

World Film History

Sichuan University-Pittsburgh Institute

Fall 2025

Wednesday 19:20-21:55, 1st Teaching Building A211

COURSE DESCRIPTION: (3 semester hours)

World Film History is a comprehensive course that explores the evolution of the film as an art form across the world. The course will offer a historical understanding of the development of film-making and its impact on various cultures, societies, and global markets.

Students will study the significant periods, genres, and movements in world cinema and how they affected contemporary film-making. The course will intensively investigate the contributions of the most prominent filmmakers, studios, and actors and how their works influenced and reflected the cultural and political events of their times. In addition, the technological advancements and innovations, the social and cultural changes, and the political influences on world cinema throughout history will also be introduced and explored.

Through a combination of lectures, screenings, and discussions, students will develop a critical understanding of a range of films from different countries, languages, and genres, by discussing their visual language, narrative styles, and thematic concerns. By the end of the course, students will have an extensive knowledge of the history of cinema and its impact on global cultures, as well as the necessary critical tools for analyzing and understanding world cinema as an art form.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Name: Hongyan Zou, PhD

Email: zoezou77@163.com Office: Zone 4, 511

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of the course, it is expected that students should be able to:

1. Understand the origins of cinema, key movements, influential filmmakers, and major technological advancements that have shaped the medium;
 2. Develop a critical eye and a deeper appreciation for the artistic elements of cinema, such as cinematography, editing, sound design, production design, and storytelling techniques by examining a wide range of films from different periods and countries;
 3. Obtain some fundamental concepts and theories of film analysis;
 4. Develop the insights into the historical, social, and political contexts that influenced filmmakers and their works;
 5. Develop students' analytical and communication abilities by involving students in class discussions, film screenings, research papers, and presentations.
-

TEXTBOOK OR REFERENCE BOOKS:

Course Syllabus

1. *Film History* (3rd edition) David Bordwell, Cristin Thompson
 2. *Film Art: An Introduction* (10th edition) David Bordwell, Cristin Thompson
 3. *Grammar of the Film Language*, Daniel Arijon
-

EVALUATION:

GENERAL PERFORMANCE 50%:

General performance would be evaluated from the following three parts

[Attendance 20%+Participation 30%+Assignment 50%]

FINAL EXAM: Essay, 50%

Homework and computer assignments will be given in the lectures. Due dates for each assignment will also be post to Blackboard. Homework assignments and final essay must be typed and presented in a professional manner. Unless otherwise stated, homework assignments are to be completed on an individual basis. Homework assignments may require presentation to the class (a subset will be selected for class discussion – you should be prepared to present your work). Semester project require a short film produced cooperatively by all members of a subset.

Late work will receive a penalty of up to 10% per day. Work (writing assignments/short film/essay) from unexcused absences cannot normally be made up. However, at the instructor's discretion, some work may be made up with penalty. You are responsible for ALL materials posted to Blackboard (assignments and lecture notes). These materials may include: papers, videos, lectures, assignment problems/explanations, classmate presentations, and reference materials. Some optional/supplemental materials may also be posted to Blackboard. These materials are intended to supplement and enhance the materials presented and discussed in class.

The lecture schedule shows the text material to be covered each class period. It is recommended that students read the text prior to the class lecture. Due dates, holidays, and exam dates are also listed. The schedule will be adhered to as closely as possible; however, some changes will undoubtedly be required (particularly to schedule any guest lecturers). Changes to the schedule (due dates, additional information provided, etc.) will be announced during the lecture period. You are responsible for noting these changes.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Introduction to World Cinema and film history

- Introduction to World Cinema and the development of film technology
- Key periods and movements in World Cinema

Week 2: Silent Cinema Era

- The Lumiere Brothers
- The development of silent film and storytelling techniques
- Georges Méliès: the magician of the cinema

Week 3: Hollywood and the Studio System

- The Hollywood studio system

Course Syllabus

- The Golden Age of Hollywood

Week 4: European Cinema – French Impressionism

- The formal traits of Impressionism

- Analysis of a representative Impressionist film

Week 5: European Cinema – German Expressionism

- German Expressionism and the Avant-Garde movement

- Analysis of a representative Expressionist film

Week 6: Soviet Cinema in the 1920s

- The Montage Filmmakers

- Soviet Montage: Form and style

Week 7: The Introduction of Sound and Continued Innovation in Hollywood

- Sound in the United States

- Other cinema innovation and genre innovation

Week 8: World Cinema of the 1950s & 60s (1)

- Italian Neorealism and social realism

- Discussion and analysis: *Bicycle Thieves*

Week 9: World Cinema of the 1950s & 60s (2)

- The French New Wave and its influence on cinema

- Discussion and analysis: *Breathless*

Week 10: World Cinema of the 1950s & 60s (3)

- People's Republic of China: Maoism and tradition

- The Japanese New Wave

Week 11: New Hollywood: late 1960s to late 1970s

- The changing face of Hollywood and the big three

- The rise of independent cinema

Week 12: Documentary and Experimental Film since the late 1960s

- Direct cinema and its legacy

- Discussion and analysis: Frederick Wiseman and the tradition of direct cinema

Week 13: The rise of non-western cinema since the 1970s (1)

- Indian Cinema: the development of the Bollywood

- Alternatives to Bollywood

Week 14: The rise of non-western cinema since the 1970s (2)

- Mainland China: two generations and the commercial market

- Hong Kong and Taiwan

- South Korea

Week 15: Film Festivals and International Film Markets

- The role of film festivals in contemporary cinema

- Understanding film distribution and production

Week 16: Conclusion: Reflections on World Cinema and Film History

- Review of key periods and movements in World Cinema

- Summary of the evolution of film history

- Future directions for World Cinema and Film Studies

Important! Please Note: The schedule is subject to change based on availability of guest lecturers and the classroom driven, interactive nature of this course. All topics will be covered, but order may vary. Plan on attending all scheduled class sessions!

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are responsible for all material covered as part of this class (including both graded and ungraded assignments posted on Blackboard). The work (homework, final paper) submitted for grading should represent your individual/group effort. Studying and working with your peers (on outside class assignments) is greatly encouraged, as this can provide an extremely valuable resource to students, and you are encouraged to work with your group members.

In general, submitting work copied from others is considered academic misconduct. Plagiarism of ideas or work as well as giving or receiving unauthorized information on assignments is considered academic misconduct. All academic misconduct will be dealt with severely and may result in a course grade of "F." Refer to school policy and the student handbook for complete information on your rights and responsibilities as a student.

Violations include, but are not limited to:

Plagiarism:

This is using other people's work without providing citations and references. It is, for example, using ideas, phrases, papers, data - copied directly or paraphrased - that you did not arrive at on your own. Sources include published works such as book, movies, Websites, and unpublished works such as other students' papers or material from a research service. In brief, using someone else's work as your own is academically dishonest.

The risk of plagiarism can be avoided in written work by clearly indicating, either in footnotes or in the paper itself, the source of any major or unique idea or wording that you did not arrive at on your own. Sources must be given regardless of whether the material is quoted directly or paraphrased.

COURSE COMMUNICATION:

For general course-related questions, please post in the course forum so that all students can benefit from the answer. For personal matters, please email me directly.