DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION  COURSE NO. MC 353

COURSE TITLE: Film History

NEW COURSE

I. Catalog Description

An examination of the artistic and social impact of the cinema, from its beginnings in the late 19th century to the present. (3 credit hours)

II. Prerequisite(s)

45 hours + EN 140

III. Objectives

A. To introduce students to the major technical and artistic advances in the medium of film, from the late 19th century to present.

B. To acquaint students with the major movements, directors, and films in the history of world cinema.

C. To inform students about the historical and social influences on various national cinemas.

D. To help students develop the skills necessary to analyze and critique the artistry and social purpose of motion pictures.

IV. Expectations of Students

A. To attend lectures, discussions, and screenings regularly

B. To read all text and supplemental assignments

C. To demonstrate their knowledge of film history in three examinations

D. To write a research paper on a topic related to film history

E. To participate in discussion of films screened in class

F. To complete all other class assignments
V. Course Content

A. The Beginnings of Film 1 week

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. Early developments in motion pictures
   b. William Dickson and the Kinetoscope
   c. Lumière Brothers and the Cinématographe

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Vaudeville influence on Edison shorts
   b. Roots of documentary in Lumière shorts
   c. Roots of narrative film in Méliès and Porter shorts

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. Edison shorts (1895-1900)
   b. Lumière Brothers shorts (1895-1900)
   c. *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) – Georges Méliès
   d. *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) – Edwin Porter

B. American Film in the 1910s and 1920s – Evolution of the Feature Film  1 week

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. Birth of Hollywood
   b. America after World War I

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Griffith and master-scene editing
   b. Techniques of the silent comedy

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) – D.W. Griffith
   b. *The Immigrant* (1917) – Charlie Chaplin
   b. *The General* (1927) – Buster Keaton

C. German Expressionism 1 week

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. Post-World War I Germany
   b. Freud and Psychology

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Expressionistic filmmaking
   b. Kammerspielfilm

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. *The Last Laugh* (1924) – F.W. Murnau
   b. *The Joyless Street* (1925) – G.W. Pabst
   c. *Metropolis* (1926) – Fritz Lang
D. Soviet Film and the Montage Theory

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. Bolshevik Revolution
   b. Communism and Social Purpose

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Kino-Pravda documentaries
   b. “Montage of attractions”

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. Battleship Potemkin (1925) – Sergei Eisenstein
   b. Mother (1926) – V.I. Pudovkin
   c. The Man with a Movie Camera (1928) – Dziga Vertov

E. American Film in the 1930s and 1940s – Hollywood Studio System

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. The Great Depression
   b. Hollywood studio system

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Introduction of sound
   b. Genre filmmaking

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. Trouble in Paradise (1932) – Ernst Lubitsch
   b. Stagecoach (1939) – John Ford
   c. The Lady Eve (1941) – Preston Sturges

F. Italian Neorealism

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. Fascist Italy under Mussolini
   b. German occupation after Mussolini

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Neorealism
   b. Post-neorealism

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. The Bicycle Thief (1948) – Vittorio de Sica
   b. Open City (1945) – Roberto Rossellini
   c. Umberto D (1952) – Vittorio de Sica

G. American Film in the 1950s – Film Noir

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. America after World War II
   b. Crime and the Mafia
2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Expressionistic influences
   b. Moral ambiguity

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. *Sunset Blvd.* (1950) – Billy Wilder

H. Japanese Film

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. Feudalism and “jidai-geki”
   b. Modern Japan and “gendai-geki”

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Stylistics of Akira Kurosawa
   b. Stylistics of Kenji Mizoguchi
   c. Stylistics of Yasujiro Ozu

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. *Rashomon* (1950) – Akira Kurosawa
   b. *Ugetsu* (1953) – Kenji Mizoguchi
   c. *Tokyo Story* (1953) – Yasujiro Ozu

I. Auteur Theory

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. François Truffaut and “Cahiers du Cinéma”
   b. Andrew Sarris and the “auteur theory”

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Thematic pre-occupations of selected film auteur
   b. Stylistic traits of selected film auteur

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. *Strangers on a Train* (1951) – Alfred Hitchcock
   c. *8 ½* (1963) – Federico Fellini

J. American Film in the 1960s and 1970s – Maverick Film Directors

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. Vietnam War and Watergate
   b. Demise of the Studio System

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Critical examination of American culture
   b. Stylistic experimentation
3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. Badlands (1973) – Terrence Malick
   b. Taxi Driver (1976) – Martin Scorsese
   c. The Conversation (1974) – Francis Ford Coppola

K. Postmodern Film 1 week

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. Beginnings of the postmodern era
   b. Modern culture vs. postmodern culture

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Recycling
   b. Violence and social pessimism

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   a. Brazil (1985) – Terry Gilliam

L. Contemporary American Film – Independent Cinema 1 week

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. Blockbuster mentality in Hollywood
   b. Sundance and the film festival circuit

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Structural experimentation
   b. Technological advances

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   b. Memento (2000) – Christopher Nolan

M. Emerging National Cinemas 1 week

1. Historical/Social Influences
   a. Key historical events of selected nation
   b. Key social influences of selected nation

2. Technical/Artistic Characteristics
   a. Thematic pre-occupations of selected national cinema
   b. Stylistic traits of selected national cinema

3. Screening of relevant film(s). Possibilities include:
   b. The Sweet Hereafter (1997) – Atom Egoyan
VI. Textbook


VII. Auxiliary Materials

A. Films will be screened in class each week

VIII. Basis for Student Evaluation

A. Forty percent will be determined by two objective exams

B. Twenty percent will be determined by an objective final exam

C. Twenty percent will be based on one 5-8 page research paper

D. Ten percent will be based on other written assignments

E. Ten percent will be based on class participation