

History 2866 (001), American History and Film SSII 2007
211 Hellems, M-F 12:45-2:20 (July 10 – August 10)

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Course website: <http://www.colorado.edu/AmStudies/lewis/film/ssfilmclass.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, Rear Window, Far from Heaven, Dr. Strangelove, Breakfast at Tiffany's, The Graduate, Platoon, One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest, Wall Street, 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 an in-class 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 an in-class 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 4 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 12 movies we see this semester, students will be required to write 3 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 the first midterm is due (July 23).

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

July 10 **Introduction: The Movies and the Great Depression**
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 1-7;
Quart and Auster, pp. 1-11;
See City Lights (1931)

July 11 **Class and the Great Depression in City Lights**
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 12-18, 53-63;
Ebert, "Review City Lights" (Web);
Jaffe, "Fighting Worlds: City Lights, Modern Times,
and The Great Dictator" (Web);
See City Lights (1931)

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

- July 12** **World War II and American Culture**
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 169-177;
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 13-19;
Quart and Auster, pp. 13-19;
See Casablanca (1942)
- July 13** **Loyalty, Betrayal, and Propaganda in Casablanca**
Ebert, “1996 Review of Casablanca” (Web);
Ebert, “2000 Review of Casablanca” (Web);
Ecco, “Review of Casablanca” (Web);
Dirks, “Review of Casablanca” (Web);
Berardinelli, “Review of Casablanca” (Web);
“Memorable Quotes from Casablanca” (Web);
“Lyrics to As Time Goes By” (Web)
See Casablanca (1942)

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

- July 16** **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);
See Rear Window (1954)

**City Lights Film Review due
and Handout Midterm # 1**

- July 17** **The Paranoid Culture of the 1950s**
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);
See Rear Window (1954)

July 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)
See Far from Heaven (2002)

Casablanca Film Review due

July 19 **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);
See Far from Heaven (2002)

July 20 **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);
See Dr. Strangelove (1964)

July 23 **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);
See Dr. Strangelove (1964)

Takehome Midterm # 1 Due
and Rear Window Film Review due

4. Cultural and Social Change in the 1960s

- July 24** **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); See Breakfast at Tiffany’s (1961)
- July 25** **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); See Breakfast at Tiffany’s (1961)
- Far from Heaven Film Review due**
- July 26** **The Middle Class and the 1960s Youth Rebellion**
Levine and Pappasotiriou, pp. 116-136;
Quart and Auster, pp. 82-93;
Mintz and Roberts, pp. 265-270;
SDS, “The Port Huron Statement” (Web); See The Graduate (1967)
- July 27** **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); Dougherty, “Review of The Graduate” (Web) See The Graduate (1967)
- Dr. Strangelove Film Review due**
and Handout Midterm # 2

5. The Vietnam War and the Troubled 1970s

July 30

The Cold War and the Vietnam War

**Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 107-115, 141-143; 177-180;
President Johnson, “Peace without Conquest” (Web);
Kerry, “Vietnam Veterans against the War” (Web);
Sitkoff, “Vietnam Revisionism” (Web);
See Platoon (1986)**

Breakfast at Tiffany’s Film Review due

July 31

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;
(Web); Ebert, “Review of Platoon” (Web);
Kempley, “Review of Platoon” (Web);
See Platoon (1986)**

The Graduate Film Review due

Aug. 1

Anxiety and Confusion in the 1970s

**Lewis, “Trends in American Society in the 1970s” (Web);
Levine and Papatotiriou, 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);
See One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest (1975)**

Aug. 2

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”;
Ebert, “2003 Review of One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest”;
(Web); Dirks, “Review of One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s
Nest”;
See One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest (1975)**

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

Aug. 3 The Yuppie and the Growth of Conservative America

Quart and Auster, pp. 127-143;
Levine and Pappasotiriou, pp. 189-195;
Crawford, “The Rise of the New Right” (Web);
Boesky, “Berkeley Graduation Address” (Web);
Newsweek, “The Year of the Yuppie” (Web);
See Wall Street (1987)

Take-home Midterm # 2 is due
and Platoon Film Review due

Aug. 6 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 Econom Inequality”
(Web); Ebert, “Review of Wall Street” (Web); Kempley,
“Review of Wall Street” (Web);
See Wall Street (1987)

One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest Film Review due

7. The 1990s and early 21st century America: Searching for Order in a Troubled World

Aug. 7 Neo-liberalism, the Culture Wars, and the Anxious 1990s

Levine and Pappasotiriou, 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);
See American Beauty (1999)

Aug. 8 **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)
See American Beauty (1999)

Wall Street Film Review due

Aug. 9 **Crashing into Ourselves in 21st Century America**
Pells, “Film: Movies and Modern America” (Web);
Levine and Papatotiriou, pp. 237-252;
Morrison, “The Tumultuous 21st Century” (Web);
Ebert, “Review of Crash” (Web);
Edelstein, “Review of Crash” (Web);
Griffin, “Review of Crash” (Web);
Denby, “Review of Crash” (Web);
Brussat, “Review of Crash” (Web);
See Crash (2004)

Aug. 10 **In-class Final Exam (last day of class)**

American Beauty and Crash Film Review due