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Summer Session 2006
Ruth Adams 001, MW 6:00 to 9:30 pm
Rutgers--The State University

**American Film and American Myth
American Studies 01:050:262**

"Good movies make you care, make you believe in possibilities again."
--Pauline Kael

Contact Information

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Required Reading

Joseph M. Boggs & Dennis W. Petrie, The Art of Watching Films, Sixth Edition, 2004,
McGraw Hill

Sidney Lumet, Making Movies, New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

Course Requirements

Normally, when this class meets in the evening we will see at least one feature-length film along with one or two episodes of our serial. Episodes of the serial are shown once and only once. The responsibility for seeing these films is yours and yours alone. Seeing a film is not like reading a book. A book can be picked up and set down whenever you like. These episodes must be seen when they are shown. However, all of the feature films will be placed on reserve in the Media Room (basement level) of the Cook-Douglass Library in video format.

Since the quality of your written work will crucially depend upon first-hand knowledge of each film, we encourage you to view each major film twice--once in class and later at the library. In addition, use of videotapes or DVD's on your own is encouraged (insofar as the films are available in these formats). You should always try to see a film twice, since you pick up many subtleties the second time. On most evenings, you will be given a take-home study guide, which may prove useful in preparing for the final. It will not be turned in or graded, but it should be answered completely.

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend all scheduled course meetings, to come on time starting on the very first day, and to stay in class through the lecture, the break, and the screening of the feature film. Since every day in summer school represents about one week's work in regular sessions, regular and punctual attendance is mandatory. You are allowed one excused absence to be used for illness, business, tragedy, or even pleasure. There are no other excused absences for any reason. If you miss twice, your attendance grade will be lowered one letter grade (in other words, the best grade you would get would be a B), three times another letter grade or C, four times a D, five times an F, six or more times are grounds for failure of this course. So please try to attend class regularly.

Note that every new copy of *The Art of Watching Films* comes with a free copy of a CD-ROM. This text-specific CD will help clarify and reinforce specific concepts addressed in the text with the use of film clips (one per chapter), a corresponding commentary for each film, and a quiz for you to take to test your understanding of the material. With the quiz function, you should test your mastery of the concepts addressed in the CD. You should take the separate quiz (10 questions) for each chapter. Answers can be immediately checked and the results should be emailed to us upon the completion of each quiz at americanfilm.americanstudies@gmail.com. You should email us the results of each quiz by midnight of the day before that reading assignment falls due. For example, you should be emailing me the results of the quizzes for Chapters One and Two by midnight of the day before our second class meeting. Please, no lame excuses. Just do the work. Late work will not be accepted. Either do it on time or you do not get credit for the assignment.

Exams and Grades

Attendance and Participation	20%
Midterm Exam (objective only)	30%
Final Exam (objective plus essays)	50%

The midterm covers the first three weeks of the course. The final is cumulative, and it covers all six weeks of the course. Both examinations will test recall of the films (through dialogue identification) and concepts in the textbook (especially terminology) Pay particular attention to the terms that are explained in the glossary, pages G-1 to G-8 in the back of the book. In addition to a number of objective (multiple choice) questions, the final will also give you a chance to write two essays to demonstrate your skill at handling ideas.

Attendance at both the midterm and final examinations is mandatory and required. This obligation must have top priority if you expect to receive credit for the course. Be sure to arrange your work schedule and your personal schedule accordingly. If you do not take the exams, you will not get credit for the course. The exams will be given at the scheduled time only. There are no alternate dates or make-ups. You may be excused only for illness that requires hospitalization or a documented death in your immediate family. Unless there is a drastic emergency of this nature that can be substantiated and documented, we expect you to attend and take the exams on schedule.

In the belief that proper crib preparation is indistinguishable from studying, I have institutionalized and legalized the crib sheet for both the midterm and the final exams in this course. You are allowed to use a legal crib sheet. My purpose is to reduce exam anxiety and to encourage good study habits. The rules are as follows:

- @ Both sides of a single 8 1/2" X 11" piece of paper may be used.
- @ Crib sheets must be written by hand--not typed--and signed.
- @ The crib sheet is to be turned in with the exam.

"Talk low, talk slow, and don't say too much."
--advice on acting, attributed to John Wayne

Course Approach to Film

There are a number of different ways to study a movie. We could concentrate on the film as representative of a director's skill and philosophy. Or we could look at basic patterns or formulae that make up the various genres. These and other ways of studying movies are all worthwhile. However, in American Studies we take another approach. The most common name for this approach is socio-cultural.

Our approach assumes that popular movies are a product created mainly for commercial profit. In order to be profitable, movies must give their audiences what people want to see. And mainly people want to see films that reflect their moral, philosophical beliefs as well as stories that are entertaining.

Therefore, movies provide us with valuable clues to the worldviews of the crowds who go to them. By studying the movies we are also studying the culture out of which they come. Hints as how to relate movies to the culture will be provided throughout the course.

Course Objectives

1. To gain an overall perspective about the kinds of films made in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s, with a special focus on the "Classic" films of this Golden Age of Hollywood. We will study styles, stars, studios, and genres so that you might later view classic films with a fuller understanding and appreciation of their context.
2. To come to both an intellectual and emotional understanding of American culture by a close examination of the films produced for mass audiences of the period. The assumption in this regard is that movies of any era offer a fantasized reflection of the hopes, fears, and values of

their audiences.

Special Invitation

This course is on the selected list for the Summer Session Audit Program. It is open on a space available basis to noncredit, auditing students for reduced tuition of \$95. Rutgers Alumni and RU-ALL members may take advantage of summer audit tuition of \$65. Please have your class admission card available for presentation.

Optional Term Paper

This optional extra-credit term paper will be due in class during the next-to-the-last week as indicated in our calendar of assignments. Since the assignment is entirely optional, there will be no need for extensions. If you do not have the paper, you will not be penalized in any way. Writing this paper can only help your final grade and cannot harm you at all.

Papers will be evaluated on their merit--extra credit is not given merely because papers were completed. Papers must be generated on the computer or typewritten. Use Times New Roman in 12-point type with one-inch margins all around. No cover sheet please. Simply type your name, the course name, the instructor's name, and the date, each item on its own line, single-spaced, in the upper right hand corner of page 1. Double space down to the paper's title. Double space thereafter. Follow either the MLA (Modern Language Association) or Chicago Manual of Style guidelines for the manuscript, citations, and works cited (bibliography). Grading will be based on content, organization, development, style, and correctness. Carefully proofread for spelling, typography, punctuation, and grammar.

Successful papers will earn bonus points to be applied to the score on the final exam, after the regular grades are computed. "A" papers get 9 points; "B" papers get 7 points; and "C" papers get 5 points. When bonus points are applied to the final exam, it can make a difference of an entire letter grade. Remember, it is up to you. No one has to do the assignment. However, those who carry it out should find the experience rewarding.

We are looking for a 1750 word paper (about 7 typewritten pages) that meets the criteria below. Papers are due at the start of class of Wednesday, July 26. Late papers will not be accepted. Papers will be graded and returned to you at the final exam, one week later, on August 2.

Subject. Your paper will be about a film made by one of the directors we have studied other than the one we have already seen. You will view this outside of class. These are widely available as they are mostly "classic" films.

First paragraph. The first paragraph should contain a brief summary of the film's narrative or story (about 100-150 words). Tell us what happens in the film. This should be in your own words. Do not repeat descriptions from other sources.

Main Body. The main body of your paper (1450 words, about 5 to 6 typewritten pages) should analyze the use of mise-en-scene or cinematography. Choose only one of these elements for analysis. Do not mix them up!

If you analyze **mise-en-scene** (drawing upon the terms and concepts from Chapter 4 Visual Design): Discuss how settings, costumes, make-up, lighting, movement, acting, and use of space affect our perceptions of the film's narrative, characters, and/or meanings. Be sure to define or explain the terms you use and give specific examples from individual scenes in the film.

If you analyze **cinematography** (drawing upon the terms and concepts from Chapter 5 Cinematography): Discuss how framing and camera movement as well as other choices by the cinematographer affect our perceptions of the film's narrative, characters, and/or meanings. Be sure to define or explain the terms you use.

Conclusion. Your final paragraph (up to 200 words) should discuss some of the kinds of meanings conveyed by the film and offer some conclusions about how mise-en-scene or cinematography conveys or affects those meanings.

Format. Papers should be word-processed, double spaced, in Times New Roman, 12-point font, and have one-inch margins. Your name, and the name of the film you are analyzing should be placed in the upper right-hand corner of your first page. Be sure to place page numbers on each page. Please staple all pages together. Please do not use folders or binders, since they are too bulky.

Sources and Plagiarism. The paper should reflect your own analysis of the film in your own words. I do not expect you to use any outside sources. If you do use any sources for words or ideas, you must give them full credit in footnotes or endnotes. Plagiarism is a serious offense in this course and according to Rutgers University regulations. If you appropriate another person's ideas or words in any manner whether by restatement or direct quotation without acknowledging your source, you will commit plagiarism. The penalties for plagiarism in this course are as follows: a zero on any plagiarized writing, which may result in failure of the course and a report to the dean.

The Republic Serial

In the 1930s major film exhibitors discovered that one way to build audience loyalty was to show episodic serials. These short one-reel films were shown in weekly installments. Often the installment would end with the hero in a difficult situation. Typically, the outcome would not be resolved until the following week. The idea was to build anticipation so that the audience would return week after week to follow the hero's fate. By the 1940s, this style of filmmaking had been perfected.

To re-create the atmosphere of a 1940-style theater, we will be showing periodic installments of the "Adventures of Captain Marvel," considered by many to be the finest serial ever made. The series chronicles the exploits of "The World's Mightiest Mortal" as he combats The Scorpion, a hooded villain intent on obtaining six optical lenses that, when aligned properly, turn ordinary stones into gold! Highlighting the serial are fabulous flying sequences by Republic's ace special effects team, Howard and Theodore Lydecker. Combining a wired dummy photographed against real backgrounds in natural sunlight, with spectacular take-off leaps and landings supplied by

action ace David Sharpe, the final effects are still as fascinating today as they were in 1941.

"There was a strength and optimism, a wonderful spirit in the films of the 1930s and 1940s. It was a great era of filmmaking. In modern movies people seem like models; there's no relationship. They just pass in front of you in this shiny gloss like flickering symbols, but you can't get into them."

--Robin Menken McDonald, 24, actress

Classroom Etiquette

For your own benefit you should try to arrive on time for each class. If you are unavoidably late, please enter by the rear door so as not to disrupt everyone else's viewing. Again for your own benefit you should stay for the complete screening of each film. If something comes up such that you must leave early, speak to me about the situation beforehand, and leave by the rear entrance. Please turn off all cell phones and pagers and put them away during class. Our classroom is very large, even excessively large. Therefore, to promote discussion and participation during the lectures, we ask that you sit in one of first seven rows at the beginning of class. During the screening of the feature, you may sit anywhere you like.

Advising

I will do my best to keep an eye on you and to call you out if I think you look like you need help, but there are a lot of you and just one of me. It is therefore really up to you to come to me if you need help--on anything. I come to class early not just to take attendance but also to be available to talk. I have brief office hours during the break, but we can set up appointments then for longer meetings at mutually convenient times. . If you have course conflicts, I can arrange alternate meeting times, just ask. And don't be shy.

Advising is part of my job! I am happy to help you with course materials, paper and exam preparation, with planning your future, internships, picking a graduate school, and with navigating the Rutgers bureaucracy. Perhaps, most important, I'm a fairly good listener if you need someone safe to talk to, and I can help you find help if you need it.

Class Schedule

Mon 26 June

AMERICA AT THE MOVIES

Distribution of Syllabus

CAPTAIN MARVEL--Episode 1

MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON (1939) In Class.

Directed by Frank Capra

- Wed 28 June **FANTASY MUSICAL**
 Read Boggs & Petrie, Chapters 1 and 2
 CAPTAIN MARVEL--Episodes 2 and 3
 THE WIZARD OF OZ (1939) In Class.
 Directed by Victor Fleming
- Mon 3 July **ADVENTURE DRAMA**
 Read Boggs & Petrie, Chapters 3 and 4
 CAPTAIN MARVEL--Episode 4
 ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS (1939) In Class.
 Directed by Howard Hawks
- Wed 5 July **ROMANTIC THRILLER**
 Read Boggs & Petrie, Chapters 5 and 6
 CAPTAIN MARVEL--Episode 5
 REBECCA (1940) In Class.
 Directed by Alfred Hitchcock
- Mon 10 July **AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSICAL**
 Read Boggs & Petrie, Chapters 7 and 8
 CAPTAIN MARVEL--Episode 6
 Class Exercise on Quotation Identification
 CABIN IN THE SKY (1943) In Class.
 Directed by Vincente Minelli
- Wed 12 July **MIDTERM EXAMINATION** in class.
 Midterm takes place right after the serial chapter.
 Read Boggs & Petrie, Chapters 9 and 10
 CAPTAIN MARVEL--Episode 7
- THE MALTESE FALCON** (1941) See on your own.
 Directed by John Huston. Film not shown in class.
- Mon 17 July **FILM NOIR**
 Read Boggs & Petrie, Chapters 11 and 12
 CAPTAIN MARVEL--Episode 8
 Sample Essay Questions Distributed
 THE BIG SLEEP (1946)
 Directed by Howard Hawks
- Wed 19 July **WESTERN DRAMA**
 Read Boggs & Petrie, Chapter 13 and 14
 CAPTAIN MARVEL—Episode 9
 RED RIVER (1948)
 Directed by Howard Hawks

Mon 24 July

CRIME DRAMA

Read Lumet, *Making Movies* (Before Class)
CAPTAIN MARVEL--Episode 10
12 ANGRY MEN (1957)
Directed by Sidney Lumet

Wed 26 July

CIVIL WAR DRAMA I

Optional Term Papers Due!
CAPTAIN MARVEL--Episode 11
Course Evaluations Distributed
GONE WITH THE WIND (1939) Part One
Directed by Victor Fleming

Mon 31 July

CIVIL WAR DRAMA II

CAPTAIN MARVEL--Episode 12, The Conclusion
GONE WITH THE WIND (1939) Part Two
Directed by Victor Fleming

Wed 2 August

FINAL EXAMINATION

Course Evaluations Distributed
Blue books are supplied
Bring soft lead #2 pencils for objective
Bring ballpoint pen for essays
Every other seat seating
NO MAKEUPS; NO EXCEPTIONS

"There was a land of Cavaliers and Cotton Fields
called the Old South. Here in this pretty world
Gallantry took its last bow. Here was the last
ever to be seen of Knights and their Ladies Fair,
of Master and Slave. Look for it only in books,
for it is no more than a dream remembered. A
civilization gone with the wind."

--Prologue to screenplay by Sidney Howard
"Gone with the Wind" (1939)

"No Civil War picture ever made a nickel."
--MGM producer Irving Thalberg

"If we'd had that many soldiers,
we would have won the war."

--John Marsh to his wife, Margaret Mitchell,
after viewing the premiere of "Gone with
the Wind."

Summer Advisory

It is characteristic of summer school work that it is very intense. Unfortunately, this intense work is being carried out at the very time that many others are enjoying baseball, lazy afternoons, and weekends at the shore. However, you should bear in mind that you and you alone are responsible for keeping up with the assigned work in this course. When the semester ends with the final examination, work for this course is complete.

Therefore, please be advised that once the course has ended, there will be absolutely, positively no further opportunities for "make up" exams or "extra credit" work to improve your grade. Such after-the-fact activities are manifestly unfair to everyone else in the course who has done the work all along. The time to work on this course is now, not after the class is over.

"The motion pictures present our customs and our daily life more distinctly than any other medium and, therefore, if we were to come back a thousand years from today and tried to find some form of expression that would more clearly, more perfectly explain how we live today, it would have to be the motion picture, because there is no medium of today that so universally must please as great a number of people..."

--Irving Thalberg, 1929