VON STROHEIM & VON STERNBERG

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Office Hours:
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ENGLIT 3114: Film Directors
CRN 31114
Tuesdays, 6:00 PM to 9:50 PM
Lawrence Hall 209
Spring 2005

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The history of the American film industry is also a history of complaints by film directors about the
restraints placed upon their creative work by a profit-driven studio system. While violent clashes
between producers and various film artists have become part of Hollywood legend, no two studio
directors during the classical era were more insistent about the sanctity of art or were more critical of
industrial manufacture than Eric von Stroheim and Josef von Sternberg. Nevertheless, only the studio
system was capable of delivering the vast resources that both filmmakers required in order to realize
their opulent projects. It is no accident that, for the last thirty years, their films have often been
important for institutional histories of early Hollywood, as well as at the center of theoretical discussions
on film censorship, historical reception, women audiences, Americanization, the star system, and the
political economy of the American film industry. This course investigates the careers of these two
renegade directors with an aim toward thinking through some of the more sumptuous contradictions of
the classical Hollywood cinema.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

2001).


RECOMMENDED TEXT:
Cal.; University of California Press, 1995).

COURSE WORK:
Students will complete two take-home exams. Each exam will require a three-page response (750
words) to any one of four or five possible questions from which students must choose. Students will
have one week to complete each exam. There will be a take-home exam on von Stroheim distributed on
February 15 and due on **February 22**. The second exam on von Sternberg will be distributed on April 5 and due on **April 12**. Each exam is worth 25% of the course grade.

Also, each student will develop a research project for which a two-page proposal (500 words) will be handed in on **March 15**. The proposal will count toward 5% of the final grade. After I receive the research proposals, students will then meet with me in conference to discuss their projects further. Each student’s research project will culminate in a ten- to twelve-page paper (2,500 to 3,000 words) due on **April 26**. The project paper is worth 35% of the final course grade. There is no final exam for this course.

Students should consult the university’s policies on plagiarism. The Academic Integrity Code of the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh states that a student may be found in violation of her/his obligations if the student “presents as one's own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or words of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources”. You can find the Academic Integrity Code on the web at [http://www.fcas.pitt.edu/academicintegrity.html](http://www.fcas.pitt.edu/academicintegrity.html).

Any student with a disability who might require accommodation in this course is asked to contact both her/his instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, 412.648.7890/412.383.7355 (TTY), as soon as possible in the term. DRS is charged with verifying student disabilities and determining reasonable accommodations. Their web address is [www.drs.pitt.edu](http://www.drs.pitt.edu).

**ATTENDANCE:**
The success of this course depends upon each student’s preparation and classroom participation. Since the class meets only once a week, each student is allowed only one unexcused absence. Any student in excess of this limit can anticipate a significant reduction to her or his final grade. Excused absences may be granted for the observance of a religious holiday, for a serious medical condition, or for a legitimate family emergency. An excused absence is more easily obtained prior to the missed class session. Attendance, preparedness, and participation will for 10% of the final course grade.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

(x) = an article on reserve at Hillman Library.

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**WEEK 1**

Tuesday, January 11

**SCREENING:**

*Sunset Boulevard* (US 1952, Paramount, d. Billy Wilder) 110 minutes.

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**WEEK 2**

Tuesday, January 18

**READING:**

Koszarski, 3-55.

Norris, 1-118.

**SCREENING:**
*Blind Husbands* (US 1919, Universal, d. Erich Stroheim) 93 minutes.

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**WEEK 3**

Tuesday, January 25
**READING:**
Koszarski, 56-106.


Norris, 119-87.

**SCREENING:**

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**WEEK 4**

Tuesday, February 1
**READING:**
Koszarski, 108-33.

Norris, 188-260.

**SCREENING:**

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**WEEK 5**

Tuesday, February 8
**READING:**
Koszarski, 134-77.

Norris, 260-347.

**SCREENING:**
*Greed* (US 1925, Goldwyn, d. Erich von Stroheim) 130 minutes.
WEEK 6

Tuesday, February 15
READING:
Koszarski, 178-231.


SCREENING:
The Wedding March (US 1928, Paramount, d. Erich von Stroheim) 113 minutes.

WEEK 7

Tuesday, February 22
FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE
READING:
Koszarski, 233-335.

SCREENING:
Queen Kelly (US 1929, Gloria Productions, d. Erich von Stroheim) 101 minutes.

WEEK 8

Tuesday, March 1
NO CLASS. SPRING RECESS.

WEEK 9

Tuesday, March 8
READING:
Von Sternberg, 1-53; 112-136; 190-223.

Baxter, 1-38.

SCREENING:
The Last Command (US 1928, Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg) 88 minutes.

WEEK 10

Tuesday, March 15
PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE
READING:
Von Sternberg, 54-111.

Baxter, 39-84.
OPTIONAL READING:

SCREENING:

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**WEEK 11**

Tuesday, March 22  
READING:  
Von Sternberg, 136-151; 224-69.


OPTIONAL READING:  

*Grand Design*, David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson, Chapter 5: “Technological Change and the Classical Film Style, 109-41.

SCREENING:  
*Der Blaue Engel* (Germany/US 1930, UFA-Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg)

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**WEEK 12**

Tuesday, March 29  
READING:  


OPTIONAL READING:  

SCREENING:  
Tuesday, April 5
READING:
Baxter, 133-72.


OPTIONAL READING:


SCREENING:

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WEEK 14

Tuesday April 12 SECOND TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE
READING:
Baxter, 85-132.


OPTIONAL READING:

SCREENING:
*Shanghai Express* (US 1932, Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg) 90 minutes.
Tuesday April 19
READING:
Von Sternberg, 270-340.


SCREENINGS:
Encuentra entra Dos Reinas [The Meeting of Two Queens] (Spain 1991, d. Cecelia Barriga) 14 minutes.

WEEK 16
Exam Week. No Final Exam.

Tuesday, April 26      FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE
READING:

Baxter, 173-93.


SCREENING:
The Devil is a Woman (US 1935, Paramount, d. Josef von Sternberg) 114 minutes.