

**21L.011 The Film Experience – Lecture Outlines**  
**Professor David Thorburn**

**Lecture 1 - Introduction**

1. Not a Film Course
2. What is Film?
3. Think Away I-Pods
4. The Fred Ott Principle
  - Horseless buggy principle
  - Fallacy of technological determinism
5. A Paradox: Capitalism and the Movies

**Lecture 2 - Keaton**

1. The Fred Ott Principle, continued
  - Three phases of media evolution
2. Buster Keaton (1895-1966)
  - Acrobat / Actor
  - Technician / Director
  - Metaphysician / Artist
3. *The General* (1927)
  - "A culminating text"
  - Structure
  - The Keaton Hero: Steadfast, Muddling
  - The Keaton Universe: Contingency

**Lecture 3 - Chaplin 1**

1. The Multiplicity Principle
  - Entertainment vs. Art
2. Movies Before Chaplin
3. Enter Chaplin
  - The invention of character
4. The Tramp as Myth
5. Film as a social form
  - Film as a social form

## Lecture 4 - Chaplin 2

1. Keaton vs. Chaplin
2. Chaplin's World:
  - Elemental themes
3. *Modern Times* (1936)
  - Context
  - A culminating film
  - The Gamin
  - Sound
  - Structure
  - Chaplin's complexity

## Lecture 5 - Film as a Global and Cultural Form

1. Film as a Cultural Form
  - Global vs. National Cinema
  - American vs. European Cinema
  - High culture vs. Hollywood
2. Montage vs. *Mise en Scene*
3. Eisenstein and *Potemkin* (1925)
  - Film as instruction, propaganda, moral fable

## Lecture 6 - German Film

1. German Film and Expressionism
  - Lotte Eisner, *The Haunted Screen* (1969)
  - *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Weine, 1919)
  - *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1926)
2. F.W. Murnau (1889-1931)
  - *Nosferatu* (1922)
  - *Sunrise* (1927)
  - *Tabu* (w/ Robert Flaherty, 1931)
3. *The Last Laugh* (1924)
  - The unchained camera
  - Themes: working class tragedy
  - Character: work and personal identity
  - The ending: true or false

## Lecture 7 - Hollywood in the 1930s

1. An Industry Emerges
  - The Studio Era
  - “The golden age of Hollywood”
  - Stars and genres
2. The Cultural Work of Movies
  - Entertainment
  - Genre and License
  - Invention vs. Convention
  - “The genius of the system”
  - Consensus Narrative
3. Strains of Comedy
  - Anarchic
  - Worldly
  - Screwball
4. Screwball heroine
  - Barbara Stanwyck in two clips:  
*Ball of Fire, The Lady Eve*

## Lecture 8 - Capra and Hitchcock

1. Frank Capra (1897-1991)
  - Sentimental populist
  - Key films
2. *It Happened One Night* (1934)
  - Context: the Depression
  - The American Male
  - Romance across social class
  - “A marriage of true minds”
3. Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980)
  - An anecdote
  - Hitchcock’s career
  - Hitchcock the technician
  - Themes: “The Double Man”
4. *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943)
  - Context: WWII, Hitchcock in exile
  - Against Capra
  - The opening: behind any door or window
  - An American town, an American family
  - Two Charlies: rhyming shots
  - Subplot: murder as diversion
  - The ending: ambiguity

## Lecture 9 - The American Musical Film

1. Numbers
  - 1927-47: 919 films (48 films each year)
  - 1949-58: 23 films per year
  - 1959-80: 7 films per year
2. Themes
  - Show business: community: the show goes on
  - High culture, popular culture
  - Class or position vs. talent, merit
  - Convention, restraint vs. spontaneity, energy, "the natural"
3. History
  - Revue, Operetta
    - *Love Me Tonight* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1932)
  - Busby Berkeley & Warner Brothers
    - *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (1933)
  - Astaire, Rogers and RKO
    - *Top Hat* (1935)
  - MGM and "the integrated musical"
    - *Singin' in the Rain* (Donen and Kelly, 1952)
  - Arthur Freed (1894-1973): The Freed Unit

## Lecture 10 - The American Musical (continued)

1. Astaire vs. Kelly
2. *Singin' in the Rain*
  - Self-consciousness: an encyclopedia of musical history
  - Key themes
  - The place of song and dance

## Lecture 11 - American Film in the 1970s

1. Transformations and Subversion
  - Directors
  - Actors
  - Style/Endings
  - Dissenting Genres
2. Social History
  - Viet Nam war
  - Assassinations
  - JFK, LBJ, Nixon
  - Watergate
3. Film and Television: A New Consensus Medium
  - Versions of *MASH*

## Lecture 12 - American Film in the 1970s (continued)

1. Bob Fosse (1927-1987)
  - Dancer, choreographer, director
  - His favorite year: 1973
  - Films:
    - 1968: *Sweet Charity*
    - 1972: *Cabaret*
    - 1974: *Lenny*
    - 1979: *All that Jazz*
    - 1980: *Star 80*
  
2. *Cabaret*
  - Beyond genre: the end of Hollywood
  - Weimar Germany and America in the late 1960s
  - Style: *mise en scene* and montage
  - Texture: multiplicity
  - Musical numbers: true integration
  - Key themes: innocence, history, the limits of satire

## Lecture 13 - The Western Movie

1. Movies as Consensus Narrative
  - The Western genre as a space of discourse
  
2. Historical/Cultural Background
  - The "real" west: 1860-1890
  - Popular culture before film
  - Intellectual culture: The Turner Thesis
  
3. The Western as Cultural Myth
  - Founding story
  - Dichotomies
  - The divided hero: savior and savage

## Lecture 14 - The Western (continued)

1. The Western Film
  - A quick history
2. John Ford (1895-1973)  
Robert Altman (1925-2006)
3. *The Searchers* (1956)
  - Damaged hero
  - Setting: Monument Valley
  - Plot: founding story, captive's tale
  - A turning point
  - The title: ambiguity
4. *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971)
  - "Ruin the Sacred Truths"
  - Plot vs. character
  - Sound and image: a new realism?
  - Hero/savior, clown or fool
  - Love story: gal from the East
  - Founding myth: Presbyterian Church
  - The ending: slapstick murder as the town is born
5. Major Western Movies: A Chronology

### Major Western Movies: A Chronology

1. Silent Film
  - 1903 *The Great Train Robbery*
  - 1913 *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch* (D.W. Griffith)
  - 1914 *The Virginian* (Cecil B. DeMille)
  - 1917 *Straight Shooting* (John Ford)
  - 1923 *The Covered Wagon* (James Cruze)
  - 1924 *The Iron Horse* (Ford)
  - 1925 *Go West* (Keaton)
2. Early Sound
  - 1929 *In Old Arizona* (Raoul Walsh) [first sound western]
  
  - 1930s: Singing Cowboys, B-westerns  
Gene Autry, Roy Rogers  
Saturday matinees: Lash LaRue
3. The Classical Age of the Western Film
  - 1939 *Stagecoach* (John Ford; starring: John Wayne)
  - 1940 *The Westerner* (Wm Wyler)
  - 1941 *Billy The Kid* (David Miller; s: Robert Taylor)
  - 1944 *Buffalo Bill* (Wm Wellman; s: Joel McCrea)
  - 1946 *My Darling Clementine* (Ford; s: Henry Fonda)
  - 1948 *Fort Apache* (Ford; s: Wayne and Fonda)
  - 1948 *Red River* (Howard Hawks; s: Wayne, Montgomery Clift)
  - 1948 *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (John Huston; s: Humphrey Bogart)

4. The 'Adult' Western
  - 1950 *The Gunfighter* (Henry King; s: Gregory Peck)
  - 1952 *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann; s: Gary Cooper)
  - 1953 *Shane* (George Stevens; s: Alan Ladd)
  - 1956 *The Searchers* (Ford; s: Wayne)
  - 1957 *3:10 to Yuma* (Delmer Daves)
  - 1958 *The Left- Handed Gun* (Arthur Penn; s: Paul Newman)
  - 1960 *Magnificent Seven* (John Sturges)
  - 1961 *One-Eyed Jacks* (Marlon Brando; s: Brando and Karl Malden)
  - 1962 *Lonely Are the Brave* (David Miller; s: Kirk Douglas)
  - 1967 *Hombre* (Martin Ritt; s: Newman)
  - 1969 *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (George Roy Hill; s: Newman and Robt Redford)
  - 1969 *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah; s: William Holden)
  - 1969 *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Sergio Leone; s: Fonda and Charles Bronson)
  
5. The Anti-Western
  - 1970 *Soldier Blue* (Ralph Nelson)
  - 1971 *Little Big Man* (Arthur Penn; s: Dustin Hoffman)
  - 1971 *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (Robert Altman)
  
6. Vestiges, Reincarnations
  - 1985: *Silverado* (Lawrence Kasdan)
  
  - 1990s: *Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood)
  - Dances with Wolves* (d. and s: Kevin Costner)
  - Wyatt Earp* (Kasdan; s: Costner)
  
  - 2007: *3:10 to Yuma* (James Mangold)
  - The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (Andrew Dominik)

## Lecture 15 - Jean Renoir and Poetic Realism

1. French Film
  - A parallel history
  - Film theory
2. Jean Renoir (1894-1979)
  - 1926 *Nana* (Zola novel)
  - 28 *The Little Match Girl*
  - 31 *La Chienne*
  - 32 *Boudu Saved from Drowning*
  - 34 *Madame Bovary* (Flaubert novel)
  - 35 *Toni*
  - 37 *Grand Illusion*
  - 39 *Rules of the Game*
  - 50 *The River*
3. Poetic Realism
  - Forerunner: Jean Vigo (1905-34)
  - Key Features
  - André Bazin (1918-58) on Renoir
4. Two Examples:
  - The Ending of *Boudu*
  - Dinner in prison: *Grand Illusion*
5. Visual Style as Moral Vision

## Lecture 16 - Renoir's *Grand Illusion*

1. Camera
  - Invisible witness: respectful, attentive, restless
2. Actors
  - Von Stroheim: The man you love to hate
  - Gabin: Mad proletarian
3. Themes
  - Prison camp as microcosm
  - Barriers, boundaries
  - Historical transition
4. Renoir's Maturity
  - Character
  - Plot: a war story without battles
  - The title: how many grand illusions?

## Lecture 17 - Italian Neorealism

1. The Opening of *Bicycle Thieves*
  - The multiplicity principle
2. Historical Context
  - WW II
  - Italian film under Fascism
  - Hollywood film
3. Origins
  - Italian, German, French
4. Key Features
  - Non-professional actors, outdoor camera, mise en scène style, documentary flavor, character vs. plot, focus on women, children, working-class figures
5. Central Figures
  - Cesaré Zavattini (1902-77)
  - Luchino Visconti (1906-76)
  - *Obsession (1942)*
  - *The Earth Trembles (1948)*
  - Roberto Rossellini (1906-77)
  - *Open City (1945)*
  - Vittorio De Sica (1902-74)
6. The Neorealist Counter-plot
  - The beginning of *Open City*

## Lecture 18 - De Sica, *Bicycle Thieves*

1. Vittorio De Sica (1902-74)
  - 1942 *The Children Are Watching Us*
  - 1946 *Shoeshine*
  - 1948 *Bicycle Thieves*
  - 1950 *Miracle in Milan*
  - 1952 *Umberto D*
  - 1960 *Two Women*
  - 1971 *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*
2. *Bicycle Thieves*
  - Structure: organic form
  - Social themes
  - Character: father and son
  - The title

## Lecture 19 - Akira Kurosawa and *Seven Samurai*

1. Japanese Cinema: a note
  - Kenji Mizoguchi
  - Yasujiro Ozu
2. Kurosawa's career
  - Rashomon* (1950)
  - Ikiru* (1952)
  - Yojimbo* (1961)
  - High and Low* (1963)
3. *Seven Samurai* (1954)
  - A footnote
    - Shimura's top knot
  - Epic themes, epic structure
    - Seasons, elemental themes, founding story
    - historical transition
  - Characters
    - Shimura's leader, Mifune's clownish half-peasant, the technician, the disciple.
    - Villagers: from stereotype to individual
  - Visual style: both montage and mise en scène
  - One scene: "To the Village"

## Lecture 20 - Film as Art and Artifact

1. Film as a cultural form
  - Stories and culture
  - Culture as a process, always unfinished
  - "Golden Lads": consensus narrative
    - conservative, collaborative, accessible
2. Film as art
  - Art as a form of intelligence and competence
  - Texture, multiplicity
  - A final example: *Seven Samurai* – "Epilogue"
3. Thanks to all of you