

**History 2866 (710), American History and Film Spring 2011**  
**Harding Classroom, TR 2:00-3:15, Screening T 6:00-9:00**

**Dr. Chris H. Lewis**

**Ph. 492-5878**

**Office: Sewall Hall 42D**

**Office Hours: MWF 1:00 – 3:00, and by appt.**

**E-mail: [cclewis@colorado.edu](mailto:cclewis@colorado.edu)**

**Course website: <http://www.colorado.edu/AmStudies/lewis/film/>**

**Sewall Academic Mission: The primary goal of the Sewall Academic Program is to promote critical thinking within the framework of a liberal arts curriculum that emphasizes the interaction between history and culture. To meet this goal, the program offers small, seminar-style classes that foster analytical thought through reading, discussion, and written expression and that require active and consistent student participation.**

**Course Description: This course examines twentieth-century American history, focusing on American culture and society. The primary texts for this course are America since 1945: The American Moment, American Film and Society since 1945, and Hollywood's America: U.S. History through its Films. You will view American films such as City Lights, Casablanca, The Graduate, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Wall Street, American Beauty, and Crash. You will critically analyze how American cultural and social conflicts are portrayed and worked out in popular films. By watching, discussing, and writing about these films, you will examine how motion pictures create a window into modern American culture and society. You will learn how to read American films as cultural texts that help us better understand history and culture.**

**Course Objective: My objectives are threefold. Firstly, you will understand the major historical events and cultural issues in twentieth-century America. Secondly, you will understand how to read films as cultural texts that open up a window into American history. And, thirdly, you will learn how to use popular American films to understand competing perspectives on American history, culture, and society.**

**Required Reading:**

S. Mintz and Hollywood's America: U.S. History  
R. Roberts, eds., through its Films, 4th edition.  
P. Levine and  
H. Papatotiriou, America Since 1945: The American Moment  
L. Quart and  
Albert Auster, American Film and Society since 1945, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

**Films in this class:**

City Lights, Casablanca, The Third Man, Rear Window, Far from Heaven, Dr. Strangelove, Breakfast at Tiffany's, The Graduate, Apocalypse Now, One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest, Wall Street, Do the Right Thing, Fight Club, American Beauty, and Crash.

**Online Readings:** Some of the assigned readings are on the course website in the daily class website links. You will need a password to access the readings: "cclewis". These readings are "pdf documents" that you can read online or print out and read at your convenience.

**Grading:** Grades will be based on class participation and attendance (10%), film reviews (20%), two take-home midterms (20% each), and a take-home final (30%). I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes and assignments in class. Content will count most heavily in all written work, but grammar, spelling, and style will also affect your grade.

**Course grades will be defined in these terms:**

**A--Excellent--( Thoughtful, coherent, insightful, contributes)**

**B--Good--( Knows material well, lacks depth, not outstanding)**

**C--Fair--( Adequate, average, passing, little participation)**

**D--Poor--( Little understanding, little effort, incoherent)**

**F--Fail--( No evidence of understanding, no work, no learning)**

**Exams:** There will be two take-home midterms and final in this class. The exams will ask students to critically analyze and contrast these films' competing perspectives on American society and culture. You will discover that the more notes they take and the more thoughtfully you review these films the easier it will be for you to write your midterms and final exams.

**Class Participation and Attendance:** Because this is not a lecture course, active class participation is very important. Participation and attendance will be a large part of your grade (10 %). You must participate actively in class discussion in order to get a high participation grade. Class attendance is required. There are 6 excused absences to be used for illness, business, tragedy, or even pleasure (or when you just got the blues). If you miss more than six classes, you will fail the class. So please try to attend class regularly.

**Film Reviews:** Out of the 15 movies we see this semester, students will be required to write 4 film reviews ( 2-3 pages each). As long as your film reviews are turned in at the time they were first due, you will be allowed to revise your reviews throughout the entire semester for a higher grade. Film reviews will be graded on how well you critically analyze how a movie works and how it exemplifies larger cultural and social issues in American history and society. You are required to write at least one film review before the first midterm is due (March 1).

**Incompletes:** I will be very reluctant to give a grade of Incomplete (IF). I assign incompletes only to students who have successfully completed most of the course work and who have been prevented by significant and unanticipated circumstances from finishing all of their assignments. Incompletes require the Chair's permission and a written contract.

**Classroom Behavior:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to

address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at

[http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

**Disruptive Classroom Behavior** : This is a college classroom. I will deduct points from your final class grade for behavior that is disruptive to the classroom learning environment. Disruptive behavior includes sleeping, using your cell phone, surfing the web on your computer, playing computer games, checking your e-mail, checking your Facebook, sending and receiving text messages, listening to your MP3 player, watching DVDs or Netflix movies, reading newspapers, working on another class in this class, planning your day with your daytimer or Blackberry, etc. If after the student is warned, the disruptive behavior persists, I will ask them to leave the classroom that day.

**Discrimination and Sexual Harassment:** The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment

(<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html>, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships applies to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>

**University Honor Code:** All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>

**As faculty, students, and members of the University community, we value honor, integrity, and morality. Honor is about academic integrity, moral and ethical conduct, and pride of membership in a community that values academic achievement and individual responsibility. Cultivating honor lays the foundation for lifelong integrity, developing in each of us the courage and insight to make difficult choices and accept responsibility for actions and their consequences, even at personal cost.**

**Students with Disabilities: I encourage students with disabilities, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, and psychiatric disabilities, to discuss with me after class or during my office hours appropriate accommodations. If you have any additional questions about how the University can accommodate your disability, please see me or the Coordinator of Disability Services in the Disability Services Office , 322 Willard Hall, (303-492-8671). If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard 322 ([www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices))).**

**Religious Obligations and Class Attendance: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class if you have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or other required attendance, because of religious obligations, please notify me two weeks in advance of the conflict to request special accommodation. See the CU Policy at this website: [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html)**

**Cheating and Plagiarism: Cheating and plagiarism violate the University Honor Code. Plagiarism is copying another person's work and turning it in as your own. Plagiarism can involve buying a "class paper" online, copying another student's work, or copying whole paragraphs and material from other sources, such as encyclopedias or textbooks. See the website for the Pledge not to Plagiarize: <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/Code.html>.**

## **1. The Rise of the Movies and the Great Depression**

**Jan. 11**      **Introduction: The Great Depression**  
**Mintz and Roberts, pp. x-xi, 1-7, 112-128;**  
**Quart and Auster, pp. 1-11**

**Screening City Lights (1931) – 6:00-9:00 Harding**

**Jan. 13**      **Class and Social Status in Silent Film**  
**Mintz and Roberts, pp., 31-42, 75-82; Musser, “Work,**  
**Ideology, and Chaplin’s Tramp” (Web);**  
**Ebert, “Review City Lights” (Web); Jaffe, “Fighting Words:**  
**City Lights, Modern Times, and The Great Dictator” (Web)**

## **2. World War II and the Rise of the Cold War**

**Jan. 18**      **World War II and the Good War**  
**Mintz and Roberts, pp. 18-20, 129-143, 329-339;**  
**Levine and Papisotiriou, pp. 1-5, 13-19;**  
**Quart and Auster, pp. 13-19**

**Screening Casablanca (1942) – 6:00-9:00 Harding**

**Jan. 20**      **Loyalty, Betrayal, and Propaganda in Casablanca**  
**Mintz and Roberts, pp. 91-99, 170-173;**  
**Ebert, “2000 Review of Casablanca” (Web);**  
**Ebert, “2002 Review of Casablanca” (Web);**  
**Ecco, “Review of Casablanca” (Web);**  
**Berardinelli, “Review of Casablanca” (Web);**  
**“Memorable Quotes from Casablanca” (Web);**  
**“Lyrics to As Time Goes By” (Web)**

**Jan. 25**      **Post-World War II Culture and Film Noir**  
**Mintz and Roberts, pp. 20-24, 144-162, 175-177;**  
**Levine and Papisotiriou, pp. 19-29;**  
**“Film Noir: A Brief Introduction” (Web);**  
**Dirks, “Tim Dirks on Film Noir” (Web)**  
**Blaser, “Film Noir and the Hard-Boiled Detective Hero”**  
**(Web)**

Screening The Third Man (1949) – 6:00-9:00 Harding  
and City Lights Film Review due

Jan. 27 Darkness and Confusion in Early Cold War Culture  
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 30-41;  
Quart and Auster, pp. 20-37;  
John Blaser, “The Outer Limits of Film Noir” (Web);  
Ebert, “Review of The Third Man” (Web);  
Dirks, “Review of The Third Man” (Web)  
Berardinelli, "[Review of the Third Man](#) (Web)

### 3. The 1950s and Cold War Culture: Conformity and Paranoia

Feb. 1 McCarthyism and Conformity in the 1950s  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 179-197;  
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 41-48;  
Shrecker, “Blacklists and other Economic Sanctions”  
(Web); Shrecker, “The Legacy of McCarthyism” (Web);  
Fried, “Nightmare in Red” (Web)

Screening Rear Window (1954) – 6:00-9:00 Harding

Casablanca Film Review due

Feb. 3 Conformity and Alienation in Cold War Culture  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 198-206;  
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 72-80;  
Quart and Auster, pp. 39-51;  
Ebert, “1983 Review of Rear Window” (Web);  
Ebert, “2000 Review of Rear Window” (Web);  
Denby, “Critics Notebook -- Rear Window” (Web);  
Mogg, “Some Notes on Rear Window” (Web);

Handout Midterm # 1

Feb. 8 Nuclear Fear and the Cold War  
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 95-103;  
Quart and Auster, pp. 67-79;  
Schell, “The Fate of the Earth” (Web);

**Civil Defense in the 1960s (Web);  
50 Facts about Nuclear Weapons (Web);**

**Screening Dr. Strangelove (1964) – 6:00-9:00 Harding**

**The Third Man Film Review due**

**Feb. 10      Nuclear Fear and Insanity during the Cold War  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 243-254;  
Paul Boyer, “Dr. Strangelove and History” (Web);  
Ebert, “1994 Review of Dr. Strangelove” (Web);  
Ebert, “2000 Review of Dr. Strangelove” (Web);  
Dirks, “Review of Dr. Strangelove” (Web);  
Paul Boyer, “Dr. Strangelove at 40” (Web);**

**Feb. 15      The Nuclear Family and Containment in the 1950s  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 163-169;  
Elaine May, “Containment at Home” (Web);  
Nixon, “The Real War” (Web);  
Schwartz, “You can trust the Communists to be  
Communists” (Web); “Leave it to Beaver.org” (Web)**

**Screening Far from Heaven (2002) – 6:00-9:00 Harding**

**Rear Window Film Review due**

**Feb. 17      Conformity and Alienation in 1950s Culture  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 219-233;  
Quart and Auster, pp. 52-64;  
Buchanan, “1992 Speech to the Republican Convention” (Web);  
Ebert, “Review of Far from Heaven” (Web);  
Edelstein, “Review of Far from Heaven” (Web);  
Rolling Stone, “Review of Far From Heaven” (Web);  
Taylor, “Review of Pleasantville” (Web);  
Maslin, “Review of Pleasantville” (Web)**

#### **4. Cultural and Social Change in the 1960s**

**Feb. 22      1960s America and the Nuclear Family**

**“The Good Housewife: Excerpt from 1950s Home Economics book” (Web); Friedman, “The Feminine Mystique” (Web); Chafe, “Social Change and the American Women, 1940-1970” (Web); Morgan, “Rights of Passage” (Web);**

**Screening Breakfast at Tiffany’s (1961) – 6:00-9:00**

**Dr. Strangelove Film Review due**

**Feb. 24      The Struggle over Women’s Lives in the early 1960s**

**NOW, 1966 Statement of Purpose (Web); NOW, “1977 Declaration of American Women” (Web); “Why I Want a Wife” (Web); Steinem "Testimony for the ERA" (Web); Douglas, “She Got the Devil in her Heart” (Web); Berardinell, “Review of Breakfast at Tiffany’s” (Web); Crazy for Cinema, “Review of Breakfast at Tiffany’s” (Web)**

**March 1      The Middle Class and the 1960s Youth Rebellion**

**Levine and Papatiriu, pp. 116-136;  
Quart and Auster, pp. 82-93;  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 24-28, 255-263;  
SDS, “The Port Huron Statement” (Web);**

**Screening The Graduate (1967) – 6:00-9:00 Harding**

**Far from Heaven Film Review due & Midterm # 1 is due**

**March 3      The Youth Rebellion and the Rise of the Silent Majority**

**Mintz and Roberts, pp. 309-328;  
Time, “The Generation Gap” (Web);  
Time: “Persons of the Year: Middle Americans” (Web);  
Ebert, “Review of The Graduate” (Web);  
Doughtery, “Review of The Graduate” (Web)**

## 5. The Vietnam War and the Troubled 1970s

- March 8**    The Cold War and the Vietnam War  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 207-218;  
Levine and Papasotiriou, pp. 107-115, 141-143; 177-180;  
President Johnson, “Peace without Conquest” (Web);  
Kerry, “Vietnam Veterans against the War” (Web);  
Sitkoff, “Vietnam Revisionism” (Web);
- Screening Apocalypse Now (1979) – 6:00-9:00 Harding
- Breakfast at Tiffany’s Film Review due  
& handout Midterm # 2
- March 10**    The Vietnam War and the Dark Side of the Cold War  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 281-300;  
Quart and Auster, pp. 119-125, 144-150;  
Hagen, "Apocalypse Now: Joseph Conrad  
and the Television War"(Web); Ebert, "1979 Review of  
Apocalypse Now " (Web) ; Ebert, "[1999 Review of  
Apocalypse  
Now](#) " (Web)
- March 15**    Anxiety and Confusion in the 1970s  
Lewis, “Trends in American Society in the 1970s” (Web);  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 264-271;  
Levine and Papasotiriou, pp. 153-162, 183-185;  
Nixon, “Farewell to the White House Staff” (Web);  
Jimmy Carter, “1976 Speech at Democratic Convention”  
(Web); President Carter, “The Crisis of Confidence”  
(Web);
- Screening One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest (1967) –  
6:00-9:00 Harding
- The Graduate Film Review due

**March 17** Cynicism, Conformity, and Exhaustion in the 1970s  
Schrag, “The Forgotten American” (Web);  
Quart and Auster, pp. 97-119;  
Ebert, “1979 Review of One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest”  
(Web); Ebert, “2003 Review of One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s  
Nest” (Web); Dirks, “Review of One Flew Over the  
Cuckoo’s Nest” (Web)

**March 22-24** No Classes: Spring Break Week

## **6. The 1980s and the Rise of Conservative Culture and Politics**

**March 29** The Yuppie and the Growth of Conservative America  
Quart and Auster, pp. 127-143;  
Levine and Papatiriu, pp. 189-195;  
Crawford, “The Rise of the New Right” (Web);  
Boesky, “Berkeley Graduation Address” (Web);  
Newsweek, “The Year of the Yuppie” (Web);

Screening Wall Street (1987) – 6:00-9:00 Harding

Apocalypse Now Film Review due

**March 31** The Rise of Conservative America: Separate and Unequal  
Hertzberg, “The Short, Happy Life of the Yuppie”(Web);  
Quart and Auster, pp. 150-160; “A Rising Economy that  
Lifts Only Yachts” (Web); “How Unequal Are We  
Anyway” (Web); Phillips, “Graph of Economic Inequality”  
(Web); Ebert, “Review of Wall Street” (Web); Kempley,  
“Review of Wall Street” (Web);

Takehome Midterm # 2 is Due

**April 5** Race and Class in Reagan’s America  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 272-280;  
Bikel, “Race and the O.J. Verdict: Interview (Web);

L.A. Times, “Three Days of Hell in Los Angeles”(Web);  
Ebert, “Review of American History X” (Web);  
Dyson, “Public Enemy, Rap’s Prophets of Rage” (Web);

Screening Do the Right Thing (1989) – 6:00-9:00 Harding  
One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest Film Review due

April 7 Rap and Hip Hop and the Underclass in the late 1980s  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 343-348;  
McWhorter, “Hip Hop Holds Blacks Back” (Web);  
Dyson, “Gangsta Rap and American Culture” (Web);  
Ebert, “1989 Review of Do the Right Thing” (Web);  
Ebert, “2001 Review of Do the Right Thing” (Web);  
Emerson, “Review of Do the Right Thing” (Web);  
Berardinelli, “Review of Do the Right Thing” (Web)

## 7. The 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century America: Searching for Order in a Troubled World

April 12 Violence and Paranoia in Fight Club  
Taubin, “So Good it Hurts: Fight Club” (Web) ;  
Sragow, “It Just Sort of Clicked: Review of Fight Club” (Web) ;  
Blackwelder, "Beaten to Pulp Fiction" (Web); “Fighting Talk, an  
interview with Ed Norton” (Web); Freed, “Postmodernism and  
Violence” (Web)

Screening Fight Club (1999) – 6:00-9:00 Harding

Hanoudt Final Exam and Wall Street Film Review

April 14 Is Fight Club a Comedy about Paranoia and Despair?  
Wise, "Menace to Society: Interview with David Fincher" (Web);  
Smith, "Interview with David Fincher, Fight Club Director"  
Ebert, "Review of Fight Club" (Web); O'Hehir, "Review of  
Fight Club" (Web); Edelstein, "Boys do Bleed: Review of Fight  
Club" (Web)

April 19 Neo-liberalism, the Culture Wars, and the Anxious 1990s  
Levine and Papatiriu, pp. 199-210;

Quart and Auster, pp. 163-182;  
Schneider, “Cynicism didn’t Start with Watergate” (Web);  
Christensen, “Vietnam: The War that won’t go Away” (Web)

Screening American Beauty (1999) – 6:00-9:00 Harding  
Do the Right Thing Film Review due

April 21 Middle-class Angst and Cultural Confusion in the 1990s  
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 211-224;  
Quart and Auster, pp. 183-192;  
Ebert, “Review of American Beauty” (Web);  
Edelstein, “Review of American Beauty” (Web);  
Maslin, “Review of American Beauty” (Web);  
Turan, “Review of American Beauty” (Web);  
“Memorable Quotes from American Beauty” (Web)

April 26 Crashing into Ourselves in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America  
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 354-370;  
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 237-257;  
McIntosh, “White Privilege” (Web);  
Kendall, “Understanding White Privilege” (Web);  
Moore, “Race in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (Web);  
Morrison, “The Tumultuous 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (Web)

Screening Crash (2004) – 6:00-9:00 Harding  
Fight Club Film Review due

April 28 Race, Class, and Social Alienation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Quart and Auster, pp. 193-207;  
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 258-277;  
Ebert, “Review of Crash” (Web);  
Edelsten, “Review of Crash” (Web);  
Griffin, “Review of Crash” (Web);  
Denby, “Review of Crash” (Web);  
Brussat, “Review of Crash” (Web)

American Beauty and Crash  
Film Reviews due along with the Final Exam.

**Take-Home Final Exam: Due Thursday, May 5th,  
between 10:00 and 4:00 p.m. in my office (Sewall 42D)**