Course Overview: In this course we watch and discuss many of the great films made in Hollywood from the 1930s to the 1970s. We will also read about these films and their histories in Jon Lewis’ *American Film*. The course emphasizes the political and social contexts of these movies, as well as the context of film history. The course puts the films in conversation with each other and in conversation with the political and social movements of their historical moments.

Course Objectives: You will learn a great deal in this course, I am certain, but let me list some of the primary learning objectives of the course. At the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Place these films in the context of film history and social/political history;
2. Analyze films in relation to their historical context;
3. Discuss critically major genre and directors across mid-century American film history;
4. Demonstrate the above knowledge in written essays, creative projects, class discussion, and tests.

General Overview of Grading: Your final grade in this course will be determined by your performance on one test (20% of total); quizzes, class participation, and general preparedness (20% together of total); one paper (20% of total), and one final project (40% of total). See the rules and regulation handout for more information. The university’s grading scale is presented here: [https://www.uml.edu/Catalog/Undergraduate/Policies/Academic-Policies/Grading-Policies.aspx](https://www.uml.edu/Catalog/Undergraduate/Policies/Academic-Policies/Grading-Policies.aspx).

Guidelines for Grading: The first essay in this course will be an academic, analytical essay of a work or multiple works of literature on the syllabus. The paper will be graded on, among other things, its organization, structure, close readings, originality, clarity, and innovation. The second paper in the course can be very similar to this first paper in nature, or it can be a more creative project. The final paper will offer students a chance to demonstrate the knowledge and skills developed during the course while also providing them with considerable creative freedom. For example, you might design a virtual museum exhibit, make a documentary video about an aspect of Lowell connected to the course, construct an American Values syllabus of your own, plan and teach a class of a younger sibling in high school or elementary school, interview an artist, politician, or some other local figure, research in detail one of the writers on our syllabus—the possibilities are endless. The two tests in the course will ask you to identify quotations from our readings, place them context, and connect them by writing short essays to the main themes in the course. Finally, the quizzes in the course will be short answer reading quizzes.

This is a 3-credit course, as defined by federal regulation. You should expect to complete 6 hours of out of class work each week for approximately 15 weeks, for a total of 90 hours of outside-of-class work.

Required Texts:


All the films, which are available in any number of ways.

Important Dates: Jan. 30  Last day to drop without record

April 5  Last day for students to withdraw from course with a “W”

Disability Accommodations: In accordance with University policy and the ADA, I will provide accommodation for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Their office is in University Crossing, 220 Pawtucket Street, Suite #300, phone: 978-934-4574, e-mail: Disability@uml.edu. Documentation of disability is confidential.

Instructional Resources: The Writing Center, located on the third floor of O’Leary Library, offers free writing tutoring. You can meet with a tutor about any writing assignment in any class. Check it out: [https://www.uml.edu/Writing-](https://www.uml.edu/Writing-).
Center/. The Centers for Learning and Academic Support Services provide many tutoring resources; more details are available here: https://www.uml.edu/class/. I encourage you to seek assistance if you are struggling in this or any class here at UML. Their services are free to use (and paid for by your student fees!).

Additional List of Rules and Requirements

1. **Class participation** makes possible a dynamic, collaborative learning community -- the possibility that we as a community produce knowledge. For this reason, class participation is part of your final grade. In order to participate you must, of course, come to class well prepared. Don’t just do the reading, but write down questions you have and begin to develop opinions about the reading. Always bring the assigned texts and materials with you to class: every class discussion will involve us in some close analysis of specific passages and images. I will often provide handouts with study questions, and you should come to class having considered those questions in depth. You should also come to each class with at least one marked passage or image and/or one well-considered question or observation to launch discussion. The less assertive need not fear: class participation is not measured by how much you talk; rather, it is the degree of your involvement with and attentiveness in the class, your ability to listen to and respond to your peers, your willingness to share your thoughts in a constructive way.

2. You will write two **formal papers/projects** in this course. I will distribute a handout detailing requirements, due dates, and procedures. Late assignments lose half a letter grade for each class period late.

3. **Plagiarism or cheating** of any sort will result in failure of the assignment and endanger your future in the course. For a discussion of plagiarism see the Undergraduate Academic Integrity Policy: https://www.uml.edu/Catalog/Undergraduate/Policies/Academic-Policies/Academic-Integrity.aspx

4. This course has one midterm test. The test may only be taken late under extraordinary circumstances, and the student must provide a note from a doctor or a dean. In such situations, the request to take the test late must be made at least 24 hours in advance. Failure to follow these rules will result in a zero on the test.

5. **You are required to attend class.** Also, you must have prepared whatever material the assignment requires. An absence will affect your participation grade. And prolonged absences will lead to failure of the course. If you miss class more than two times I will expect you to see me in my office to discuss your future in the course and possible withdrawal.

6. If you come to class **excessively or repeatedly late**, it will affect your grade. Also, please refrain from getting up and leaving the room during class unless it’s an emergency.

7. You may drink in class, **but you may not eat**. Please silence your phone (vibrate is not silence), and please refrain from messaging during class. If your phone is in way used in class, I will immediately confiscate it and call my close friend who runs a gambling ring in Turkmenistan.

8. Your **final grade** is comprised of your grades on the papers/final projects (40% of total), your grades on the two tests (again, together 40% of total), and your grade on daily quizzes/workshops and class participation (together 20% of total).

9. In the event of a **class cancellation** because of snow or my absence, please stay current with the syllabus.

10. Please feel free to drop by my office hours to discuss the class or the reading/writing assignments. Of course, I will be happy to make appointments at other times if my office hours conflict with your schedule. **You can best reach me by email.**

11. You are responsible for checking your UNIVERSITY email account.

**Syllabus**

Please complete all readings for the day they appear.


**Week (1) of Jan. 16**

T: Course Introduction

**1930s**

TH: “The Studio System” 102-110  
“Genre and Studio Hollywood” and “The Gangster Film” 118-122  
*Scarface*, dir. Howard Hawks (1932)

**Week (2) of Jan. 23**

T: “Censorship” 110-118  
“Melodrama” 123-128  
*Imitation of Life*, dir. John M Stahl (1934)

TH: “Horror” 128-131  
*Dracula*, dir. Tod Browning (1931)

**Week (3) of Jan. 30**

T: “The Musical” 131-137  
*42nd Street*, dir. Busby Berkeley and Lloyd Bacon (1933)

TH: “Comedy” and “Romantic Comedy” 137-145  
*Bringing Up Baby*, dir. Howard Hawks, (1938)

**1940s**

**Week (4) of Feb. 6**

T: “Hollywood in Transition” and “The Last Best Years” 147-161  
*Citizen Kane*, dir. Orson Welles (1941)

TH: “Casablanca” 183-185  
*Casablanca*, dir. Michael Curtiz (1942)

**Week (5) of Feb. 13**

T: Midterm Test Review  
“Post-war America” 193-200

TH: “Film Noir” 201-209 and “Howard Hawks 215-218  
*The Big Sleep*, dir. Howard Hawks (1948)

**Week (6) of Feb. 20**

T: NO CLASS; MONDAY SCHEDULE

TH: **MIDTERM TEST**

**1950s**

**Week (7) of Feb. 27**

T: “Billy Wilder” 218-222  
*Sunset Boulevard*, dir. Billy Wilder (1950)

TH: “Elia Kazan” 222-225  
Week (8) of March 6

T: Paper Discussion
   “Moving toward a New Hollywood” 233-247

TH: “Genre: The Western” 247-250
    The Searchers, dir. John Ford (1956)

Week (9) of March

Week (10) of March 20

T: FIRST PAPER DUE

TH: “Teen Movies” 250-256
    The Wild One, dir. Laszlo Benedek (1953)

Week (11) of March 27

T: Rebel without a Cause, dir. Nicholas Ray (1955)

TH: “Hitchcock” 258-264
    Vertigo, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1958)

1960s

Week (12) of April 3

T: “From Marilyn Monroe to Doris Day” 266-272
    Some Like It Hot, dir. Billy Wilder (1961)

TH: “Bonnie and Clyde” 272-276
    Bonnie and Clyde, dir. Arthur Penn (1967)

Week (13) of April 10

T: Final Paper/Project
   “A Hollywood Renaissance” 281-289

TH: “The Godfather” 291-298
    The Godfather, part 1, dir. Francis Ford Coppola (1972)

Week (14) of April 17

T: “Chinatown” 299-301
    Chinatown, dir. Roman Polanski (1974)

TH: “Martin Scorsese” 301-305
    Taxi Driver, dir. Martin Scorsese (1976)

Week (15) of April 24

T: “Robert Altman” (306-308)
    Nashville, dir. Robert Altman, (1975)

TH: LAST DAY OF CLASS
    FINAL PAPER DUE