

University of Calgary  
Department of Communication, Media and Film  
FILM 405-01  
Pre-Code Cinema

Winter 2020 REVISED

January 13, 2020—April 15, 2020  
(excluding February 16-22, April 10 + 13)  
Screenings: Monday 2:00PM—4:45PM,  
Lectures: Wednesday 3:00PM—4:50PM

Instructor:	Dr. Lee Carruthers
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Web Page:	See course page via D2L
Office Hours:	Via email

**NOTE:** The information below represents a revised schedule for the remaining weeks of the course, deploying online resources. If you have any difficulty accessing video files via D2L, please notify me ASAP. While I anticipate that the schedule outlined here will be carried out in full, small changes may be made if online materials cannot be made available. So, be sure to read every email from me carefully until the course has concluded: I will make as few changes as possible and will only contact you with information that directly supports your success in the course.

The **course films** can be accessed via D2L: from the main course page, go to Content and locate the link to each film title. We are receiving access to these teaching resources under s. 30.01 of the Copyright Act, for use in this class only. If you retain a copy, this exception requires that you delete the copy 30 days after you have received the final evaluation for the course. Thank you for your compliance.

### Course Description

This course surveys the phenomenon of pre-code cinema, focusing on films produced in Hollywood between the announcement of the Hays Code and its enforcement, 1930-1934. By this, we will test the claim that the films produced in these years emerged from a “parallel universe” (Doherty, 1999), generating representations of sex, vice, violence, and immorality without equal in the classical era. Close consideration will be given to industrial policy and practices, and the stipulations of the Motion Picture Production Code text; more richly, the course engages the cultural, technological, intellectual, and creative contexts from which these titles spring, as well as the distinctive character of the films themselves. To situate these works, we will examine significant filmic precedents, assessing the extent to which silent cinema and avant-garde practice inform pre-code aesthetics. A special emphasis of the course concerns the films’ resonance for the present moment, illuminating contemporary issues of identity and urban experience.

### Objectives of the Course

This course has three main objectives:

1. To examine a representative range of pre-code titles, locating common features and idiosyncratic elements via narrative, stylistic, and thematic analyses
2. To develop a nuanced understanding of the conditioning contexts of 1930s film production, situating pre-code films as complex objects that answer to particular commercial and cultural imperatives
3. More broadly, to consider the ways pre-code cinema highlights questions of medium, representation, and cultural legibility.

### Viewing Requirements

Students are required to watch all films indicated on the course schedule, using the online versions made available via D2L for the rest of the semester.

### Participation Requirements

The format for the weekly D2L contributions is unchanged, though the last 4 weeks of the course will be carried out remotely. Expectations are outlined below.

Informed participation is an essential component of this course that will help to determine your final grade. Please note that a significant percentage of your grade is based on participation: if you do not make informed contributions to our weekly discussions, you can expect to receive zero for this part of your grade. Besides the weekly readings + screenings, there is a simple task to be completed every week, as follows:

Every week, go to the D2L site to submit a detailed screening note about the weekly film(s). There will be a general question or prompt for you to discuss. Your response should be a paragraph or so in length; it should focus on a detail or raise a specific issue, engaging one of the issues raised by the prompt specifically and thoughtfully. These responses must be posted before the deadline each week (for the remainder of the course, **Friday at 10PM**, unless specified otherwise) in order to earn marks.

### **Policy on the use of Electronic Communication Devices**

Laptops are for note-taking only. Using a laptop for email or unauthorized browsing during class time will jeopardize your participation grade. Likewise, texting and cell phone use is not permitted during class time: turn off these devices when you arrive at the classroom to avoid grade penalties.

### **Textbooks and Readings:**

The course has two main sources of required readings. The first is the **course textbook**, available at the Campus Bookstore: Thomas Doherty's *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema 1930-1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), designated as '**PCH**' on the syllabus. Second, a selection of additional readings are posted on the **D2L** course page: be sure to consult the schedule to confirm each week's reading assignment.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Transitioning to distance learning for the remainder of the semester, your grades will be determined as follows:

Reading Quizzes (based on <u>two written already</u> )	10%
Midterm (short film + analysis, take-home)	25%
Reading Summaries (NEW)	10%

(2 summaries, each a single-page gloss of a course reading, responding to a focused question. Students will be asked to compose a summary twice in the next four weeks, and will be given 4 days to complete this task each time. Detailed instructions to follow.)

D2L posts (10 in total; 2 remaining) 15%

Final Essay 40%

(A paper based in historical research, and/or textual analysis, 2500 words in length, on one or more of the central films or issues of the course. Detailed instructions and sample topics will be provided by April 1<sup>st</sup>; the paper is due April 15<sup>th</sup>, submitted via email.)

### Submission of Assignments

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, submitting via email or Dropbox (check the specific assignment instructions). **Note:** It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act**. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

### Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

### Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/). Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

### Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

## Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, final grades are reported as letter grades. Quizzes will be assessed with point grades; midterm assignment and final essays will receive letter grades. Participation and Discussion Board contributions will receive a point score. The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

\* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

## Plagiarism

**Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense.**

Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media. You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself.

**In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation

style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to [https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm\\_source=ssc&utm\\_medium=redirect&utm\\_campaign=redirect](https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect)

### **Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation**

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, online lectures, notes, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright ([www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf)) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

### **Academic Misconduct**

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### **Research Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

### **Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal**

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

### **Student Support Services and Resources**

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at [itsupport@ucalgary.ca](mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca) or by calling 403-220.5555.

### Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings (REVISED)

#### UNIT THREE: WOMEN, MODERNITY, SEXUALITY

##### **Week 9            March 16 + 18**

The New Woman (i)

Screening:                    *Pandora's Box* (G.W. Pabst, Germany, 1929)  
**ONLINE ACCESS VIA CPL >> KANOPY (see my email for instructions)**

Reading:

- Mary Ann Doane, "The Erotic Barter: *Pandora's Box*." In *Femme Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 142-164. **D2L**

Recommended:

- Sabine Hake, "The Continuous Provocation of Louise Brooks." *German Politics and Society*, Issue 32 (Summer, 1994) pp. 58-75. **D2L**

##### **Week 10            March 23 + 25**

The New Woman (ii)

Screening:                    *Female* (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1933)  
**ONLINE ACCESS VIA D2L (Course page>Contents>Film title link)**

Reading

- Veronica Pravadelli, "Cinema and the Modern Woman." In *Blackwell's History of American Cinema*, vol. II, edited by Cynthia Lucia, Art Simon, Roy Grundmann (Wiley- Blackwell, 2012), pp. 247-268. **D2L**
- Chapter 5, "Vice Rewarded" *PCH* pp. 103-131.

#### UNIT FOUR: CULTURAL VISIBILITIES

##### **Week 11            March 30 + April 1**

Whiteness and the 'Other'

Screening:                    *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper, USA, 1933)  
*Tarzan and his Mate* (Cedric Gibbons, USA, 1934)  
*Paul Robeson: The First Black Star* (Video short, TIFF 2017).  
**ONLINE ACCESS VIA D2L (Course page>Contents>Film title link)**

## Reading

- Chapter 10 "Primitive Mating Rituals" *PCH*, pp. 253-293.
- Ellen Scott, "More than a 'Passing' Sophistication: Dress, Film Regulation, and the Color Line in 1930s American Films." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 1/2, FASHION (SPRING/SUMMER 2012), pp. 60-86 **D2L**

## Recommended:

- Jesse Wentz, "Oscar Micheaux: American Independent." ONLINE: <https://tiff.net/the-review/oscar-micheaux-american-independent>

## **Week 12**      **April 6 + 8**

### Gender Performance

Screening:                    *She Done Him Wrong* (Lowell Sherman, USA, 1933)  
                                     *Morocco* (Joseph von Sternberg, USA, 1930), excerpt  
**ONLINE ACCESS VIA D2L (Course page>Contents>Film title link)**

## Reading:

- Edward Field, "Mae West." *The New Yorker* 15 July 1974: 30. **D2L**
- Ramona Curry, "The Prostitute, the Production Code, and the Depression." In *Too Much of a Good Thing: Mae West as Cultural Icon* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 28-54. **D2L**

## Recommended:

- Tanya Horak, "The Lesbian Vogue and Backlash Against Cross-Dressed Women In the 1930s." In *Girls Will Be Boys: Cross-Dressed Women, Lesbians, And American Cinema, 1908-1934* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers U.P., 2016), pp. 169-189 (chapter excerpt). **D2L**

## **Week 13**      **April 15**

### Instituting the Code: Joseph Breen's Hollywood

Screening:                    *It Happened One Night* (Capra, USA, 1934)  
**ONLINE ACCESS VIA D2L (Course page>Contents>Film title link)**

## Reading:

- Chapter 12, "Classical Hollywood Cinema" *PCH*, p. 319-342.
- Guidelines and topics for the course essay