

MAJOR GENRES

Cowboy, Gangster, Detective: American Masculinity Mythologized in Film

In each of the following three units, we will view films that chart the evolution of each genre throughout the studio era, as well as at least one reconstruction. This course will focus on what makes genre film – plot structures, iconography, audience values – with an emphasis on the ways in which genre provides a vehicle for the examination of mythologized American values. The notion of gender in film and, more specifically, **American masculinity in film**, will be discussed throughout the course.

This schedule and the readings listed are subject to change with notice

	A Mythologized Past: Westerns
CLASS 1 9/10	<u>Intro: What makes a genre film? Components of the Western</u> FILM: THE WESTERNER (Wyler, 1940)
CLASS 2 9/17	<u>The post-war Western and the influence of Noir/ Nature vs. culture</u> FILM: MY DARLING CLEMENTINE (Ford, 1946) READING: Schatz, Thomas. <i>Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System</i> . McGraw-Hill, 1981, pp. 36-41, 45-49, and 50-52. (excerpts all in one file on Canvas)
CLASS 3 9/24	<u>Political Westerns, “pure” Westerns, and gender values after WWII</u> FILM: HIGH NOON (Zinnemann, 1952) READING: Warshow, Robert. “Movie Chronicle: The Westerner.” <i>The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theater, and Other Aspects of Popular Culture</i> . Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 105-124
CLASS 4 10/1	<u>John Wayne, age and masculinity, and the mourning of the classic Western</u> FILM: THE SHOOTIST (Siegel, 1976) READING: Cloutier, Jean-Christophe. “A Country for Old Men: Unforgiven, The Shootist, and the Post-Heyday Western.” <i>Cinema Journal</i> , no. 4, 2012, pp. 110-129.
	The Urban Nightmare: Gangsters
CLASS 5 10/8	<u>Iconography and narrative conventions, predecessors, and the importance of sound in the Gangster genre</u> FILM: UNDERWORLD (von Sternberg, 1927) READING: McArthur, Colin. “Iconography” and “Background.” <i>Underworld USA</i> . The Viking Press, 1972, pp. 23-33 and 59-70. (excerpts all in one file on Canvas)
CLASS 6 10/15	<u>The Gangster hero: masculinity, the city milieu, and censorship</u> FILM: SCARFACE (Hawks, 1932) READING: Warshow, Robert. “The Gangster as Tragic Hero.” <i>The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theater, and Other Aspects of Popular Culture</i> . Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 97-103

CLASS 7 10/22	<u>The enforcement of production code principles and the death of the classic gangster</u> FILM: ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES (Curtiz, 1938) READING: Schatz, Thomas. <i>Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System</i> . McGraw-Hill, 1981, pp. 92-102.
CLASS 8 10/29	<u>From hero to psychopath / The influence of Noir</u> FILM: WHITE HEAT (Walsh, 1949) READING: McArthur, Colin. "Development." <i>Underworld USA</i> . The Viking Press, 1972, pp. 34-58.
CLASS 9 11/5	<u>Subversion of a genre and return to the classic gangster/ Humor, violence, and masculinity</u> FILM: GOODFELLAS Midterm paper due
City and Psychology: Noir and the Hardboiled Detective	
CLASS 10 11/12	<u>How do we define noir? Noir conventions, the urban milieu, and the man with a code</u> FILM: THE MALTESE FALCON (1941) READING: Peterson, L.S., and J.A. Place. "Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir." <i>Movies and Methods</i> , edited by Bill Nichols. University of California Press, 1976, pp. 325-338 Krutnik, Frank "Film Noir and America in the 1940s." <i>In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity</i> . Routledge, 1991, pp.56-65
CLASS 11 11/19	<u>Opposing visions of femininity and the psychological manifests in Noir</u> FILM: MURDER, MY SWEET (1944) READING: Gledhill, Christine. "Klute 1: A Contemporary Film Noir and Feminist Criticism." <i>Women in Film Noir</i> . Edited by E. Ann Kaplan. The British Film Institute, 1998, pp. 27-34. (an excerpt)
CLASS 12 11/26	<u>The dangerous woman, the defeated man, and the family that never was after WWII</u> FILM: OUT OF THE PAST (1947) READING: Place, Janey. "Women in Film Noir" <i>Women in Film Noir</i> . Edited by E. Ann Kaplan. The British Film Institute, 1998, pp. 47-68.
CLASS 13 12/3	<u>The American family and the <i>femme fatale</i> / The construction of masculinity/ Cold War concerns</u> FILM: KISS ME DEADLY (1955) READING: Krutnik, Frank "The Masculine Hero." <i>In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity</i> . Routledge, 1991, pp. 86-91 Harvey, Sylvia. "Woman's Place: The Absent Family of Film Noir." <i>Women in Film Noir</i> . Edited by E. Ann Kaplan. The British Film Institute, 1998, pp. 35-46.

CLASS 14 12/10	<u>Neo-noir and the subversion of characteristics of classic noir/ Time and setting</u> FILM: THE LONG GOODBYE (1973) READING: Watch CHINATOWN (Polanski, 1974)
CLASS 15 12/17	<u>Looking forward: the future of noir</u> FILM: BLADERUNNER (1982)

Policies

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. After two absences, you will lose half a letter grade for each class missed, regardless of circumstance. I will not accept doctors' notes, nor any other form of documentation.

Repeated tardiness will also negatively impact your grade.

If you miss either the first or second half of class, you will accrue 1/2 of an absence.

You are responsible for the completion of the work assigned whether you are in class or not. Please refer to the syllabus and consider reaching out to a peer for notes on class discussion.

Technology:

Cell phones, laptops, and tablets will not be permitted. If you are warned about using your phone/laptop/tablet more than once, your participation grade for the day will be a failing one and you may be counted as absent.

Readings:

It is critical that you complete each reading assignment before our class sessions. **Be sure you bring the text we are reading to each class session.** We will often refer to certain passages and you must be able to read along.

Assessment

There will be a midterm paper and a final paper, and each must be at least 4 pages in length; more detailed information, including prompts, will be uploaded as these assignments approach.

Each week – with a few exceptions – there will be discussion prompts posted to Canvas. You do not need to submit a discussion post each week, but you must submit at least 5 throughout the course of

the semester. These posts will receive letter grades. Each will have a specific due date. Late discussion board posts will not be considered.

Participation will be a vital part of your final grade. The foundation of this class will be the discussion we have together; the more voices we have participating, the more interesting and fun the class will be!

Grading:

Midterm: 25%

Final: 25%

Participation: 10%

Discussion Board Posts: 30%