

## American Cinema Syllabus

### COURSE INFORMATION

#### *The Essentials:*

1. American Cinema/Film 18
2. Denise Bostrom, Instructor
3. 415-239-3651
4. film18ac@aol.com
5. Film Dept. FAX information

#### *Course Description:*

An introductory course in film studies bringing Hollywood filmmaking into clear focus as an art form, as an economic force, and as a system of representation and communication. Explores how Hollywood films work technically, artistically, and culturally to reinforce and challenge American's national self image.

Prerequisites/Co-requisites: None

#### *Required Text and Educational Materials:*

1. Belton, American Cinema/American Culture, 1<sup>st</sup>. Ed., 1994
2. Sikov, Study Guide for American Cinema, 1<sup>st</sup>. Ed., 1994
3. Ability to view the introductory video series on American cinema, *American Cinema* Telecourse series

#### *Course Objectives:*

Upon completion of this course a student will be able to:

1. Summarize American film history from the silent era to present day movies.
2. Compare the developing technology in film to its evolving aesthetics.
3. Interpret the basic technical and critical vocabulary of motion pictures.
4. Evaluate the changing economic structure of the film industry.
5. Assess the different genres, film grammar, and editing and lighting styles used in films and rate how successfully these techniques are employed.
6. Appraise their role as moviegoers and increase their ability to watch films critically.
7. Examine how the tools of camera angles, lighting, editing and sound manipulate how we feel about a filmed subject.
8. Distinguish and contrast the styles of different filmmakers.

## **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS**

1. Fast-speed computer with at least a 14.4 modem
2. Internet access
3. Web browser with graphics capability
4. Word processing software (MS Word or WordPerfect)
5. E-mail capability
6. Other hardware or software (CD-ROM player, Real Audio, etc.)

## **COMPETENCIES AND EVALUATION**

1. CCSF Online Skill Assessment

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### *Assignments:*

1. Students are expected to view the 13 Telecourse programs outlining American Cinema as an art form, economic system and cultural commodity.
2. Students are expected to read a standard text and study guide on American Cinema.
3. Written assignments are also required. These include:
  - a. Film Reviews of classic Hollywood films (1920 - 1970)
    - i. References to text and other web sites
  - b. Term paper that incorporates the course objectives
4. Additional assignments include:
  - a. Field trips to large screen theatres that showcase classic Hollywood cinema
  - b. Viewing suggested films referenced in the text
  - c. Weekly participation in online discussion
  - d. Participation in class designed web page
  - e. Taking self-test online quizzes

### *Grades/Evaluation:*

Evaluation: Grades are based on a combination of methods to assess a student's comprehension of course objectives. These will include:

1. Quizzes online (25%)
2. An online midterm essay (25%)
3. Weekly online postings (25%)
  - a. Incorporates material in the text, broadcast and other web sites
4. Contribution to a group web page dedicated to a film genre (25%)

### *Make-Up Policy:*

A student must submit a written reason why he or she missed a deadline by the day of the deadline.

The student and instructor will then select a mutually agreed upon new deadline for the work, which the student will then confirm in writing. If the student does not turn in the late work by the second deadline, the instructor then may give a failing grade on that missed assignment.

*Withdrawal Policy:*

Students may withdraw from the class up to the accepted withdrawal deadlines in the college. Students may write and ask the instructor to sign a late withdrawal slip and the instructor will sign the form if the withdrawal is requested before the mid-term. Withdrawing from the class after the mid-term is at the discretion of the instructor.

*Note:* it is the sole responsibility of the student to withdraw from the class. The instructor will not drop a student who is not participating, but rather give a low or failing grade to a student who is not submitting work.

*Academic Honesty:*

Policy Number: 6Hx28: 10-16

*Netiquette Rules:*

1. Short and concise messages
2. Include a clear subject line
3. Include signature at the bottom of your message
4. Use CAPS sparingly
5. Disagree with an idea with respect
6. Do not forward chain mail
7. Do not attach a file to a message if you can paste in into the body of a note

*Course Content & Schedule:*

Week One

Orientation

Read text & Study Guide: Cinema as an Institution

Visit suggested web sites

Participate in online discussion

Week Two

View: Classical Hollywood Cinema

Read: textbook chapters - 2 and 3  
Visit suggested web sites: Writing a compelling film review  
Online discussion

### Week Three

View: The Studio System  
Read: text - chapter 4, study guide - unit 2  
Suggested screening: *Morocco*, *Scarface*  
Visit suggested web sites: Hollywood Studios  
Online discussion

### Week Four

View: The Star System  
Read: text - chapter 5, study guide - unit 3  
Suggested screening: *Mildred Pierce*  
Visit suggested web sites: Creating Hollywood Stars  
Online discussion: drafting a film review

### Week Five

View: The Western  
Read: text - chapter 10, study guide - unit 4  
Suggested screening: *Red River*  
Take self-test quiz  
Online discussion

### Week Six

View: The Comedy  
Read: text - chapter 7, study guide - unit 5  
Suggested screening: *The Lady Eve*  
Visit suggested web sites: Romantic Comedy  
Online discussion: writing a film review  
Turn in Film Review

### Week Seven

View: The War Film  
Read: text - chapter 8, study guide - unit 6  
Suggested screening: *They Were Expendable*  
Visit suggested web sites: War films  
Online discussion: the purpose of war films

### Week Eight

View: Film Noir  
Reading: text - chapter 9, study guide - unit 7  
Suggested screening: *Double Indemnity*  
Visit suggested web sites: Film noir

Online discussion: creating a class web page on film noir

### Week Nine

View: Film in the Television Age

Read: text – chapter 12, study guide – unit 8

Suggested screening: *Rebel Without a Cause*

Online Self-Review for Mid-term

Online discussion: preparing for the Mid-term

### Week Ten

On-campus Mid-term

Online discussion: organizing a class web page (film noir)

### Week Eleven

View: The Film School Generation

Read: text – chapter 14, study guide – unit 9

Suggested screening: *Goodfellas*

Visit suggested web sites: film school generation

Online discussion: delegate tasks for the web page

### Week Twelve

View: The Edge of Hollywood

Read: study guide – unit 10

Suggested screening: *Dawn of the Dead*

Visit suggested web sites: interactive sites

Online discussion: draft a film review

Begin building: class web page (film noir)

### Week Thirteen

View: Film Language: Classical Hollywood Style Today

Read: study guide – supplementary unit 1

Suggested screening: *Midnight Cowboy*

Online discussion: draft a final paper on film noir

Build: class web page (film noir)

Turn in film review

### Week Fourteen

View: Writing and Thinking About Film

Read: study guide – supplemental unit 2

Suggested screening: *Scarlet Street*

Online discussion: digital technology

Build: class web page

### Week Fifteen

View: Classical Hollywood Style Today

Read: study guide – supplemental unit 3

Suggested Screening: *American Beauty*  
Online discussion: self-test final review  
Build: class web page

Week Sixteen

Read: text – chapters 6, 11 and 13  
Take online self-test review  
Build: complete class web page

Week Seventeen

On-campus final  
Final papers on film noir due

*Navigating Your Online Class:*

1. Home page
2. This Week in American Cinema: Film 18
3. Orientation
4. Syllabus
5. This week's discussion
6. Past week's discussion
7. Class web page
8. Self-text quizzes & reviews
9. Web links