

## COMM 6850: FILM HISTORY I

Text: David Cook: A History of Narrative Film, Third edition

The grade for this course will be determined in the following manner:

### Undergrads

|              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| First Quiz   | 25                |
| Final Quiz   | 25                |
| First Essay  | 25(min. 6 pages)  |
| Second Essay | 25 (min. 5 pages) |

### Graduates(6850)

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|-----------------------------|-----|
| First Quiz                  | 10% |
| Second Quiz                 | 10% |
| First Essay (min. 7 pages)  | 25% |
| Second Essay (min. 7 pages) | 25% |
| Final Essay (min. 7 pages)  | 30% |

Attached is a listing of essay questions and the day each is due. For their first essay assignment, undergraduates will write on either topic A, B, or C. For their second essay undergrads will write on either topic D or on the final essay assignment, which will deal primarily with the work of Jean Renoir and Orson Welles, and will be discussed in detail on NOVEMBER 8. Graduate students enrolled in COMM 6850 are required to write on Topic A. They may choose from Topic B, C, or D for their second essay. (Graduate students will also be required to write the final essay.)

Note: Those undergraduates who are concerned about receiving an essay grade before the October DROP deadline are advised to write on topic A. Again, ALL undergrad students must write on one of the first three topics.

All essays must be typewritten, double spaced, and carefully proofread. Corrected typos and spelling errors are acceptable. In addition to being historically accurate and grammatically correct, an A paper will present its arguments in a persuasive manner and with a strong sense of style. This is a senior level course; it is assumed that at this stage of your college career you understand what constitutes plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense that can result in an F and expulsion from the university, so do not be sloppy about attribution of sources.

While missing class will not be held against the student per se (although new university regulations require me to report chronic absenteeism), he/she will be held responsible for knowledge of all classroom activities, including all films screened in class, regardless of the reason for absence. There are no extra screenings for students who miss class. Late essay submissions will suffer grade penalties,

Films, assignments, and exam dates as listed on this schedule are subject to change. It is, of course, the student's responsibility to be aware of any changes that are announced in class, even if they are absent the day the changes are announced. Drinking and eating are prohibited in this screening facility. Talking during the screenings is rude, boorish behavior. As a class none of us will tolerate it.

### Reading and Film Schedule

- 8/30 Course Introduction; MUYBRIDGE; EDISON; LUMIERE PREMIERE PROGRAM; TRIP TO THE MOON
- 9/06 Reading Due: Preface, pgs 1-87; ;, THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY  
LIFE OF AN AMERICAN FIREMAN; ENOCH ARDEN; MUSKETEERS OF  
PIG ALLEY, THE GIRL AND HER TRUST; Intro to BIRTH OF A NATION
- 9/13 THE BIRTH OF A NATION Reading due: 88-101
- 9/20 Reading Due: 102-129; Discussion & Video Excerpts: **Nation, Intolerance** and  
Lillian Gish excerpts; Screen THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI
- 9/27 excerpts from METROPOLIS; NOSFERATU; screen THE LAST LAUGH
- 10/04 **ESSAY A DUE**; Reading Due: 130-195; FILM GRAPHICS: ABSTRACT  
ASPECTS OF EDITING; THE DIVING SEQUENCE FROM OLYMPIAD;  
video excerpts from **End of St. Petersburg**; THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN  
*Inventory for first quiz*
- 10/11 \*\*\*\*\*First Quiz\*\*\*\*\* CHAPLIN SHORT; Unknown Chaplin excerpt;  
THE GOLD RUSH
- 10/18 Reading Due: p196-214; SHERLOCK JR. excerpts, ONE WEEK; COPS;  
THE GENERAL

10/25 Reading due: 215-238; SUNRISE ; excerpts from THE WIND; THE CROWD; GREED; THIEF OF BAGHDAD

11/01 Reading Due: 239-273; ; **M**; video excerpts from SINGING IN THE RAIN; MODERN TIMES; KING KONG; **ESSAY B DUE**

11/08 Reading Due: p274--391; directors of the 30's; SELECTED VIDEO EXCERPTS; Berkeley/Astaire/Renoir intro ; Final Take home essay assigned; Screen LE GRANDE ILLUSION

11/15 **ESSAYs C and D DUE** Discussion of Le Grande Illusion ;screen RULES OF THE GAME

11/22 **UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY: THANKSGIVING 2001**

11/29 Reading Due: Chapter 10 ; CITIZEN KANE Lecture; Screen CITIZEN KANE; *inventory for final quiz*

12/13 Final Exam period 1-3 P.M. xxxxxxxxxxxx.**FINAL ESSAY DUE; \*\*\*\*FINAL QUIZ\***

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Additional Note concerning Essay Assignments: If you have a particular interest in a topic **from this period in film history** other than the ones listed in this syllabus see me at the end of class before October 1 with a proposal for your paper. This proposal should include a list of possible research sources as well as a one paragraph description of the thesis of your paper- I will at that time advise you if your proposal is acceptable.(You are welcome, of course, to see me much earlier than October 1 to discuss the topic in informal terms before preparing your thesis and list of sources.) If the proposal is for a paper to be written **INSTEAD** of essays A, B, or C, that paper will be due on November 15. If you propose this paper to substitute for the second essay assignment, it will be due on December 13.

Grades will utilize the plus/minus system:

A 94-100

A- 90-93

B+ 87-89

B 84-86

B- 80-83, etc



## FILM HISTORY I ESSAY QUESTION "A"

THE BIRTH OF A NATION: It has been said that with this film the motion picture truly came of age.....both for good and for evil. Discuss the revolutionary importance of this film in terms of: a) motion pictures as an art form; b) motion pictures as a social force; c) motion pictures as an industry.

In formulating and organizing your essay, you'll be expected to draw on material covered during class lectures/discussion and material covered in your text. In addition, you'll be expected to do some outside reading, either from the books on reserve or from other sources unearthed during your own research.

The organization and wording of the essay, however, should be your's. When drawing from the above sources, be sure to give proper credit. This can be done through formal endnotes or footnotes. Alternatively, you may choose simply to give credit to your sources in the body of your essay. For instance, "As Cook points out, Porter's work was not considered controversial at the time." (p345). Or: "In his history of the silent film, THE PARADE'S GONE BY, Kevin Brownlow points out that many technical innovations usually attributed to Griffith were actually first utilized by director Allan Dwan" (p213). Remember, paraphrasing a source requires that you credit the source. Remember also that plagiarism may result in expulsion from the university.

A good essay will intelligently organize your resources into a coherent, thorough, and carefully documented paper. An exceptional essay (a.k.a: one which might receive an "A") will also incorporate added insights and documentation based on notes taken during your ACTIVE viewing of the film(s) under discussion.

The general guidelines discussed above hold true for all your essay assignments in this class.

Please note that books have been placed on 24 hour reserve - so if you wait until "the last minute" you may well find they are all checked out - this is no excuse for a late paper! (Remember: late submissions will receive lower grades!) Also, please return reserve books to the library on time - hoarding books for two or more days is not just expensive - it is boorish, selfish, irresponsible, and anti-social behavior that hurts your fellow students.

## ADDITIONAL ESSAY QUESTIONS

### ESSAY "B".....

During the 1920's the Soviet and German cinemas developed in equally influential but distinctly different directions. Explain how the prevailing social, cultural, scientific, and artistic climates in each country influenced film form and content - and illustrate your answer with detailed accounts of specific films seen in class. (Note: "Detailed accounts" does not mean lengthy plot summaries.)

### ESSAY "C".....

Based on the films seen in class, compare and contrast the film technique, comic style, and world view (thematic concerns, vision of life) of Charles Chaplin and Buster Keaton. (A discussion of their personal background and pre film training may be relevant to your answer, but do not devote more than 15% of your essay to such details.)

### ESSAY "D".....

SUNRISE has been condemned by some as a technically brilliant but trivial and saccharine film - proof that Hollywood can corrupt even a film maker of Murnau's stature. Others have hailed it as "the crowning achievement of the silent cinema," - and as a film that reveals the same thematic and stylistic concerns that characterized Murnau's German films. With whom do you agree? Why? How does the film seem "American?" How does it seem "German?"