

History 2866 (750), American History and Film Spring 2008
Libby L103 Classroom, MW 3:00-4:15, Screening M 6:00-9:00 L103a

Dr. Chris H. Lewis

Ph. 492-5878

Office: Sewall Hall 42C

Office Hours: MW 2:00-2:50, 4:20-5:15

E-mail: cclewis@spot.colorado.edu

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

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, 3rd edition.
P. Levine and
H. Papatotiriou, America Since 1945: The American Moment
L. Quart and
Albert Auster, American Film and Society since 1945, 3rd 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 (25%), two take-home midterms (20% each), and a take-home final (25%). 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: 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: You may be absent from one week of classes for personal or medical reasons during the semester without your grade being affected. If your class meets twice per week, this means you may miss 2 classes for personal or medical reasons; if your class meets 3 times per week, you may miss 3 classes for personal or medical reasons. Any more absences than this will affect your grade by one grade increment; for instance, an A- grade will automatically become a B+, a B grade will automatically become a B-, and so forth. In cases of hospitalization or a death in the family, contact your instructor immediately to discuss options. 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 3).

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

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; 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).

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

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. 14 **Introduction: The Great Depression**
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 1-7, 12-18;
Quart and Auster, pp. 1-11
- Screening City Lights (1931), Casablanca (1942)
– 6:00-9:00 Libby 103A
- Jan. 16 **Class and Social Status in Silent Film**
Mintz and Roberts, pp., 53-63;
Levine and Papatiriu, pp. 1-5, 13-19;
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. 21 **No Class – Martin Luther King Holiday**
- Jan. 23 **Loyalty, Betrayal, and Propaganda in Casablanca**
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 169-177;
Quart and Auster, pp. 13-19;
Ebert, “2000 Review of Casablanca” (Web);
Ebert, “2002 Review of Casablanca” (Web);
Ecco, “Review of Casablanca” (Web)
- Jan. 28 **Post-World War II Culture and Film Noir**
Quart and Auster, pp. 20-31;
Levine and Papatiriu, pp. 19-29;
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 195-202;
“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 Libby 103a
- City Lights Film Review due

Jan. 30 **Darkness and Confusion in Early Cold War Culture**
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 30-41;
Quart and Auster, pp. 31-37;
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. 4 **McCarthyism and Conformity in the 1950s**
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 195-202;
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 Libby 103a

Casablanca Film Review due

Feb. 6 **Conformity and Alienation in Cold War Culture**
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. 11 **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 Libby 103a
The Third Man Film Review due

Feb. 13 **Nuclear Fear and Insanity during the Cold War**
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 252-264;
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. 18 **The Nuclear Family and Containment in the 1950s**
Quart and Auster, pp. 52-64;
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 Libby 103a

Rear Window Film Review due

Feb. 20 **Conformity and Alienation in 1950s Culture**
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. 25 **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. 27 **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 3 **The Middle Class and the 1960s Youth Rebellion**
Levine and Papasotiriou, pp. 116-136;
Quart and Auster, pp. 82-93;
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 265-270;
SDS, "The Port Huron Statement" (Web);

Screening The Graduate (1967) – 6:00-9:00 Libby 103a

Far from Heaven Film Review due

Midterm # 1 is due

March 5 **The Youth Rebellion and the Rise of the Silent Majority**
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 10 **The Cold War and the Vietnam War**
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 Libby 103a

Breakfast at Tiffany's Film Review due

March 12 **The Vietnam War and the Dark Side of the Cold War**
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 284-297;
Quart and Auster, pp. 119-125, 144-150;
Hagen, "[Apocalypse Now: Joseph Conrad
and the Television War](#)"; Ebert, "1979 Review of
[Apocalypse Now](#) " (Web) ; Ebert, "[1999 Review of Apocalypse
Now](#) " (Web)

March 17 **Anxiety and Confusion in the 1970s**
Lewis, "Trends in American Society in the 1970s" (Web);
Levine and Papatiriu, 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 Libby 103a

The Graduate Film Review due

Handout Midterm # 2

March 19 **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 24-26 **No Classes: Spring Break Week**

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

March 31 The Yuppie and the Growth of Conservative America

Quart and Auster, pp. 127-143;
Levine and Papatotiriou, 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 Libby 103a

Apocalypse Now Film Review due

April 2 The Rise of Conservative America: Separate and Unequal

Hertzberg, “The Short, Happy Life of the Yuppie”(Web);
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 298-308; 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);

April 7 Race and Class in Reagan’s America

Reich, “As the World Turns” (Web);
L.A. Times, “Three Days of Hell in Los Angeles”(Web);
Chambers, “[Rodney King and the Los Angeles Riots](#)” (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 Libby 103a

One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest Film Review due

Takehome Midterm # 2 is Due

April 9 Rap and Hip Hop and the Underclass in the late 1980s
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 21st century America: Searching for Order in a Troubled World

April 14 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 Libby 103a
Wall Street Film Review due

April 16 Is Fight Club a Comedy about Paranoia and Despair?
Giroux, "[Fight Club and the Politics of Masculine Violence](#)" (Web); 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 21 Neo-liberalism, the Culture Wars, and the Anxious 1990s
Levine and Papatotiriou, 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"

Screening American Beauty (1999) – 6:00-9:00 Libby 103a
Do the Right Thing Film Review due

April 23 **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 28 **Crashing into Ourselves in 21st Century America**
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 237-257;
McIntosh, “White Privilege” (Web);
Kendall, “Understanding White Privilege”(Web);
Moore, “Race in the 21st Century” (Web);
Morrison, “The Tumultuous 21st Century” (Web)

Screening Crash (2004) – 6:00-9:00 Libby 103a

Fight Club Film Review due

April 30 **Race, Class, and Social Alienation in the 21st 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 Wednesday, May 7th,
between 10:00 and 4:00 p.m. in my Libby Office