

# COMD 207 – Film History Fall 2013

**Instructor:** Corry Shores

**e-mail:** corryshores@gmail.com

**Class Hours:** Mon 1:40-3:30 / Wed 3:40-5:30

**Office:** FA305

**Office Hours:** Best by appointment, but normally free Tues 9:00-15:00 and Fri 9:00-17.00

## **The Course:**

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This course explores the history of cinema from its invention to the digital era. It covers major breakthroughs, significant movements and genres in cinema, as well as different topics, such as style and meaning, elements of film narrative, techniques of film production. The course will also examine the historical, political and cultural context of the movies.

## **Aims:**

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1. Understanding movies in a historical context.
2. Identifying and examining the key texts and contexts of different film forms, traditions and styles.
3. Describing the economic, social and cultural means that shape film movements.
4. Analyzing the form and content of particular films.

## **Readings:**

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**The core text:** Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (McGraw Hill, 2009) (available at Meteksan Bookstore and Bilkent Library Reserve).

**Additional reading:** Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (ed.) *The Oxford History of World Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

\* You are expected to read the assigned chapters prior to the lecture and screening of each class. This is essential as the in class discussions will depend on your familiarity with the texts.

## **Requirements and Assessment:**

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**Attendance:** Because of the nature of the course (excerpts from many films will be shown in class) attendance to all classes and screenings is not just a requirement but vital for your success. You are allowed two absences throughout the semester. Each subsequent absence will result in losing 3 points. Upon sixth absence you will receive an F for the final grade (3 absences: 7; 4 absences: 4; 5 absences: 1; 6 absences: F).

**In-class participation and Moodle forum:** You are encouraged to ask questions and discuss your ideas and reactions to the films, the readings, and the class in general. You can also discuss any questions or concerns you have about the material we are studying or anything else related to the course.

**Screening journals:** 2x400 words entries on individual films (Due by October 13<sup>th</sup> and November 17<sup>th</sup>)

**Critical essay:** 1000 words (Due by December 15<sup>th</sup>)

**Final exam:** Date to be announced

**Grading**

Attendance	10
Participation & Forum	10
Screening journals	20 (10x2)
Critical essay	30
Final Exam	30
TOTAL	100 points

<b>A+</b> 100	<b>B+</b> 85-89	<b>C+</b> 70-74	<b>D+</b> 55-59
<b>A</b> 95-99	<b>B</b> 80-85	<b>C</b> 65-69	<b>D</b> 50-54
<b>A-</b> 90-94	<b>B-</b> 75-79	<b>C-</b> 60-64	<b>F</b> 0-50

**Course schedule:**

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**Week 1: Early Cinema**

Sept 16 Course agenda, goals and procedures

Sept 18 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 1 (3-21), Screening: Selections from *Landmarks of Early Cinema*, vol. 1

**Week 2: Early Cinema (cont.) / Development of Narrative Form**

Sept 23 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 1, 2, 3 (21-31; 33-51; 55-79) Screening: More selections from *Landmarks of Early Cinema*, vol. 1

Sept 25 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 7 (143-165). Screening: *Sherlock Jr.* (Buster Keaton, 1924, 45 min.)

**Week 3: German Expressionism**

Nov 30 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 5 (101-117)

Oct 2 Screening: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919, 69 min.)

**Week 4: Soviet Montage**

Oct 7 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 6 (119-140)

Oct 9 Screening: *Chelovek s kino-apparatom* (*Man with a Movie Camera*, Dziga Vertov, 1929, 68 min.); Excerpts from *Staroye i novoye*, (*The General Line*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1929)

Oct 13: 1<sup>ST</sup> SCREENING JOURNAL DUE

**Week 5: NO CLASS**

Oct 14 No Class

Oct 16 No Class

**Week 6: French Poetic Realism**

Oct 21 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 13 (283-301)

Oct 23 Screening: *Le jour se lève* (*Daybreak*, Marcel Carné, 1939, 93 min.)

**Week 7: Hollywood Studio System and Genre Innovations**

Oct 28 No class

Oct 30 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 10 (213-237)

**Week 8: Hollywood Studio System and Genre Innovations (cont.)**

Nov 4 Screening: *City Lights* (Charlie Chaplin, 1931, 87 min.)

Nov 6 Screening: *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952, 85 min.)

**Week 9: Italian Neo-realism**

Nov 11 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 16 (353-371)

Nov 13 Screening: *Umberto D* (Vittorio de Sica, 1952, 89 min.)

Nov 17: 2<sup>nd</sup> SCREENING JOURNAL DUE

**Week 10: Postwar Cinema: Japan**

Nov 18 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 18 (391-413)

Nov 20 Screening: *Rashomon* (Akira Kurosawa, 1950, 88 min.)

**Week 11: French New Wave**

Nov 25 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 19&20 (415-475)

Nov 27 Screening: *Bande à part* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1964, 95 min.)

**Week 12: Third Cinema**

Dec 2 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 23 (535-576)

Dec 4 Screening: *Ceddo* (*Outsiders*, Sembene, 1977, 120 min.)

**Week 13: Experimental and Avantgarde Cinema**

Dec 9 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 8 (173-184), 21 (477-507)

Dec 11 Screening: *Un Chien Andalou* (Bunuel/Dali, 1929, 14 min.); *Blinkety Blank* (Norman McLaren, 1955, 5 mins.); *Dante Quartet* (Stan Brakhage, 1987, 8 min.); "Catalog" (John Whitney, 1961, 7 min.)

Dec 15: CRITICAL ESSAY DUE

**Week 14: Documentary Film**

Dec 16 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, 24 (579-602)

Dec 18 Screening: *F for Fake* (Orson Welles, 1975, 85 min.)

**Week 15: Contemporary Cinema: Dogme 95**

Dec 23 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 27 & 28 (679-703; 713-714)

Dec 25 Screening: *Festen* (*The Celebration*, Thomas Vinterberg, 1998, 105 min.)

**Week 16: Post-cinema**

Dec 30 Reading: Thompson and Bordwell, Ch. 30 Ch. 30 of 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, to be provided (713-30)

## Assignments

### 1. Screening Journals

For this assignment you will write a 1-2 page (400-500 words) response to a film of your own choice (This might be one of the films screened in class, or other films mentioned in the textbook in relation to a particular period/movement, or any other film that is linked with these). You might start taking notes on the film. What questions does the film raise? You can discuss a particular scene, character, theme, or image. You might as well compare this film with other films of the period and/or movement, or texts you have read, or some contemporary films. What is the significance of this particular film in relation to social, economical or cultural context?

Please do not include any plot summaries. Presume that the reader knows the basic plot of the movie you are writing about. This is not a film review, thus avoid any value judgments such as "a great film". Please focus on one or two topics and support your ideas with course readings and other relevant material. Make sure to use the vocabulary and analytical tools you have learned in this course.

You are responsible for turning in two screening journals over the course of the semester:

First Journal (Due: Oct 13<sup>th</sup>, Sunday): Early cinema (week one), silent cinema (week two), German Expressionism (week three), Soviet Montage (week four).

Second Journal (Due: Nov 17<sup>th</sup>, Sunday): French Poetic Realism (week six), Classical Hollywood (week seven), Italian Neo-realism (week eight), Postwar World Cinema (week nine).

### 2. Critical Essay

The critical essay should extensively deal with a film movement, a period in film history, a genre or the work of a director. What is the significance of it? What is its relevance to contemporary cinema? By focusing on a few films (which you have seen) analyze a specific problem in relation to that movement/period/ genre/director. Please put a title that would give a general idea what the essay is about.

Please use at least two primary sources (apart from the course textbook) and follow proper referencing system. All students must see me to discuss proposed paper thesis. The essay should be 3-4 pages (1,000 words) long and due by Dec 15<sup>th</sup>, Sunday.

#### Notes:

- All written assignments must be word-processed and must be submitted to Moodle by the due date, as a Microsoft Word (Word 97-2004) document. Name the file with your last name only and do not use Turkish characters (i.e. aydin.doc) Please include your name and student number, and make sure to carefully edit and proofread your own work.
- All film titles must be written in italic and must include the director's name and the year of production in parenthesis.
- Late submission: Your grade will be lowered by one point for each day after the due date.
- Plagiarism: The unacknowledged use of the words/ideas/insights/original research of another is prohibited. Plagiarism might lead to failing the course and even disciplinary charge. Please make sure to document properly any information you use.