FMS - 365: HOLLYWOOD STARDOM

INSTRUCTOR: ANNE HELEN PETERSEN
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OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY 1-4, HUNTER 204

CLASS: MONDAY 10-10:50; WEDNESDAY/FRIDAY 11-11:50
SCREENING: TUESDAY 7:30 - 10:30

COURSE BLOG: HTTP://WHITMANSTARS.WORDPRESS.COM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
According to Richard Dyer, one of the founders of star studies, “stars matter because they act out aspects of life that matter to us; and performers get to be stars when what they act out matters to enough people.” In this class, we’ll be exploring that very idea – what makes a person a star? Why do stars matter? What do our stars say about ourselves and the society in which we live? Over the course of the semester, we’ll be looking at dozens of stars, investigating how each was produced, received, and remembered. We will study stars as both semiotic and sociological constructions – as images that can be “read” and deconstructed, but also as manifestations of specific cultural moments. Stars don’t just appear as they do in the night sky: they are made. This class will teach you how, and why, that phenomenon persists.

COURSE GOALS:
By the end of this course, students will be expected to:
• Understand how to “read” a star image
• Understand how stars function within ideology
• Possess a firm grasp of the history of stardom and the star system
• Contemplate the shifting notion of stars and stardom in contemporary Hollywood

COURSE MATERIALS:
Richard Dyer, Stars.
Richard Dyer, Heavenly Bodies.
Richard DeCordova, Picture Personalities
Recommended: Paul McDonald, The Star System (Cheap used online)
All other readings are available through CLEo or online.

CLASS POLICIES:
• You are expected to read all material by the day it is listed on the syllabus.
• If you miss a screening, you must make it up -- either by soliciting the material from me or from an alternate source (Netflix, Amazon, online, etc.)
• If you miss class, you are responsible for obtaining missed material, assignments, etc.
• No cell phones. If it rings, if you text, you’re out for the day.
• No laptops. We’ll talk about why.
CONTACTING ME:
The best way to communicate is through office hours. Always, always, always. If you cannot make my office hours, I am available by appointment. If you have a quick question that needs answered, you may either email me or find me on Gchat. If my dot is green, chat away. I will try to answer emails as quickly as possible, but may not be able to answer within an hour. Remember that I’m an old person and go to bed before 2 a.m.

RECOMMENDATION LETTERS/REFERENCES:
I would be happy to write a letter or be a reference for you once the class is complete; however, this is not a guarantee that I will write one for you. I will only write a letter for you if I have a strong, positive experience of you as a student. Here’s what you can do to help your case while in my class: 1.) Attend and participate avidly in class; 2.) Submit your work as directed on the syllabus. 3.) Show me your personality.

If you want a letter later on, approach me well in advance of any deadline for the letter or reference. Be proactive in sharing your goals and qualifications with me.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:
If you are a student with a disability who will need accommodations in this course, please meet with Julia Dunn in the Academic Resource Center (Mem. 205, x5213, dunnjl@whitman.edu) for assistance in developing a plan to meet your academic needs.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:
• I expect that all work submitted is the original work of the student whose name appear on it and that the work is prepared originally for this course. In other words, follow Whitman’s policies on academic honesty and plagiarism. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, or are unsure about how to properly cite sources, please come talk to me. PLAGIARISM CAN MEAN AN AUTOMATIC F. DON’T MESS AROUND.
• This syllabus is subject to small changes in lecture topics, readings, and screenings.
• There are no incompletes in this course save an extreme circumstance.
COURSE GRADING

FINAL STAR STUDY 40%
BLOG DISCUSSION 30%
SUPPLEMENTAL STAR: 10%
ATTENDANCE 10%
PARTICIPATION 10%
100%

ASSIGNMENT SPECIFICS:

FINAL STAR STUDY:
Your final star study will act as a synthesis of the class. You will choose one star/celebrity and perform an extensive study and reading of his/her image, cultural significance, and overall “meaning.” The star study will include an essay roadmap, comments on each others’ roadmaps, a draft, peer-review, and your final product, due at the end of the course.

BLOG DISCUSSION: After viewing the screening and completing the reading for each week, you will be expected to participate in a class discussion, prompted by me, on the course blog. Generally, responses will be due by MIDNIGHT on THURSDAY, with a comment on a peer’s post due by class time on Friday. Some weeks, very brief posts will be due at other times. Your responses should be concise, proof-read, provocative, respectful, and compelling, and conversational. See the course blog under “Posting Guidelines” for more details.

SUPPLEMENTAL STAR PRESENTATION: For one class period, you will be in charge of introducing the class to a “supplemental star” -- a star who fits closely with our discussion for the day, but isn’t necessarily the “main” point of discussion. With a strict ten-minute time limit, you’ll introduce the star with clips and images, offer a very concise bit of biography, and talk a bit about the star’s constructed image, relating the star to the week’s readings and the other featured stars. A week before presenting, you should meet with Annie for background reading and tips. Presentation will be graded on evidence of research, preparedness, and presentation style.

ATTENDANCE: Showing up. Staying awake. More than five minutes late = absent. I will give you two free absences for any reason – excused or unexcused. After two absences, your grade begins to drop.

PARTICIPATION: Talking. In class. Regularly. But not dominating every conversation. There’s a fine art to participation, and this course should help you refine it. If you’re absolutely not comfortable with talking in class, please come meet with me during office hours, and we can arrange for an alternate means of participation.
WEEK ONE
NO SCREENING

MON 1/14: WHO ARE STARS? AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?
• Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, 1-18

WED 1/16: PICTURE PERSONALITIES
• Paul McDonald, *The Star System*, 15-37

FRI 1/18: THE STAR
• Richard DeCordova, “The Emergence of the Star System” (CLEo)
• Richard DeCordova, *Picture Personalities*, “The Star”
• Supplemental Star: Mary Pickford

WEEK TWO
NO SCREENING

MON 1/21: MLK DAY - NO CLASS

WED 1/23: STARS AND IDEOLOGY
• Richard Dyer, *Stars*, 1-32

FRI: NO CLASS

WEEK THREE
SCREENING: *Miss Fatty’s Seaside Lovers* (*Arbuckle 1915*)

MON 1/28: STAR SCANDALS
• Supplemental Star: Theda Bara

WED 1/30: STAR SCANDALS, CON’T
• Supplemental Star: Wallace Reid

FRI 2/1: FATTY ARBUCKLE
• Sam Stoloff, “Fatty Arbuckle and The Black Sox: The Paranoid Style of American Popular Culture, 1919-1922.” (CLEo)
WEEK FOUR
SCREENING: It (Badger 1927)

MON 2/4: IDOLS OF CONSUMPTION
• Richard Dyer, Stars, 35-46
• Supplemental Star: Gloria Swanson

WED 2/6: CLARA BOW
• Marsha Orgeron, “Making ‘It’: in Hollywood: Clara Bow, Fandom, and Consumer Culture” (CLEo)

FRI 2/8: THE DEPRESSION AND LABOR
• Charles Eckert, “Shirley Temple and the House of Rockefeller” (CLEo)
• Primary Star: Shirley Temple

WEEK FIVE
SCREENING: It Happened One Night (Capra 1934)

MON 2/11: STARDOM UNDER THE STUDIO SYSTEM
• Paul McDonald, The Star System, 39-66 (CLEo)
• Supplemental Star: Joan Crawford

WED 2/13: PUBLICITY
• Ronald L. Davis, “The Glamour Factory” (CLEo)
• Supplemental “Stars”: Louella Parsons/Hedda Hopper

FRI 2/15: CLARK GABLE
• Christine Becker, “Clark Gable: The King of Hollywood” (CLEo)
• Supplemental Star: Carole Lombard

WEEK SIX
SCREENING: The Philadelphia Story (Cuckor 1940)

MON 2/18: THREE DAY - NO CLASS

WED 2/20: KATHARINE HEPBURN
• Scandals of Classic Hollywood: Katharine Hepburn’s Trousers (CLEo)
• Supplemental Star: Jimmy Stewart

FRI 2/22: STAR TYPES
• Richard Dyer, Stars, 47-59
• Supplemental Stars: James Cagney, Bette Davis, John Wayne, Betty Grable
WEEK SEVEN
SCREENING: Blonde Venus

MON 2/25: DIETRICH AND GARBO
  • Alexander Doty, “The Sexy Hausfrau versus the Swedish Sphinx” (CLEo)

WED 2/27: ALTERNATE RECEPTIONS
  • Andrea Weiss, “A Queer Feeling When I Look At You: Hollywood Stars and Lesbian Spectatorship in the 1930s” (CLEo)

FRI 3/1: MORE ALTERNATIVES
  • Scandals of Classic Hollywood: Cary Grant’s Intimate Bromance (CLEo)

WEEK EIGHT
NO SCREENING

MON 3/4: END OF AN ERA
  • Charles Wolfe, “The Return of Jimmy Stewart: The Publicity Photograph as Text”

WED 3/6: NO CLASS - ANNIE AT CONFERENCE
FRI 3/8: NO CLASS -- ANNIE AT CONFERENCE

SPRING BREAK

WEEK NINE
SCREENING: Gilda (Vidor 1946)

3/25: THE STARS GO WILD
  • Paul McDonald, The Star System, 67-78 (CLEo)
  • “Tells the Facts and Names the Names” (CLEo)

WED 3/27: INGRID BERGMAN AND RITA HAYWORTH
  • Adrienne McLean, “The Cinderella Princess and the Instrument of Evil” (1st Half) (CLEo)

FRI 3/29: EVEN MORE
  • Adrienne McLean, “The Cinderella Princess and the Instrument of Evil” (2nd Half) (CLEo)
WEEK TEN
SCREENING: On the Waterfront (Kazan 1954)

MON 4/1: POSTWAR MASCULINITY
• Scandals of Classic Hollywood: Marlon Brando’s Dirty Dungarees (CLEo)
• Supplemental Stars: Montgomery Clift, James Dean

WED 4/3: IMAGE UNDONE
• Truman Capote, “A Duke in His Domain” (CLEo)

FRI 4/5: BRANDO AND CAPOTE
• Douglas McCollum, “In Cold Type” (CLEo)

WEEK ELEVEN
SCREENING: The Misfits (Huston 1961)

MON 4/8: POST-WAR FEMININITY
• No Reading - Watch Gentleman Prefer Blondes on own (on reserve)
• Supplemental Stars: Elizabeth Taylor, Doris Day, Debbie Reynolds

WED 4/10: MONROE
• Richard Dyer, Heavenly Bodies, “Monroe and Sexuality” (Part One -- through “Desirability”)

FRI 4/12: MONROE CONT.
• Richard Dyer, Heavenly Bodies, “Monroe and Sexuality” (Part Two -- “Desirability” to the end)

WEEK TWELVE
SCREENING: Introducing Dorothy Dandridge (Coolidge 1999)

MON 4/15: BLACKNESS AND STARDOM
• Mia Mask, “Dorothy Dandridge’s Erotic Charisma” (CLEo)
• Supplemental Star: Harry Belafonte

WED 4/17: POST-RACIAL?
• Read: Mia Mask, “Halle Berry: Charismatic Beauty in a Multicultural Age” (CLEo)

FRI 4/19: NO CLASS -- MEET WITH ANNIE RE: STARS
WEEK THIRTEEN
SCREENING: A Star is Born (Cukor 1954)

MON 4/22: MAKING MEANING
• Richard Dyer, “Judy Garland and Gay Men” (through “Androgyny”)

WED 4/24:
• Richard Dyer, “Judy Garland and Gay Men” (through “Androgyny”)

FRI 4/26: NO CLASS -- MEET WITH ANNIE
DUE: INITIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

WEEK FOURTEEN
NO SCREENING

MON 4/29: STAR STUDY EXEMPLAR
• Richard Dyer, “A Specific Image: Jane Fonda,” 63-86

WED 5/1: DUE: ROAD MAPS
• In-Class Peer Reviews

FRI 5/3: NO CLASS -- MEET WITH ANNIE

WEEK FIFTEEN
NO SCREENING

MON 5/6: LAST DAY OF CLASS
DUE: FIRST DRAFT - STAR STUDY

FINAL PAPER DUE: TUESDAY, MAY 14, 8 PM