

## English 492G: Warner Bros. Studio

Spring 2005

Tu/Th 12:25-2:15, Caldwell G107



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**Film Studies at NCSU:** NCSU offers a Film Studies Minor (15 credit hours) and a Film Major (30 credit hours). For more information contact Dr. Maria Pramaggiore or visit our website: [www.ncsu.edu/chass/film](http://www.ncsu.edu/chass/film).

### Required Texts:

Behlmer, Rudy. *Inside Warner Bros. (1935-1951)*. Simon & Schuster.  
Schatz, Thomas. *The Genius of the System*. Henry Holt & Co.

Additional readings will be available on “e-reserve”: <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/rbr/> under Eng492 (or under Orgeron). Please bring relevant readings to each class session, including printouts of e-reserve materials.

**Optional Text:** *A Writer's Reference*. Diana Hacker. This is a very useful guide to paper writing, research, citation, academic integrity, and the mechanics of language.

### Course Objectives and Expectations:

This course will provide students with an understanding of how one of the major Hollywood studios functioned during Hollywood's Golden Era. We will study the workings of the studio system and of Warner Bros. in particular, including its stars, directors, producers, films, and its founders: Jack, Harry, Sam, and Albert. Through screenings, readings, class discussions, in-class work, a series of papers, and a comprehensive final exam, students will leave the course with a demonstrable understanding of the films, personnel, in-house style, star-making, and operations of Warner Bros. during the 1930s and 1940s.

Participating in weekly class discussions is essential to ensuring your success in this course. Participation will help build confidence in your ideas and will help to create an atmosphere in which productive, courteous, and intellectually rigorous discussion will shape the direction of our studies. Consistent active participation will also influence borderline grades.

### Attendance:

Regular course attendance is required. If you miss a class, ask another student for notes and find out if you missed any new assignments. You are responsible for making up any missed screenings on your own time. The library's media center—located on the second floor of D.H. Hill, 515-2977—has the films we'll be viewing this semester.

In-class quizzes (we will frequently have unannounced ones based on the readings and screenings) and exercises cannot be made up. Documented emergencies will receive special consideration if work can be made up in a timely fashion; however, it is up to you to email me promptly (within 48 hours) and to provide verifiable documentation for any such accommodations within a week. Excessive unexcused absences will have an

adverse effect upon your grade; missing more than four days of class will result in incremental drops in your final grade of a third per additional missed day. For example if you miss six days of class and achieve a B in the course, your grade will drop two thirds to a C+.

### **Administrative:**

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. If you will be participating in a sport or other University sponsored event this semester you should provide me with documentation so that we can make arrangements for you to make up for any missed work.

### **Written Work:**

I accept late papers; they drop a grade per class day that they are late. I do not accept emailed papers under any circumstances. You are, however, welcome and encouraged to discuss paper topics or any other assignment with me in advance via email or in person. Consider using the university's free Writing Tutorial Services, 515-3163.

### **Academic Integrity:**

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes all forms of plagiarism, cheating on assignments or exams, turning in work that has been written (partially or entirely) by someone else (this includes websites), failing to appropriately represent and document sources, fabricating information or citations, or helping another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. In addition to being referred to the Office of Student Conduct and having to undertake that office's Academic Integrity Program, any student who violates the Code of Student Conduct—whether in a formal paper, an informal writing assignment, an exam, or any other kind of assignment—will receive a failing grade in the course and be placed on Academic Integrity Probation.

Please see [http://www.ncsu.edu/student\\_affairs/osc/AIpage/acaintegrity.html](http://www.ncsu.edu/student_affairs/osc/AIpage/acaintegrity.html) for an explanation of academic integrity and of the consequences for violating it. Ignorance is not an excuse for any act of plagiarism; the University considers it your responsibility to know the rules of academic integrity. If you don't understand the rules for academic writing, please see me or consult a writing manual well *before* working on your first paper.

### **Grades:**

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Daily Work (Quizzes, In-Class Work, Homework, etc.): 20%

Paper #1 (4-5 pages): 20%

Paper #2 (8-10 pages): 30%

Final Exam: 30%

All assignments will be graded with letter grades using a plus/minus scale, or on a point system with an equivalent scale.

**Extra Credit:** Extra credit towards the "Daily Work" portion of your grade can be earned by attending the February Warner Bros. film series at the Witherspoon campus cinema. Films start at 7:00 and are free and open to the public. Write a one-page response (5 pts.) to the screening(s) you attend, including some of the information you learned during the introduction that helped you in thinking about the film. You can do two write-ups for 10 points total. You are, of course, encouraged to attend the whole series!

**Feb 3:** *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933, 100 min.), Dir. Mervyn LeRoy, Introduced by Marsha Orgeron; **Feb 10:** *They Made Me a Criminal* (1939, 92 min.), Dir. Busby Berkeley, Introduced by Laura Boyes; **Feb 17:** *They Drive By Night* (1940, 95 min.), Dir. Raoul Walsh, Introduced by Devin Orgeron; **Feb 24:** *High Sierra* (1941, 100 min.), Dir. John Huston, Introduced by Tom Wallis.



### Syllabus for Spring 2005

*Please come to class having already read whatever we are scheduled to discuss.*

Tu Jan 11 Course Introduction & Warner Bros. History  
 Clips: "A Trip Through a Hollywood Studio" (Vitagraph, 1934)  
 "Duck Amok" (1953) Daffy, Dir. Chuck Jones  
 "Show Biz Bugs" (1957) Bugs & Daffy, Dir. Friz Freleng

Th Jan 13 Studio System History  
 Read: *Genius* 3-12, 58-66; *Inside* 8, 15, 23, 128-9, 228-233  
 "The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930" & Addenda (347-367, e)  
 Clips: *The Jazz Singer* (1927) Dir. Alan Crosland  
 "I Love to Singa" (1936) Dir. Tex Avery  
*Night Nurse* (1931) Dir. William Wellman  
*Baby Face* (1933) Dir. Alfred E. Green

### Ripped from the Headlines: Crime & Punishment in the Pre-Code Era

Tu Jan 18 Screen: *Little Caesar* (1931, 79 m.) Dir. Mervyn LeRoy, Starring Edward G. Robinson  
 "One Froggy Evening" (1955) Dir. Chuck Jones

Th Jan 20 Read: *Genius* 135-155; *Inside* 6-7, 9-11  
 "Criminal Codes: Gangsters Unbound" Thomas Doherty (137-157, e)

Tu Jan 25 Screen: *The Public Enemy* (1931, 83 m.) Dir. William Wellman, Starring James Cagney  
 "What's Opera Doc" (*Merrie Melody* 1957, Chuck Jones)

Th Jan 27 Read: *Inside* 17, 31-32; "The Gangster as Tragic Hero" Robert Warshow (e)

Tu Feb 1 Screen: *I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang* (1932, 93 m.) Dir. Mervyn Le Roy  
 Starring Paul Muni

Th Feb 3 Read: *Inside* 5-6; "Criminal Codes: The Prison Film" Thomas Doherty (157-170, e)

### Dancing Through the Depression: Busby Berkeley and the Backstage Musical

Tu Feb 8 Screen: *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (1933, 89 m.) Dir. Lloyd Bacon & *42nd Street Trailer*  
 "What's Up Doc?" (1950) Bugs & Elmer, Dir. Robert McKimson

Th Feb 10 Clips: *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933) Dir. Mervyn LeRoy  
 "Stage Door Cartoon" (1944) Bugs & Elmer, Dir. Friz Freleng

Tu Feb 15 Screen: *Footlight Parade* (1933, 104 m.) Dir. Lloyd Bacon  
 Starring James Cagney, Joan Blondell, Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell

Th Feb 17 Read: *Inside* 25, 54-64  
 Clips: "Honeymoon Hotel" (1934), Dir. Earl Duvall (first color WB cartoon)

### Post-Code Characters: Heroes and Anti-Heroes

Tu Feb 22 Screen: *Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938, 102 m.) Dirs. Michael Curtiz & William Keighley

Starring Errol Flynn, Olivia De Havilland, Basil Rathbone, Claude Rains

- Th Feb 24     **Paper #1 Due**  
Read: *Inside* 44-53  
Clips: “Rabbit Hood” (1949) Bugs, Dir. Chuck Jones
- Tu Mar 1     Screen: *The Maltese Falcon* (1941, 101 m.) Dir. John Huston, Starring Humphrey Bogart
- Th Mar 3     Read: *Genius*, 297-321; *Inside* 149-159  
Clips: “Slick Hare” (1947) Bugs & Elmer, Dir. Friz Freleng
- Tu Mar 8     CLASSES CANCELED Spring Break
- Th Mar 10    CLASSES CANCELED Spring Break

**Asking for the Moon: Bette Davis and the W.B. Constellation**

- Tu Mar 15    Screen: *Jezebel* (1938, 103 m.) Dir. William Wyler, Starring Bette Davis, Henry Fonda
- Th Mar 17    Read: *Genius* 199-227; *Inside* 27-8, 39-44  
Screen: “You Ought to Be in Pictures” (1940) Porky & Daffy, Dir. Friz Freleng
- Tu Mar 22    Screen: *Dark Victory* (1939, 104 m.) Dir. Edmund Goulding, Starring Bette Davis
- Th Mar 24    CLASSES CANCELED Spring Holiday
- Tu Mar 29    Screen: *Now, Voyager* (1942, 117 m.) Dir. Irving Rapper, Starring Bette Davis
- Th Mar 31    Read: *Inside* 74-79, 107, 166-172; Cathy Klaprat, “The Star as Market Strategy” (e)

**Revisiting, Rethinking, Reinventing: Genre and Stars in the 1940s**

- Tu Apr 5     Screen: *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942, 126 m.) Dir. Michael Curtiz, Starring James Cagney
- Th Apr 7     Read: *Inside* 113-114, 117-118, 178-184
- Tu Apr 12    Screen: *Casablanca* (1942, 102 m.) Dir. Michael Curtiz  
Starring Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman
- Th Apr 14    Read: *Inside* 194-221; Jack Nachbar, “Doing the Thinking for All of Us” (e, 5-15)  
Screen: “The Big Snooze” (1946) Bugs & Elmer, Dir. Bob Clampett
- Tu Apr 19    Screen: *Mildred Pierce* (1945, 111 m.) Dir. Michael Curtiz, Starring Joan Crawford
- Th Apr 21    Read: *Genius* 411-439; *Inside* 254-261, 291  
Clips: “Swooner Crooner” (1944) Porky, Dir. Frank Tashlin
- Tu Apr 25    Screen: *White Heat* (1949, 114 m.) Dir. Raoul Walsh, Starring James Cagney
- Th Apr 28    **Paper #2 Due**  
Screen: “Hollywood Steps Out” (1941) Dir. Tex Avery  
“Rhapsody Rabbit” (1946) Bugs, Dir. Friz Freleng
- Th May 5     1:00-4:00 p.m. Final Exam **\*There are no make-ups for the final exam\***