

Syllabus: CES 286 Popular Culture - 5647B121

Syllabus: History of American Cinema

American Studies 286

Instructor: Dan Thornton

Time: Online

Place: Online—Vista/Blackboard

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Course Goals:

- * Present the role of the still photograph and its influence on motion pictures
- * Describe the process and history of the motion picture evolving from arcade entertainment to a dominant storytelling medium
- * Discuss the history and techniques of the great early film pioneers inside and outside the U.S., and analyze the continuing aesthetic theories of editing motion pictures
- * Analyze the journey from the golden age of American silent films to the creation of the Hollywood studio system, and its subsequent celebrity culture
- * Present how the acceleration of film technologies mirror technological trends throughout the culture and economy
- * Write and research aspects of the Film industry
- * Explain the basic principles of cameras, lenses, film stocks and sound recording processes
- * Describe the use of movies as ideological tools, and as propaganda
- * Present the ways in which American cinema has, or has not, presented diverse voices

The course will have weekly modules that will roll out consecutively as such:

Week 1: (Cook: 1,2, 4,5) note that reading assignments are to be done by the second class of the week they are assigned The photograph and the influence of the aperture on human perception. From Brady's battlefield documents to Stieglitz's and Muybridge's new photographic fine art form, the still photograph's influence on motion pictures. From early arcade flicks to Edwin S. Porter's "The Great Train Robbery" the motion picture moves from entertainment to story teller. Montage and the great Russian film pioneers: Eisenstein, Vertov, Kuleshov and the early aesthetic theories of editing motion pictures.

Week 2: (Cook: 3,6-8)

United Artists: the journey from the golden age of American silent films to the creation of the first Hollywood studio, and its subsequent celebrity culture. The great German cinematic experiments of the Weimar republic including: Expressionism, Symbolism and even the Dada.

Talkies: how an acceleration of technologies in film making sets the stage for Hollywood's "Gilded Age". Students will get a "nuts and bolts" look at cameras, lenses, film stocks and early sound recording.

