

CIN 3008F: Topics in Film & Media History: Issues in Silent Cinema

Course Description: This course will investigate relatively recent thought about silent cinema, concentrating on pertinent methodological frameworks, scholarly debates, and examination of notable tendencies and cultural practices specific to cinema before sound. The course will cover both the early cinema period and the years that follow, and take up issues both historiographical (e.g., periodization, institutionalization) and topical (e.g., gender and silent cinema). The course will also consider how practices that occurred during the period (including those related to exhibition, presentation, and reception) and those pertinent to the present day (such as restoration and preservation) affect our understanding of cinema's earliest years.

Because no course can cover everything, I have made deliberate choices in restricting the scope and depth of the seminar. For example, you will note that I have focused on research devoted to the American cinema, that I have elected to stick with just three topics, and that I have concentrated on scholarship produced within the last twenty or so years. These foci forced near-total exclusion of entire areas of investigation (such as technological, industrial, and stylistic concerns) that I would normally make a priority. But any such exclusions could become the basis for your final papers; I encourage you to pursue topics that interest you, even if this leads you beyond the course's self-consciously devised (and admittedly limiting) parameters.

Meeting Times & Locations:

Screenings --T: 3-5

Seminar --W: 1-3

[Please note that on occasion the screening slot may be used as a seminar session devoted to an appearance by a guest.]

Required Texts: The sole source of readings for this course will be a selection of essays specified on a weekly basis under "Reading Schedule."

Assignments and Evaluation:

- 1) Assignment #1: 8-12 pages, due **October 24** (15%)
Methodological paper
- 2) Assignment #2: 20+ pages, due **December 8** (35%)
Final research essay
- 3) Class Facilitation and Reading Questions: Schedule to be drawn up early in the term (25%)

4) Attendance and Participation: These are considered essential, and any student expecting to miss a class must alert the instructor in advance of the class in question. (25%)

READING & SCREENING SCHEDULE

UNIT ONE: Early Cinema: Debates and Paradigms

Week I / September 12 & 13: Historiographies of Early Cinema

Screening: selection of early films

Readings: Robert Sklar, “*Oh, Althusser!*: Historiography and the Rise of Cinema Studies,” *Radical History Review* 41 (Spring 1988): 10-35.

David Bordwell, “Prospects for Progress: Recent Research Programs” [excerpt], in *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 116-139.

Jennifer M. Bean, “Introduction: Toward a Feminist Historiography of Early Cinema” [excerpt], in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), pp.1-14.

For review: Roberta Pearson, “Early Cinema” and “Transitional Cinema” in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 13-42.

Tom Gunning, “Early American Film,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 255-271.

Week II / September 19 & 20: When Was (Early) Cinema?:

Periodizing the First Years

Screening: selection of early films

Readings: Noel Burch, “A Primitive Mode of Representation?”, in *Life to Those Shadows* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 186-201.

Kristin Thompson, “From Primitive to Classical,” in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Routledge, 1985), pp. 245-264.

Ben Brewster, “Periodization of Early Cinema,” in *American Cinema’s Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices*, ed. Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 66-75.

André Gaudreault, "Looking at Cinema in a New Light," in *Film and Attraction: From Kinematography to Cinema*, trans. Timothy Bernard (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), pp. 9-31.

Charles Musser, excerpts from *Politicking and Emergent Media: US Presidential Elections of the 1890s* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 132-144; 180-190.

Week III /September 26 & 27: Narrative and the Cinema of Attractions

Screening: selection of early films

Readings: Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde" [1986], rpt. in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), pp. 381-388.

Tom Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7.2 (1994): 189-201.

Charles Musser, "Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7.2 (1994): 203-232.

Donald Crafton, "Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle and Narrative in Slapstick Comedy" [1988], rpt. in *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, ed. Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 106-119.

Tom Gunning, "Response to "Pie and Chase"," in *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, pp. 120-122.

Charlie Keil, "Integrated Attractions: Style and Spectatorship in Transitional Cinema," in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, pp. 193-204.

James Fiurama, "Electrocuting an Elephant at Coney Island: Attraction, Story, and the Curious Spectator," *Film History*, 28.1 (January 2016): 43-70.

Additional Session / Friday, September 29, 2-4pm: Special Presentation by Ned Thanouser

Week IV /October 3 & 4: (Early) Cinema: Modernity's Messenger?

Screening: *Traffic in Souls* (U.S., 1913)

Readings: Mary Ann Doane, "Technology's Body: Cinematic Vision in Modernity," (1992), rpt. in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, pp. 530-551.

Ben Singer, "Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 72-101.

Tom Gunning, "From the Kaleidoscope to the X-Ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin, and *Traffic in Souls*," *Wide Angle*, 91.4 (October 1997): 25-61.

Kristen Whissel, "Regulating Mobility: Technology, Modernity, and Feature-Length Narrativity in *Traffic in Souls*," *camera obscura* 17.1 (June 2002): 1-29.

Ben Singer, "The Ambiomodernity of Early Cinema: Problems and Paradoxes in the Film-and-Modernity Discourse," in *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture*, ed. Klaus Kreimeirer and Annemone Lingensa (New Barnet, Herts: John Libbey, 2009), pp. 37-52.

UNIT TWO: Women and the Silent Screen

Week V /October 10 & 11: Women (Transformed) Onscreen

Screening: selection of early films

A Florida Enchantment (U.S., 1914)

Readings: Miriam Hansen, "Adventures of Goldilocks: Spectatorship, Consumerism and Public Life," *camera obscura*, 8 (January 1990): 50-72.

Constance Balides, "Scenarios of Exposure in the Practice of Everyday Life: Women in the Cinema of Attractions," *Screen*, 34.1 (Spring 1993): 19-37.

Siobhan B. Somerville, "The Queer Career of Jim Crow: Racial and Sexual Transformation in *A Florida Enchantment*," (1997), rev. and rpt. in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, pp. 251-269.

Karen Beckman, "Insubstantial Media: Ectoplasm, Exposure, and the Stillbirth of Film," in *Vanishing Women: Magic, Film, and Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 61-93.

Maggie Hennefeld, "Destructive Metamorphosis: The Comedy of Female Catastrophe and Feminist Film Historiography," *Discourse* 36.2 (2014): 175-206.

Week VI /October 17 & 18: Serial Queens and Their Fans

Screening: *The Hazards of Helen*, "Episode 13: The Escape on the Fast Freight" (U.S., 1915)

episodes from Pearl White serials

Readings: Ben Singer, "Female Power in the Serial-Queen Melodrama: The Etiology of an Anomaly," *camera obscura* 8 (January 1990): 90-129.

Nan Enstad, "Dressed for Adventure: Working Women and Silent Movie Series in the 1910s," *Feminist Studies* 21.1 (1995): 67-90.

Shelley Stamp, "An Awful Struggle Between Love and Ambition: Serial Heroines, Serial Stars, and Their Female Fans" [2000], rpt. and excerpted in *The Silent Cinema Reader*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 210-25.

Jennifer Bean, "Technologies of Early Stardom and the Extraordinary

Body,” *camera obscura* 16.3 (May 2001): 9-57.

Week VII /October 24 & 25: The Varieties of Female Silent Stardom

Screening: *The New York Hat* (U.S., 1912)

Toll of the Sea (U.S. 1922; 54 mins.)

Hotel Imperial (U.S., 1927; 80 mins.)

Readings: Diane Negra, “Immigrant Stardom in Imperial America: Pola Negri and the Problem of Typology,” in *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Stardom* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 55-83.

Gaylyn Studlar, “Oh, “Doll Divine”: Mary Pickford, Masquerade, and the Pedophilic Gaze,” *camera obscura*, 16.3 (May 2001): 197-227.

Yiman Wang, “The Art of Screen Passing: Anna May Wong’s Yellow Yellowface Performance in the Art Deco Era,” *camera obscura* 20.3 (2005): 158-191.

Charles Musser, “Conversions and Convergences: Sara Bernhardt in the Era of Technological Reproducibility, 1910-1913,” *Film History* 25.1-2 (2013): 154-174.

Lucy Fischer, “Screen Test: Celebrity, the Starlet, and the Movie World in Silent American Cinema,” *Feminist Media Histories*, 2.4 (Fall 2016): 15-63.

Week VIII /October 31 & November 1: Women’s Work in Early Hollywood

Screening: *A Girl’s Folly* (U.S.; 1917; 30 mins.)

Ella Cinders (U.S., 1926; 51 mins.)

Readings: Stamp, Shelley. “ ‘It’s a Long Way to Filmland’: Starlets, Screen Hopefuls and Extras in Early Hollywood” (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp 332-352.

Karen Ward Mahar, “Doing a ‘Man’s Work’: The Rise of the Studio System and the Remasculinization of Filmmaking” [2006], rpt. and excerpted in *The Classical Hollywood Reader*, ed. Steve Neale (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 79-93.

Mark Lynn Anderson, “Tempting Fate: Clara Smith Hamon, or, the Secretary as Producer,” in *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in American Film History Method*, ed. Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 117-150.

Hillary Hallett, “Based on a True Story: New Western Women and the Birth of Hollywood,” *Pacific Historical Review* (May 2011): 177 – 210.

Jane M. Gaines, “Pink Slipped: What Happened to the Women in the Silent Film Industry?,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell History of American Film*, Vol. I, ed. Cynthia Lucia, Roy Grundmann and Art Simon (Malden, MA:

Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 155-177.

READING WEEK / November 6-10

UNIT THREE: Publics & Practices

Week IX /November 14 & 15: The Varied Exhibition Sites (and Sounds) of Silent Cinema

Screening: Guest: Tom Russell

Readings: Lauren Rabinowitz, "Temptations of Pleasure: Nickelodeons, Amusement Parks, and the Sights of Female Sexuality," *camera obscura* 8 (May 1990): 71-88.

Rick Altman, excerpts from *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 5-13; 15-23; 119-131.

Jennifer Horne, "A History Long Overdue: The Public Library and Motion Pictures," in *Useful Cinema*, ed. Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 149-177.

Sue Collins, "Film, Cultural Policy, and World War I Training Camps: Send Your Soldier to the Show with Smileage," *Film History* 26.1 (2014):1-49.

Week X /November 21 & 22: Reading and Writing: Cinematic Paratexts, Then and Now

Screening: Guests: Paul Moore + Christina Stewart

Readings: Anne Morey, "Have You the Power?": The Palmer Photoplay Corporation and the Film Viewer/Author in the 1920s," in *American Silent Film: Discovering Marginalized Voices*, ed. Gregg Bachman and Thomas J. Slater (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), pp. 48-69.

Richard Abel, "'Zip! Zam! Zowie!': A New Take on Institutional American Cinema's History Before 1915," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 29.4 (December 2009): 421-432.

Santiago Hidalgo, "Early American Film Publications: Film Consciousness, Self Consciousness," in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, ed. Andre Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac and Santiago Hidalgo (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 202-223.

Paul Moore, "Advance Newspaper Publicity for the Vitascope and the Mass Address of Cinema's Reading Public," in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, pp. 381-397.

Eric Hoyt, "Lenses for Lantern: Data Mining, Visualization, and Excavating Film History's Neglected Sources," *Film History* 26.2 (April 2014): 146-168.

Week XI / November 28 & 29: Archives and Revivals

Screening: *Hugo* (U.S., 2011; 126 mins.)

Readings: Paolo Cherchi Usai, "Early Films in the Age of Content; or, "Cinema of Attractions" Pursued by Digital Means," in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, pp. 527-549.

Giovanna Fossati, "Multiple Originals: The (Digital) Restoration and Exhibition of Early Films," in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, pp. 550-567.

Nanna Verhoeff, "Pointing Forward, Looking Back: Reflexivity and Deixis in Early Cinema and Contemporary Installations," in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, pp. 568-586.

Constance Balides, "Intertext as Archive: Melies, *Hugo*, and New Silent Cinema," in *New Silent Cinema*, ed. Paul Fleig and Katherine Groo (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 135-158.

Week XII / December 5: Connections and Reconsiderations

Screening: NO SCREENING; seminar only

Readings: Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," *Cinémas* 14, 2-3 (Spring 2004), pp. 75-117.

Jane M. Gaines, "What Happened to the Philosophy of Film History?", *Film History*, 25, 1-2 (2013), pp. 70-80.

Rob King, "Laughter in an Ungoverned Sphere: Actuality Humor in Early Cinema and Web 2.0," in *New Silent Cinema*, pp. 294-314.