

MDIA 5: AMERICAN CINEMA

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	4
Hours:	4 lecture, 1 laboratory per week (60 total per quarter)
Advisory:	Not open to students with credit in F TV 3 or VART 3.
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Non-GE
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

Student Learning Outcomes

- A successful student will demonstrate knowledge of film's role in business, entertainment, and popular culture
- A successful student will identify and explain major trends in the evolution of American film as an art form.
- A successful student will analyze American film's role in the shaping of cultural values and perceptions.

Description

Introduction to American film as a component of art, history, culture, and business. How Hollywood has shaped an industry that has come to reflect many aspects of the American experience. American cinematic history, terminology, economic structure, and cultural importance. Development of analysis and writing skills.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Critically analyze film in the context of the context of "classical cinema" formal style.
2. Describe the history of U.S. film and how it relates to the evolution of cinematic form.
3. Identify film techniques, such as editing, sound, cinematography, and their development.
4. Understand and apply film terminology of U.S. cinema through written analyses.
5. Explain the characteristics and histories of U.S. film movements and genres through written analyses.
6. Identify the works of leading American cinema artists and their characteristics.
7. Demonstrate knowledge of film's role in business, entertainment through examination and writing assignments.
8. Demonstrate an understanding of a film's influence in shaping values and perceptions through discussion and essay writing.
9. Critically analyze film censorship, audiences, distribution patterns.
10. Identify and describe major trends in the evolution of U.S. film as an art form.

11. Understand and interpret the evolution of diversity within the structure of the American cinematic industry.
12. Through research and study of U.S. cinema, identify contributions to the art form made by people from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Course Content

1. The development of early narrative cinema, film technologies, cinema's emergence as mass entertainment
 - a. Early nickelodeons and urban movie palaces of the 1910s and 1920s
 - b. Pioneering female directors including Dorothy Arzner and Lois Weber
 - c. The history of the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930
 - d. Race movies and important African-American directors including Spencer Williams and Oscar Micheaux
2. The Hollywood Classical Cinema style
 - a. Introduction to Hollywood as an industry and cultural phenomenon
 - b. Importance of story elements and structure, character, and plot in classical cinema
 - c. Formal characteristics of the classical style: editing, sound, cinematography, mise en scene
3. The Hollywood studio system
 - a. The development of the studio as industrial scale, assembly line production and its impact upon form
 - b. Business practices and vertical integration
4. Influences of WWII refugee filmmakers on the form
 - a. Billy Wilder
 - b. Ernst Lubitsch
 - c. Fritz Lang
 - d. Fred Zinnemann
5. The star system
 - a. Cultural significance of the star system
 - b. Typecasting, method acting
 - c. Evolution from the star from the silent era to present
6. U.S. cinema genres and the genre system
 - a. Early cinema and melodrama
 - i. Melodrama modality and influences
 - b. The Western
 - i. Mythology the representation of manifest destiny
 - ii. Symbolism and social commentary
 - iii. Portrayal of Native Americans
 - c. Comedy
 - i. Romantic comedy
 - ii. Screwball comedy
 1. Social critique and gender
 - d. War and combat film
 - i. Representation of America at war
 - ii. The evolution of traditional war genre convention
 - iii. Nature and representation of heroism
 - iv. Structures of propaganda
 - e. Film noir
 - i. Expressionistic techniques and historical antecedents
7. Film in the television age

- a. Cultural and historical impact
 - b. Evolution of content
 - c. Technological developments: widescreen formats and 3-D
- 8. The Film School Generation and New Hollywood
 - a. Influences of earlier and foreign films
 - b. Blaxploitation films of the 1970s
 - c. Postmodernist cinema: parody and pastiche
- 9. Independent cinema and fine art influences
 - a. Avant garde American film
 - b. The rise of independent cinema
- 10. Cinema in the internet age
 - a. Impact of digital technology on production and business practices
 - b. Video game and social media influences on U.S. cinematic form and content

Lab Content

1. Viewing and analysis of selected cinema either on-campus or via the internet.
2. Outside-of-class observation and analysis of media promotion as it relates to cinema and its impact on society.
3. Feedback on tests and assignments either in-person or online via chat rooms, listservs, and newsgroups.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

1. Forum-type room with projection booth, video projection system, amplified sound system. Internet access and laptop computer patch to system. Playback equipment formats required: DVD/Blu-ray.
2. Library for film research, books, scripts, DVD playback facility.
3. When taught via Foothill Global Access: on-going access to computer with email software and capabilities; email address, JavaScript-enabled internet browsing software, and videotape viewing ability.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Writing assignments that require student to select film(s) from viewing list, construct, develop, and defend an argument referencing the film and the reading materials

Essay examinations that require the student to assimilate new information, develop theses, construct arguments, and draw conclusions from reading assignments and viewings

Research or analysis paper

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Lecture presentations and classroom discussion using the language of cinema

In-class viewing of selected cinema followed by instructor-guided interpretation and analysis

Discussion and critique of assigned reading and representative media

Cooperative learning exercises that require students to apply course content

Group project presentation followed by in-class discussion and evaluation

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Belton, John. American Cinema/American Culture. 2018.

Lewis, Jon. American Film: A History. 2019.

Sklar, Robert. Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of the American Movies. 2012.

Although one or more texts listed above are older than the suggested "5 years or newer" standard, they remain seminal texts in this area of study.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Writing assignments that require the student to select film(s) from viewing list, construct, develop, and defend an argument referencing the film and the reading materials.
2. Weekly reading assignments from text and outside sources, ranging from 30-60 pages per week.
3. Exams that reference the reading materials, films, and discussion periods.
4. Written journals and discussion forum when taught via Foothill Global Access.

Discipline(s)

Media Production or Film Studies