, please register at the Resource Centre for Students with a Disability and inform me of your needs at the outset of the semester.

### **WRITING YOUR ESSAYS**

Your essays must offer an *argument* that utilizes texts assigned in the course or approved outside research materials. Each essay should frame its argument in relation to assigned texts, course themes, and/or research materials. Your work will be graded on the basis of its creativity, contextualization, and the overall persuasiveness of its argument. If you are unsure of your topic or argument, please see me in office hours. (For more information about my grading criteria, see my document “Assessment Criteria for Student Research Essays” at [www.practa.com](http://www.practa.com) » Assignments.)

### **ESSAY SUBMISSION**

Completed written work must be emailed to me at <assignments.shlensky@gmail.com> and, if you are participating in the Learning and Teaching Centre project, cc'd to the LTC's Dr. Li-Shih Huang <lshuang@uvic.ca> on the due date. I may also request a printed copy. If you are participating in Dr. Huang's LTC project, you will be granted an automatic one-week extension of your paper's final due date, with the proviso that you submit a first draft to me and Dr. Huang by the syllabus due date, and that your final revised version sent to me and Dr. Huang within one week of the

original due date differs from the first draft. (If this process does not work out well, I may cancel the extension policy.) Your essay should include a title page with your name, date, and course identifying information. The electronic file you send must include *your last name as part of the document's file name*. Failure to keep a copy of the essay will result in denied credit should the submitted materials be lost.

### **LATE & MISSING ASSIGNMENTS**

If writing assignments are submitted after the beginning of the class period during which they are due, credit will be deducted by 1/3 of a letter-grade per day, starting with the due date. The automatic reply you receive from me once you send in your essay is your acknowledgment of receipt. Extension of a due date must be negotiated with me *in advance*, and medical or other emergency exceptions to this policy must be properly documented. Students are required to complete all assigned course work in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

### **WRITING IMPROVEMENT**

I may require you to seek general writing improvement and/or assignment tutoring at The Learning and Teaching Centre. If so, you will be required to do so and to rewrite your work within three weeks of receiving notice from me. Please consult [www.practa.com](http://www.practa.com) » UVic Resources, for information on making appointments at The Learning and Teaching Centre. There you will also find a form required by the Centre authorizing you to receive tutoring for a given assignment.

### **FINAL ESSAY INSTRUCTIONS**

Your final essay will be a 2000 word comparison of two films of your choosing from the course. The final essay must include discussion of at least *three* peer-reviewed academic sources (i.e., scholarly

books or academic journals). Your essay should be an argumentative essay: that is, in the course of your essay, you will give a brief summary of the films you are discussing, and then make an argument about them. Use your outside sources to help support/deepen your argument or to show how your argument differs from others' views. In the introductory section of your essay, you must present your argument in relation to the films you will be discussing, explain why your argument is vitally important, and offer a "road map" of how your essay will prove the argument you are making. The essay must prove your claims and reach a conclusion. Be sure to carefully proofread your essay; errors of grammar, diction, and structure will lower your grade. Citations in your essay should use in-text citation format (see [www.practa.com](http://www.practa.com) » Guidelines for Writing and Research for citation pointers), with a works-cited list at the end.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

More than four (4) absences shall result in reduction of the student's grade by half a grade per additional absence. Medical and other emergency exceptions to this policy will be accepted with proper documentation.

### **COMPUTER POLICY**

Please refrain from using computers, hand-held devices, and phones in the classroom, except for specifically designated assignments. Students with documented disabilities who require a computer for note-taking are excluded from this policy.

### **ELECTRONIC MATERIALS**

I will expect students to check email at least twice a week for possible course updates. Please alert me immediately of any e-mail address changes.

### **LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing, and protecting a positive, supportive, and safe working and learning environment for all its members. Students and faculty members are expected to adhere to the UVic human rights policy, located at: <http://bit.ly/4AuuT2>. Please alert me if you have any questions about this policy and its application, or if you have concerns about course proceedings or participants.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students are expected to adhere to the UVic academic integrity policy (search the current UVic Calendar for the "Policy on Academic Integrity"). Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade for the given assignment and may additionally result in a failing grade for the course. By taking this course, you agree that all submitted assignments may be subject to an originality review.

## SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Occasional 'pop' quizzes will cover materials for the course up to and including the assignments due for that day.

### WEEK 1: EARLY CINEMA

Monday, January 4

Course introduction. Film experiments of Eadweard Muybridge; early short films of Meliès and Lumière.

Wednesday, January 6

Readings due today: David A. Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 1-27.

**Required:** Send an email message with "English 414A" and your full name in the Subject line, and your phone number in the body of the message to [shlensky@uvic.ca](mailto:shlensky@uvic.ca).

In class: First part of *Birth of a Nation* (USA 1915, 187 min.), directed by D. W. Griffith.

Evening screening: Finish *Birth of a Nation*. Call Number: PN1997 B564.

### WEEK 2: GRIFFITH AND THE BIRTH OF NARRATIVE CINEMA

Monday, January 11

Readings due today: Cook, pp. 29-50.  
In class: short films of D. W. Griffith.

Wednesday, January 13

Readings due today: Cook, pp. 51-85.  
Discussion of *Birth of a Nation*.

Evening screening: Charles Chaplin, *The Gold Rush* (USA 1925, 81 min.). Call Number: PN1997 M59

### WEEK 3: HOLLYWOOD COMEDY OF THE 1920s: KEATON AND CHAPLIN

Monday, January 18

Cook, pp. 169-190.  
In class: early films of Charles Chaplin and Buster Keaton.

Wednesday, January 20

FIRST SCENE-ANALYSIS DUE: *BIRTH OF A NATION*.

Discussion of *The Gold Rush*.

Evening screening (note longer screening):

*M* (Germany 1931, 110 min.), directed by Fritz Lang. Call Number: PN1997 M13 1931

### WEEK 4: GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

Monday, January 25

Cook, pp. 87-111

In class: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Germany 1919, 77 min.), directed by Robert Wiene; written by Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz. Call Number: PN1997 C292

Wednesday, January 27

Discussion of *M* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Excerpts from *Metropolis* (Germany 1926), directed by Fritz Lang.

Evening screening (note longer screening):

*Der letzte Mann* [The Last Laugh] (Germany 1924, 90 mins.); *Battleship Potemkin* (Soviet Union 1925, 75 min.), directed by Sergei Eisenstein. Call Number: PN1997 B742

### WEEK 5: SOVIET CINEMATIC AVANT-GARDES

Monday, February 1

SECOND SCENE-ANALYSIS DUE: GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM.

Cook, pp. 113-168.

In-class: *Man with a Movie Camera* (Soviet Union 1929, 68 min.), directed by Dziga Vertov.

Wednesday, February 3

Discussion of Eisenstein and Vertov.

Evening screening: *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (USA 1927, 95 min.), directed by F.W. Murnau; scenario by Carl Mayer. Call

Number: PN1997 S929; *Nanook of the North* (USA/France 1922, 69 min.), directed by Robert J. Flaherty, first half. Call Number: E99 E7N296

#### WEEK 6: OUTSIDERS IN HOLLYWOOD OF THE 1920s

Monday, February 8  
Cook, pp. 190-203

Conclude screening of *Nanook of the North*.  
Discussion of *Sunrise*.

Wednesday, February 10

#### THIRD SCENE-ANALYSIS DUE: SOVIET CINEMA

Discussion of *Nanook*. Excerpts from Oscar Michaux, *Within Our Gates* (USA 1920, 79 mins.)

Evening screenings: *The Jazz singer* (USA 1927, 89 min.), directed by Alan Crosland. Call Number: PN1997 J37

#### WEEK 7: THE SOUND FILM

Monday, February 15  
Cook, pp. 205-230

Reading break

Wednesday, February 17

Reading break

#### WEEK 8: THE STUDIO SYSTEM AND FILM GENRE

Monday, February 22  
Cook, 231-288

Discussion of *The Jazz Singer*.

Wednesday, February 24

In class: *His Girl Friday* (USA 1940, 92 min.), directed by Howard Hawks.

Evening screening: *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* [The Passion of Joan of Arc] (France 1928, 82 min.), directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer. 1999 Call Number: PN1997 P363

#### WEEK 9: THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE AND HUMANIST CINEMA

Monday, March 1

Cook, pp. 289-303

Discussion of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*.

Wednesday, March 3

In class: *Napoléon* (France 1927, 235 mins.), dir. Abel Gance, first part.

Evening screening: *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (Germany 1927, 65 min.), dir. Walter Ruttmann. Call Number: PN1997 B47 1927

#### WEEK 10: AVANT GARDES

Monday, March 8

#### FOURTH SCENE-ANALYSIS DUE: LA PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC

Cook, pp. 303-326

Discussion of *Berlin*.

Wednesday, March 10

In class: films of Luis Buñuel, "Un chien Andalou" [An Andalusian Dog] (France, 1929, 16 mins., with Salvador Dalí); "Las Hurdes: Tierra sin Pan" [Land without Bread] (Spain, 1933, 27 mins.); Germaine Dulac, "La Coquille et le clergyman" [The Seashell and the Clergyman] (France, 1928, 41 mins., with Antonin Artaud).

Evening screening: *Citizen Kane* (USA 1941, 120 min.), directed by Orson Welles. Call Number: PN1997 C572

#### WEEK 11: WELLES AND HOLLYWOOD'S AUTEURS

Monday, March 15

Cook, pp. 327-353

Discussion of *Citizen Kane*.

Wednesday, March 17

#### FIFTH SCENE-ANALYSIS DUE: AVANT GARDES.

Further discussion of Welles and Hitchcock.

Evening screening: *Roma, città aperta*  
[Rome, Open City] (Italy 1945, 100 min.),  
directed by Roberto Rossellini. Call  
Number: PN1997 R58

WEEK 12: ITALIAN NEOREALISM

Monday, March 22

SIXTH SCENE-ANALYSIS DUE:

CITIZEN KANE

Cook, pp. 355-368

Discuss *Rome, Open City*.

Wednesday, March 24

In class: *Ladri di biciclette* [The Bicycle  
Thief] (Italy 1948, 93 mins.), directed by  
Vittorio de Sica.

Evening screening: *Double Indemnity* (USA  
1944, 107 min.), directed by Billy Wilder.  
Call Number: PN1997 D68

WEEK 13: POSTWAR HOLLYWOOD

Monday, March 29

Cook, pp. 368-385

In class: *Out of the Past* (USA 1947, 97  
min.), directed by Jacques Tourneur.

Substitute instructor

Wednesday, March 31

DUE IN CLASS AND BY EMAIL:  
PROPOSAL, OUTLINE, AND  
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR  
FINAL RESEARCH ESSAY  
COMPARING TWO FILMS.

Peer editing.

Substitute instructor

Evening screening: *Notorious* (USA 1946,  
101 min.), directed by Alfred Hitchcock.  
Call Number: PN1997 N66.

Monday, April 5

Easter break

Wednesday, April 7

Course conclusion.

Evening screening TBA.

FINAL RESEARCH ESSAY (2000  
WORDS) DUE APRIL 13, 12:00 NOON

FINAL EXAM: PRIMARILY ON DAVID  
COOK'S FILM HISTORY, BUT WILL  
ALSO INCLUDE QUESTIONS ABOUT  
FILMS.