

Klein, Paul

Course Title: Classics of World Cinema

Quarter and Academic Year: Summer 2010

DESCRIPTION: Faculty: Greg Mullins, Ph.D.

Classics of World Cinema offered a survey of film history from the 1920s to the early 1960s. The course was designed as an intensive, full-time, five-week introduction and overview of landmark films and major movements in cinema history.

The course offered eleven units, out of which students were required to complete eight units to earn full credit. The units focused on German Expressionism, Soviet Montage, Silent Cinema, Classic Hollywood, Postwar Hollywood, Italian Neorealism, Postwar Japanese Cinema, and the French New Wave. Within these units, the course focused on styles, movements, influences, auteurs and historical contexts.

Students who were new to the study of film were provided with key terms and vocabulary, and were required to make use of specialized terminology in their discussions and writing. The course emphasized analyzing both film form and content, and relating form to content. For example, students learned to differentiate between various types of camera placement, focus, and movement; how to appreciate a variety of editing techniques and styles; how to interpret the use of light, shadow, darkness, and color, how to analyze sound alongside moving images, how to analyze *mise-en-scène*, framing, and movement, and how to recognize an auteur's style. In their writing, students developed their ability to interpret how formal aspects of film making communicate ideas, symbols, themes, character development, and so forth.

Students who entered the course with a solid foundation in film studies were required to provide interpretations and analyses of films that situated them in larger historical contexts, that placed them in intertextual dialog with other films, and that offered more sophisticated critiques of the films and the film makers.

The aim of the course, for both beginning and advanced students of film studies, was to advance the student's capacity for offering original analysis and interpretation of film, and to solidify knowledge of major films, movements, and styles in the history of world cinema.

The course was offered on-line. Lectures were posted as audio files to the course web site. Classroom discussions were pursued in asynchronous discussion forums.

Students were required to write and post to a discussion forum a "critical comment" of at least 200-300 words for at least eight of the eleven units in the course. Students were also required to reply to at least three of their peers' critical comments for each unit. The discussion generated via these critical comments and replies stimulated deeper analysis of the films. The discussions also drew upon the ideas presented in lecture, linked the films to ideas presented in the textbook, and connected the films to the larger currents of cinema history.

Students were also required to write a final paper of at least five pages in which they offered a critical analysis of one of the films studied in the course.

Readings included selected chapters of Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction* (third edition) and Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* (seventh edition).

Films included *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, *The Battleship Potemkin*, *Citizen Kane*, *Casablanca*, *Psycho*, *The Bicycle Thieves*, *Dreams*, and *Breathless*. In addition, students could select and write about three additional films.

EVALUATION:**Written by: Greg Mullins, PhD**

Paul Klein successfully completed all requirements and earned full credit for Classics of World Cinema. Paul wrote insightful critical comments with outstanding analysis of *Caligari*, *Potemkin*, *Citizen Kane*, *Casablanca*, *Psycho*, *Bigger than Life*, *The Bicycle Thief*, *A Hard Day's Night*, and *Breathless*. Paul's enthusiasm for film studies was readily apparent. He studied more films than were required, and he wrote lengthy, detailed, and deeply thoughtful critical comments. Paul was also eager to engage other students in discussion forums. He demonstrated an excellent understanding of the arts and technologies of filmmaking, and linked these to searching critiques of film narrative, character, and ideology.

For the final paper, Paul wrote a fascinating inquiry into the final scene of *Breathless*. His close reading of the famously ambiguous final lines and final shots of the film offered an insightful comment on Godard's project writ large. Paul wrote, "Breathless ends in a perilous space that bridges the old and new schools of cinema: an uncertain and largely undocumented area that confirms its very own existence as film and as a changing force. With this machine gun rattle of a motion picture, Godard challenges an entire school of filmmaking, but with no significantly settled position." This paper was outstanding, both because of the thoroughness with which Paul developed his argument and because of Paul's artful prose.

Paul entered this course with a strong background in film studies. His written work demonstrated a rapid advancement in his ability to nail down specific interpretations, and to locate individual films in relation to film history. He emerged from the course poised to pursue advanced work in film studies and with a deep appreciation for major film movements and styles from the era of Silent Cinema to the French New Wave.

EQUIVALENCIES:**TOTAL CREDITS EARNED: 8****8—Film History**