

Fall 2019, FYS 02: Hollywood in the 1930s
Howard 308, MW 3:30-4:45 p.m.
Sunday Screening Lab: Howard 309, 5:30-8:15 p.m.

Dr. Dina Smith

Office: Howard 328

Office hours: W Noon-3:15 p.m.,

T/R 4:45-5:30 p.m., & by Appt.

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Films available at

Library Circulation Desk with Drake I.D.

Description and Goals:

Students in this seminar will engage critically with 1930s Hollywood history and culture through analytic writing, intensive revision, and ongoing peer-to-peer workshops. Typically, the seminar will examine the rise of the Hollywood studio system and the consolidation of power in the hands of vertically integrated studios in the wake of the Great Depression. By focusing on a few key films, students will read about the economic and cultural history of 1930s Hollywood: how movies were efficiently made, distributed, and exhibited; how a “production code” influenced the mores of movie-going; how movies influenced and were influenced by their historical moment/culture. Along the way, we will explore the unique genres and amazing films that engaged 1930’s audiences and still engage movie fans today: paying particular attention to the delightfully zany 1930s screwball comedies as well as the endearing, coming-of-age musical, *The Wizard of Oz* (celebrating its 80th anniversary this year). Students will watch and critically engage with black-and-white movies of the era through discussion, writing, and research.

Course Texts/Sites:

Harmetz, Aljean. *The Making of The Wizard of Oz*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013.

Jewell, Richard B. *The Golden Age of Cinema: Hollywood 1929-1945*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

Mizejewski, Linda. *It Happened One Night: Wiley-Blackwell Studies in Film and Television*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2010.

Swaab, Peter. *Bringing Up Baby: BFI Classics Series*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

E-Reserve Readings, password: smithfys19

<http://researchguides.drake.edu/er.php?b=c>

Course Films On Reserve (in screening order), Available at Cowles Library Circulation Desk. Please present Student I.D. for In-Library Check-out/Use:

The Wizard of Oz (1939)

Dinner at Eight (1933)

City Lights (1931) – Kanopy, free Library streaming

It Happened One Night (1934)

Bringing Up Baby (1938)

Major Essay Assignments and Writing Portfolios (75% of final grade):

- **Major Assignment grades will be a compilation of preliminary drafts and a final essay assignments; it's crucial to keep track of your revision processes (save all of those paper drafts!).** A student will receive a Major Assignment “portfolio grade” at the end of a unit that accounts for preliminary assignments, rewrites, and the entire drafting process during the unit. Thus, Major Assignment grades will be graded on a portfolio basis (**get a folder that can be turned in for a couple of weeks, one that allows you keep all of your preliminary work – everything counts**).
- All writing assignments handed in to me are to be typed. **Please follow MLA formatting guidelines.** For a thorough explanation of MLA formatting, a useful resource when formatting and revising essays, **please see the Purdue “OWL” (Online Writing Lab):** <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>
Please type your essays in Times New Roman, 12-point font, with 1” margins. Also, make sure to double-space your document. Please provide in-text citations (when necessary) for all formal essays, so that you can keep a record of the ideas plucked from readings. Please see Course Criteria section below on paper specifics.
- ***I will not accept any essays electronically.*** My reasons? I need a hard copy in order to give students the proper comments they deserve (I like to spatially explore an essay's structure). Also, I'd like to see the development from first draft to final revised formal essay, best illustrated in a folder with everything compiled, preliminary notes and whatever you have in terms of essay writing development. Please indicate the process of your drafts: “Draft 1, “Draft 2 after Writer's Workshop,” “Draft Three after re-watching the film,” etc. I am a much better editor of hard copy essays. In certain instances, I am happy to provide virtual comments via email on a draft that is in a critical stage of the writing process, but please give me at least a day to respond to any attached drafts sent as a Microsoft docx file.

Class Participation (25%):

- **Homework, attendance and class participation constitutes 25% of your grade**, a substantial percentage. Students who evince a clear engagement with the course material, have read, and who are inquisitive in class, participating actively in discussion, will achieve satisfactory class participation. Excellent class participation equals lively, informed engagement in discussion – that means asking good questions and responding to other’s questions. In- and out-of-class group work will also factor into your class participation. That means, if I assign you into reading groups in class, you will each be held accountable for your contributions to the larger group. Periodic reading and discussion quizzes will also help track class participation. If you do not talk, do not participate during group work, you will receive an automatic “F” in class participation. Your attendance is required by university policy. Sitting in a seat for a semester does not equal class participation.
- **Watching course films is required.** Whether you attend the Screening Lab or watch the film in the Library on your own or stream at home, you are required to watch the films in this course **before** discussion commences on Tuesday. There will be occasional, easy screening quizzes to note the students who are keeping up with film viewing. Ultimately, if the week requires a screening, students must watch the film for class discussion. Look at it this way, you get to watch movies as homework!
- **Discussion Board Posts will be a feature of class participation.** On most weeks, one half of the class is required to make a post to the class discussion board: GROUP A and then GROUP B. Dates for these posts will be assigned at the beginning of the semester. These posts can be brief— approximately 150 words. You might raise a question about the reading; you might discuss the importance of a key scene from a movie as it connects to the reading; you might isolate a section of the reading that you want to bring up in class and analyze. These posts are yours in as much as they are your way to guide larger class conversation. So what do you want to talk about in class after the reading and watching a film? What was a super cool thing about the week’s reading that you’d like to discuss and expand upon in class? Bring whatever you feel we need to discuss as a class in your post, anything that will enable a conversation in class that is connected to course texts. You should not offer a plot summary of what you’ve read or saw; you should not simply state a vague opinion. These posts will serve as the basis for some class discussion and should help you critically engage with readings. They are an especially great way to get the more shy students to speak up (I was one of those students way back when). These posts will count as part of your participation grade. Participation also includes class discussion and in class writings.

General Grading Policy:

- Drake University has shifted to a plus and minus grading system. In terms of assigned numerical grades (from Major Assignments to pop quizzes to class participation), please refer to the following grade scale:

A = 100%, A- = 92%, B+ = 88%, B = 85%, B- = 82%, C+ = 78%, C = 75%, C- = 72%, D+ = 68%, D = 65%, D- = 62%, F = 60% and below

- On occasion an assignment may be on the border between two letter grades and will receive a “slash” grade, such as a B+/A- or B-/C+, which equals a “90%” or “80%,” respectively.
- Any assignment not submitted earns a 0. An assignment plagiarized will also receive an automatic 0, and the student’s plagiarism will be reported to the Associate Dean of Students within the student’s college. For more information on the university’s academic dishonesty policies, see: <http://www.drake.edu/studentlife/handbook-resources/handbook/academic/#dishonesty>

Course Criteria:

- Submit all **written assignments** at the beginning of class on the day assigned and in the assigned format. No late papers will be accepted. Nor will I accept electronic submissions of portfolios. The final drafts of all essays written outside of class must be typed neatly on 8” x 11 1/2” white, smooth-edged paper, double-spaced with 1” margins on all sides. Please staple your papers, noting beginning drafts and final drafts when appropriate. **Papers of more than 2 pages long should be numbered; please follow MLA formatting requirements.** And, please proof read and spell-check all final essays. Sloppiness can lead to a letter-grade reduction. Make sure to keep a file folder with your essay(s) on your hard drive, not just in google.docs.
- I will record **attendance** of most class meetings, and, while 100% attendance would be ideal, some absences are beyond our control. I will tolerate **two unexcused absences**; no questions asked. Afterwards, the grade will be dropped **an increment per additional day absent**. A few absences due to illness or family crisis will be excused, if documented to the instructor’s satisfaction.
- Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to the observation of a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second class meeting.
- If you foresee a major problem that might dictate a long absence, please notify me beforehand in order to schedule make-up assignments.
- **Students participating in a university-sponsored event** (athletics, theater, music, field trip) will be excused if there is documentation from an appropriate authority. Students excused from an absence are not excused from the work assigned for a class session; it will be up to you to follow up on missed lectures (contact peers for notes or me) and arrange make-up assignments by contacting me.
- ****If a student has a disability** that will require special in-class arrangements, please notify the professor in writing, with a letter from Student Disability Services regarding specific accommodations, by the end of the second week of classes.
- **** Unless otherwise specified, there will be no use of laptop computers in this class.** Please take notes the old fashioned way, as multiple screens lit up in a film class takes away from the central screen being examined

English Department Policy on Sensitive Classroom Materials:

- I will make appropriate accommodations for documented disabilities. If you have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and know that specific subjects elicit an uncontrollable emotional response, and you want advance warning about classroom material, please contact Michelle Laughlin, Student Disability Services coordinator, who will work with you to make your instructor aware of your request. I will then work with you to determine what the appropriate accommodation might be.
- If you have not been diagnosed but find a certain topic so distressing that you are unable to perform academically, we encourage you to consult Ms. Laughlin; her office can refer you to the appropriate resource.
- Advance warning is not always possible. Literature represents the full spectrum of human experience and no subject matter is off-limits in a literature, writing or film course. English faculty strive to create a classroom environment in which potentially volatile material can be viewed, read, discussed and written about in a thoughtful and mature manner and in which the perspectives of all participants are listened to and respected. Students may expect to experience a certain amount of productive discomfort when confronting uncomfortable topics. Classrooms are not necessarily "safe spaces," but they can be spaces in which we support each other in confronting life's most difficult issues.

A Note on Excellence in Writing:

In **awarding grades**, I will take into consideration the ambitiousness of an essay (which includes any potential risk-taking), its clarity of thought and arrangement, and its technical excellence. A-caliber work is intelligent and original in its thinking, clearly and forcefully organized, smoothly and precisely phrased and written, and mechanically flawless. B-caliber work shows some originality in expression, organization, fluent sentences, accurate usage, and an attempt at correct, consistent mechanics. C-caliber essays are acceptable work which exhibits a lack of originality and/or a systematic organization, uninteresting and potentially repetitious sentences, and slips in grammar. D-caliber work misperceives a reading/film, lacking in proper support for arguments, and is thin, poorly organized, ambiguously or awkwardly phrased, and extremely faulty in mechanics (no proofreading and or spell-check). F is as low as it gets. F goes to papers that do not follow the assignment instructions and are so sloppy that I have to take a breath after reading each sentence. F is also available to those papers omitting page references or parenthetical notations of other sources consulted. A 0.0 grade will be awarded to plagiarized papers. A considered lack of academic integrity will be reported to the Dean's office.

FYS 02 and The Writing Workshop:

This course includes a built-in opportunity for you to receive extra assistance in developing your writing. At the Workshop, you will be paired with a trained peer tutor, who will talk about your assignment instructions and your draft with you to provide suggestions for development and expansion. Having multiple readers in class and outside of class will be an important part of your writing and revision process. I **strongly** encourage each of you to attend the Workshop for your first, second and hopefully your third essay, *at least one over the course of the semester*. Your attendance will be noted (the writing tutor will send me a report that you attended and what you discussed), and such attendance will be factored into your cumulative portfolio grade at end. I think once you avail yourself of the Writing Workshop's revision benefits, you'll automatically want to attend for your 3rd Essay assignment and for all future Drake writing assignments. Go Writing Workshop!

When you go to the Workshop, please bring along a hard copy of the essay prompt, the course syllabus, any draft or outline materials you have, and as textual evidence, any materials from the text about which you are writing. The Workshop is located in Cowles Library, Room 47, on the lower level. Appointments can be made online at <https://library.drake.edu/writing-workshop/>

Tentative Weekly Schedule Subject to Change

- Week 1:** **Film and Cultural Memory: Audiences and Movies**
- Aug 27: Introduction; In-Class Writing
- Aug 29: Reading: excerpt from Salman Rushdie's BFI book on *The Wizard of Oz* (e-reserve); Discuss previous In-class Writing assignment alongside today's Reading
- Week 2:** **Revisiting *The Wizard of Oz***
Sunday Screening: *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)
- Sep 3: Discuss Film / Group A Blackboard Post
- Sep 5: Reading: Chapters 1-3 of *The Making of the Wizard of Oz* (MWO)
- Week 3:** ***The Wizard of Oz's* Cast of Characters**
No Sunday Screening
- Sep 10: Reading: MWO, Chapter 4 / Group B Blackboard Post
- Sep 12: Reading: MWO, Chapters 5-7

- Week 4: **During and After Oz**
Sunday Screening: Rewatch *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)
- Sep 17: Reading: MWO, Chapter 8 / Group B Blackboard Post
- Sep 19: Reading: MWO, Chapters 9-11
- Week 5: **First Essay Workshop**
No Sunday Screening
- Sep 24: First Essay Draft Due In-Class (bring two copies)
- Sep 26: Revised Draft Due In-Class (bring two copies)
- Week 6: **History and Hollywood**
Sunday Screening: *Dinner at Eight* (1933)
- Oct 1: **Essay 1 Portfolio Due in Class; Discuss Film/No Blackboard Post**
- Oct 3: Reading: Richard Jewell's *The Golden Age of Cinema* (GAC),
Chapter 1, "Historical Overview"
- Week 7: **From Studios to Exhibition, a New Era of Censorship**
No Sunday Screening
- Oct 8: Reading: GAC, pp. 75-89;
Tom Schatz's "MGM in the Mid-Thirties" (e-reserve) /
Group A Blackboard Post
- Oct 10: Reading: GAC, pp. 113-139
- Week 8: **Introduction to Film Language**
Screening: *City Lights* (1931) – Kanopy streaming (e-reserve)
- Oct 15: Class Cancelled for Fall Break
- Oct 17: Reading: Selections from Corrigan and White's *The Film Experience*,
specifically from Chapters 1, 3, & 4: "Elements of Mise-en-scene:
Exploring the Material World," "Cinematography: Framing What
We See," and "Editing: Relating Images"
- Week 9: **Scene Analysis**
Flexible Screening: Rewatch *City Lights* (1931)

- Oct 22: Reading: GAC, pp. 90-105, 224-238 /Group B Blackboard Post
- Oct 24: Continue Analysis & Practice Scene Analysis
- Week 10: **Second Essay Workshop**
Flexible Screening for *Dinner at Eight* (1933)
- Oct 29: Second Essay Draft Due In-Class (please bring two copies)
- Oct 31: Revised Draft Due In-Class (please bring two copies)
- Week 11: **1930s Romantic Comedy: Sex (or None) and the Production Code**
Sunday Screening: *It Happened One Night* (1934)
- Nov 5: **Essay 2 Portfolio Due In-class**; Discuss Film
- Nov 7: Reading: pp. 1-68 of Linda Mizejewski's *It Happened One Night* (Wiley Blackwell Studies in Film and Television book)
- Week 12: **Class and Stardom in *It Happened One Night***
No Sunday Screening
- Nov 12: Reading: pp. 69-121 of Linda Mizejewski's *It Happened One Night*
- Nov 14: Group A Blackboard Post/Continue Discussion
- Week 13: **Late 1930s Screwball Comedy Perfection**
Sunday Screening: *Bringing Up Baby* (1938)
- Nov 19: Reading: Peter Swaab's BFI book on *Bringing up Baby*, pp. 1-69
- Nov 21: LIBRARY ORIENTATION – Meet in the Lobby of Cowles Library
- Week 14: **“Fun” and the Screwball Comedy**
Flexible Sunday Screening for Research Purposes
- Nov 26: Reading: Swaab BFI, pp. 69-118
Group B Blackboard Post
- Nov 28: Class Cancelled for Thanksgiving Break
- Week 15: **Third Essay Research and Workshop**
No Film Screening

Dec 3: LIBRARY RESEARCH - Meet in the Lobby of Cowles Library

Dec 5: Third Essay Draft Due In-Class (bring two hard copies)

**Essay 3 Portfolio Due During Exam Date, Thursday morning,
December 12th by 10:00 a.m. in box outside of my office door (HOW 328)**

