

HOLLYWOOD: A Social and Cultural History of American Movies, 1890-1960

Arising out of the chaotic metropolitan growth at the turn of the century, movie culture and the movie industry played crucial roles in the shaping of American society in the first half of the twentieth century. Initially *subverting* a dominant, middle-class Victorian culture and potentially *democratizing* American culture, the movies soon became a part of corporate capitalism's consumerist *transformation* of American society. In the face of the social traumas of massive depression and international conflict in the 1930s, a consolidated movie industry and culture (popularly known as "Hollywood") crafted powerful and pervasive symbols and myths to *support* traditional American values and institutions and prepare the nation for war. Caught up in the international anxieties and domestic frustrations of the early Cold War, Hollywood *conformed* to dominant cultural values (particularly anti-communism) in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Thus four (or five) words, subvert (democratize), transform, support, and conform, can briefly summarize and frame the history of movies from 1890 to 1960. Much of the fascination of this history, however, emerges at the margins where this powerful means of communication never completely ceased to be disruptive, challenging, and creative. Indeed, the civic and democratic potential of what became an essentially commercial and consumer phenomenon is an important theme in this course. Robert Sklar's Movie-Made America (1994), the best one-volume survey of the history of American movie culture, is the central text in this course. Other texts will be available on e-reserves and will represent a sampling of the extensive and remarkable scholarship on the history of movies written over the past forty years as well as a few primary documents that illustrate key episodes in movie history.

V. Outline of Course: There are six modules for the course. See the Canvas site for specific dates.

*Module One: MASS CULTURE AND THE CRISIS OF VICTORIANISM: **The Subversive/Democratic Potential of Movie Culture***

Reading: Sklar, Part One, supplemental readings on Canvas site

*Module Two: MOVIE CULTURE TAMED: **The Hollywood Moguls and the New Capitalism***

Reading: Sklar, Part Two, supplemental readings on Canvas site

*Module Three: HOLLYWOOD ON THE POTOMAC: **Hollywood Politicized and the Politics of Image-Making***

Reading: Sklar, Part Three (ch. 10-12, 14 only; skip chapter 13), supplemental readings on Canvas site

*Module Four: DEVOURING ITS OWN: **From Commitment to Accusation and the Decline of Movie Culture***

Reading: Sklar, Part Four (ch. 15-17 only, skip ch. 18) supplemental readings on Canvas site

Module Five: LONGER ESSAY ON IMAGE-BASED COMMUNICATIONS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Module Six: PRESENTATION ON VISUAL LITERACY