

21L 011 THE FILM EXPERIENCE
Professor David Thorburn

Suggested Paper Topics
First Essay

1. Describe the opening sequences of one film by Chaplin and one by Keaton or Griffith or Murnau, giving particular attention to principles of composition within each frame, camera position and movement, the rhythm of the editing. How do these technical features of each director's work help to clarify his characteristic subject-matter and attitudes toward experience?
2. Discuss the development of film as a narrative medium by analyzing significant passages from short films by D. W. Griffith available on cassette from the film/media office, 14N-417.
3. The hero in Chaplin and Keaton. Be sure to describe and interpret specific scenes and passages.
4. Heroines in Griffith and/or Chaplin and/or Keaton.
5. Machines and machinery in Chaplin and/or Keaton.
6. The city in Chaplin and/or Murnau.
7. Choose one short film by Chaplin or Keaton and discuss how several of its elements have been absorbed and transformed in a later full-length feature.
8. Narrative structure in *The General* or *Modern Times*.
9. *The General* as mock-epic: compare Keaton's treatment of the historical past, martial glory, heroines with that of Griffith in *Birth of a Nation* (available on cassette).
10. Chaplin's use of sound in *Modern Times*.
11. The symbolic transformation of ordinary objects in Chaplin.
12. Riming scenes in *Modern Times*.
13. The role of food in selected scenes from Chaplin.
14. Accident in *The General*.
15. The ending versus the larger film in *The Last Laugh*.
16. Social class in *The Last Laugh*.
17. Murnau's "subjective camera."