

Code: FLMD-213E.09

Course title: American Cinema in the 1930s and 40s

Course convenors: Hirsch Tibor

Class time and place: Tuesday 10:45-12:15 -137

Course type: Seminar

Course content: The course introduces students to the most important tendencies of the American film-history between 1927 and 1946. The lectures use two main approaches to understand historical developments of the Hollywood Cinema. The first approach focuses on the social-historical aspect: looking more closely at the changing economic characteristics of the film industry, the changing social and political expectations of the so called "pre-code" and "post-code years" of the examined period, and also the rising genres of the early talkies like the horror, like the mob- and cop movies, the musical, the screwball comedy, the early film noir. The other approach puts the emphasis on the most remarkable filmmakers and their special influence in the age: e.g. on Hawks, Ford, Capra or Lubitsch. We will also discuss the effects and reflections of the most important political and economical impacts on American Cinema within the two decades: such as the Great Depression or the World War II.

During the course students will get a general picture of the most important directors of the age: about e.g. Hawks, Ford, Capra, Lubitsch, Hawks, etc. The course will use the social-historical, industry- and genre-minded approach to discuss Hollywood in the 1930s 40s and 50s., focusing on:

1. Pre-code and post-code tendencies,
2. The raise of the horror-, the cop-, and gangster movies,
3. Films reflecting on New Deal,
4. New genres in post-code years
5. Rise of early Film Noir

Requirements: Students are required to watch the films assigned for each class. Grades will be given on the basis of the term end test.

Learning outcomes:

Indicative Reading: *Crosland, Alan: The Jazz Singer (1927)*
Whale, James: Frankenstein (1931)
Littel Caesar (1931) or Scareface (1932) or Public Enemy (1931)
Cooper, C. Merian: *King Kong (1933)*
Capra, Frank: *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town (1936)*
Capra, Frank: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939)*
Ford, John: *The Grapes of the Wrath (1940)*
Ford John: *Fort Apache (1948)*
Lang, Fritz: *Fury (1936)*
Chaplin, Charlie: *The Great Dictator (1940)*
Lubitsch, Ernst: *Ninocska – Ninochka (1939)*
Disney, Walt: *Hófehérke - Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)*
Fleming, Viktor: *Gone with the Wind (1939)*

Kertész Mihály: Casablanca – Casablanca (1942)
Huston, John: A máltai sólyom – The Maltese Falcon (1941)
Wilder, Billy: Sunset Blvd. (1950)

Bibliography:

Kristin Thompson-David Bordwell: Film History. An Introduction. New York: McGraw-Hill,
Bordwell-Staigenr-Thompson: The Classical Hollywood Cinema. London: 1985. pp. 309-385. (Part III., IV., V.)
Wright, William: Six guns and society : a structural study of the Western. London : 1975.
Doherty, Thomas: Pre-code Hollywood. Columbia Univ. Press, 1999.
