Course title: Hollywood and Europe
Course code: FILM 3003 PRAG
Programs offering course: Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3
Contact hours: 45
Term: Spring 2020

Course Description

This course offers insights into the relationships between Hollywood and Europe. The course adopts a revisionist perspective in so much as it seeks to challenge five ideas structuring understandings of the relations between the two. It begins by questioning the notion that Hollywood is strictly American, and therefore separate from Europe. Students will then ask if Hollywood and European cinema are really the binary oppositions they tend to be imagined as being. From there, we consider whether Hollywood's engagement with Eastern Europe in the twentieth century supports its reputation as a staunchly anti-Communist institution. The course then focuses on whether Americanization is the most useful explanatory framework for understanding Hollywood's engagement with the continent: first by considering the concessions Hollywood has needed to make to this powerful profit center, then the extent to which Hollywood has used European subject matter to provoke introspection among American audiences. Students will work through these topics by employing historical analysis and examining representative films such as Ninotchka (1939), Roman Holiday (1953), Rocky IV (1984), Taken (2008), and The Grand Budapest Hotel (2014).

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- analyze the dynamic and complex relationships that have existed, and which continue to exist, between Hollywood and Europe;
• discuss how the interaction of Hollywood and Europe can be conceptualized or theorized;
• critically discuss the ways in which deep-rooted contrasts between Hollywood and European Cinema have elided complex exchanges between the two;
• discuss ways in which European-based companies and European-based individuals have contributed to Hollywood and its output;
• illustrate the ambivalent relationships that characterized Hollywood’s engagement with Communist Eastern Europe as both a partner and subject matter;
• analyze of the historically specific content-tailoring strategies that Hollywood has employed to make some of its output marketable and attractive to key European audiences, and to market its films to those audiences;
• discuss and illustrate how Hollywood has used images of Europe and Europeans to invite Americans to think about themselves and their nation.

Course Prerequisites

Students from any academic background are welcomed on this course. Having an open mind to the ways cinema and audiovisual culture can be studied and understood are significantly more important determinants to getting the most out of this course than a background in Film Studies or related disciplines like Media Studies, Cultural Studies, and Communications. Because this course is open to students new to the topic, great efforts are made to familiarize newcomers to the study of motion pictures and their relevant contexts. Generally speaking, the course attempts to strike a balance between challenging non-Film Studies students and enabling Film Studies students to broaden their conceptual and historical understandings of the field; however, for obvious reasons, priority is given to the former.

Methods of Instruction

This course is built around extended sessions usually comprising a film screening, structured discussions, micro-lectures, and sometimes exercises. Students will consider the screened films in relation to specific series of questions and using specific analytical methods (see below). The films will provide concrete reference points intended to facilitate their understanding of the topics introduced in the readings and developed by the instructor. Discussions will be accompanied by detailed PowerPoint slides, which will be emailed to students after the session.
Notes on Film Analysis: It should be stressed that this course is NOT a film appreciation seminar, nor is it – strictly speaking – a film interpretation seminar. Thematic analysis is a fundamental part of this course, but these analyses are structured around specific approaches and questions in an effort to marshal the ways these audiovisual texts are examined; i.e. to encourage students to treat them as examples, embodiments or iterations of the topics discussed. Broadly speaking, students are encouraged to employ an industrially and culturally sensitive approach, one geared to understanding how commercial enterprise and creative engagement with public-sphere discourse shapes film production and content.

Note on Readings: Students new to Film Studies are sometimes surprised that writings on this well-loved entertainment form can often be quite dry and intellectually challenging. It should be stressed that film scholarship is a very different genre of writing to film journalism. The Film Studies writings used on this course – penned by some of the most influential figures in the field – are valuable for the same reasons that any other academic texts are valuable: because they contribute to knowledge. Accordingly, students should be prepared to study these writings rather than skim through them. A mandatory home screening is set to provide students with a concrete reference point intended to facilitate their understanding of the readings.

Note on Screenings: One of the bigger challenges faced by students new to the academic study of cinema is to resist efforts on the parts of the filmmakers to “lose oneself in the film”. This course treats the films as cultural artifacts, which should be analyzed with a high degree of critical distance. Accordingly, questions about the home screenings and in-class screenings will be provided to students in advance, in order to help focus and structure the analysis of these audiovisual texts. Notes should also be made during screenings.

Note on electronics in class: Except during breaks or unless otherwise stated, electronic devices may NOT be used at any time during this class. It needs to be stressed that there is no valid reason to have phones, tablets, or laptops either turned on or on display in this class, as all slides are made available to students after each session. Any notes that do need to be taken can be made with pen and paper. Guidelines on each prompt will be issued when students are expected to turn their attention to the assessment in question. Students are also advised to reach out to the instructor to discuss issues related thereto. A twenty-four-hour emailed response is
guaranteed, although usually responses will be much swifter than this. Face-to-face meetings can also be arranged upon request.

NB: Films screened on this course may not be used for any of the prompts; students must use different films for each prompt; students may not use the same film another student is using for any given prompt.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Paper 1 20%
2. Midterm Presentation 20%
3. Paper 2 20%
4. Final Presentation 20%
5. Class Participation 20%

TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Paper 1

Students are to submit a circa 1500-1700-word essay in response to a prompt derived from sessions 2-4.

Prompt

Hollywood is typically assumed to be American. However, the work of Higson and Behlil, and Meers, show how transatlantic flows of people, capital, ideas, and products complicate the notion that Hollywood is in fact an American institution, and thus distinct from Europe. With these points in mind, consider the production, content, and circulation of a Hollywood film to support where you stand on this issue.

Areas of Assessment

An understanding of the ways culture has been conceptualized in national terms.

An understanding of how cross-border movements complicate such approaches.

An understanding of how the aforementioned notions relate to Hollywood.
A demonstration of how the example film evinces transatlantic flows, and their implications vis-à-vis the prompt.

Midterm Presentation

Students are to deliver a circa 10-to-15-minute presentation in response to a prompt derived from sessions 5 and 6.

Delivery Date: Week 7

Prompt

Hollywood cinema and European cinema are often considered to be binarily opposed, based on oppositions related to escapist entertainment and cerebral art. However, this notion is complicated by European-based producers supplying Hollywood with examples of “Mid-Atlantic Cinema” and “Imperso-Nation”, and Hollywood’s handling of films using the art cinema model typically associated with Europe. With this point in mind, use an example of one of these approaches to support where you stand on this issue.

Areas of Assessment

Understanding of how Hollywood cinema and European cinema tend to be imagined.

Understanding of the general phenomena that complicate this notion.

A demonstration of how an example Hollywood film relates to one of the general phenomena.

Paper 2

Students are to submit a circa 1500-1700-word essay in response to a prompt derived from sessions 8-9.

Prompt

Discussion of Hollywood and its relations to Eastern Europe in the twentieth century has tended to spotlight Hollywood’s Anti-Communism. However, some scholars have suggested that in terms of its conduct and output Hollywood has at times been more
ambivalent about – even supportive of – aspects of state socialism. With this point in mind, use one of Hollywood’s communist-themed films to explain where you stand on this issue.

**Final Presentation**

Students are to submit a circa 10-to-15-minute presentation in response to a prompt derived from sessions 10 to 12.

**Delivery Date: Week 13**

**Prompt A**

Hollywood’s relationships to Europe as a market and as subject matter have usually been understood in terms of Americanization – as a powerful overseas US institution imposing an outside culture onto a sovereign territory. However, some scholars have suggested that the voluntary nature of movie-going and the reliance on international revenue has demanded Hollywood make concessions to the perceived tastes of audiences in Europe. With this point in mind, use a Euro-tailored Hollywood film to support where you stand on this issue.

**Areas of Assessment**

Understanding of how Americanization has been used to understand Hollywood’s relationships to European audiences and subject matter.

Understanding of how (and why) Hollywood has needed to secure major European markets.

Demonstration of how an example film bares the traces of being made with Europeans in mind.

Or

**Prompt B**

Central to the discussion of Americanization has been the notion that Hollywood promotes "American values" to international audiences such as those in Europe. However, some scholars have shown that Hollywood sometimes uses images of
Europe and Europeans primarily to invite Americans to think critically about themselves and their nation. Use a European-centered Hollywood tourist film to support where you stand on this issue.

Areas of Assessment

Understanding of how using Europe to speak to Americans complicates the Americanization thesis.

Understanding of the ways Euro-centered tourist films have been seen to address Americans.

Understanding of how an example Hollywood tourist film uses Europe to invite Americans to think about themselves and their country.

Class Participation

Participation contributes a total of 20 percent towards the final grade. This 20 percent is in turn broken down into 4 blocks corresponding respectively to student participation in sessions 2-3 (22% of participation grade/4.4% of overall grade), 4-6 (33% of participation grade/6.6% of overall grade), 8-10 (33% of participation grade/6.6% of overall grade), and 11-12 (22% of participation grade/4.4% of overall grade).

Students will receive feedback on each block once the block in question has concluded. The overall participation will be the sum of the four scores. Each student’s participation overall grade will be determined by the way s/he has contributed across the course to seminar discussions.

Students will be graded on a) the depth and b) the regularity of their insights, as well as their general level of engagement. In this respect, students will be evaluated on their engagement with a) the general topics, b) the set readings, and c) the screened example films.

Attempts to grapple with complex ideas, critical thinking, original ideas, and efforts to facilitate the learning of other students are areas graded particularly highly.
Students deemed to be struggling or falling short in terms of their general participation - unwillingness or inability to contribute, distracted or distracting conduct - will be given opportunities to contribute productively and will, in extreme cases, be contacted individually to draw their attention to their need to improve in this area.

**CIEE Prague Attendance Policy**

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences are treated equally regardless of reason for any affected CIEE course. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursions or events, as well as Internship.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

Missing classes will lead to the following penalties:

90-minute semester classes:

180-minute semester classes:

Persistent absenteeism (students approaching 20% of the total course hours missed, or violating the attendance policy in more than one class) will result in a written warning, a notification to the student’s home school, and possibly a dismissal from the program.
Missing more than 20% of the total class hours will lead to a course failure, and potential program dismissal. This is a CIEE rule that applies to all CIEE courses and is in line with the Participant Contract that each CIEE student signs before arriving on-site.

Late arrival to class will be considered a partial (up to 15 minutes late) or full (15 or more minutes late) absence. Three partial absences due to late arrivals will be regarded as one full class absence.

Students must notify their professor and Program Coordinators (PC) beforehand if they are going to miss class for any reason and are responsible for any material covered in class in their absence.

If missing a class during which a test, exam, the student's presentation or other graded class assignments are administered, make-up assignment will only be allowed in approved circumstances, such as serious medical issues. In this case, the student must submit a local doctor’s note within 24 hours of his/her absence to the PC, who will decide whether the student qualifies for a make-up assignment. Doctor’s notes may be submitted via e-mail or phone (a scan or a photograph are acceptable), however the student must ensure that the note is delivered to the PC.

Should a truly extraordinary situation arise, the student must contact the PC immediately concerning permission for a make-up assignment. Make-up assignments are not granted automatically! The PC decides the course of action for all absence cases that are not straightforward. Always contact the PC with any inquiry about potential absence(s) and the nature thereof.

Personal travel (including flight delays and cancelled flights), handling passport and other document replacements, interviews, volunteering and other similar situations are not considered justifiable reasons for missing class or getting permission for make-up assignments.

For class conflicts (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips, make-up classes and other instances), always contact the Academic Assistant to decide the appropriate course of action.

Course attendance is recorded on individual Canvas Course Sites. Students are responsible for checking their attendance regularly to ensure the correctness of the
In case of discrepancies, students are required to contact the Academic Assistant within one week of the discrepancy date to have it corrected. Later claims will not be considered.

CIEE staff does not directly manage absences at FAMU and ECES, but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.

**CIEE Academic Honesty Policy**

CIEE subscribes to standard U.S. norms requiring that students exhibit the highest standards regarding academic honesty. Cheating and plagiarism in any course assignment or exam will not be tolerated and may result in a student failing the course or being expelled from the program. Standards of honesty and norms governing originality of work differ significantly from country to country. We expect students to adhere to both the American norms and the local norms, and in the case of conflict between the two, the more stringent of the two will preside. Three important principles are considered when defining and demanding academic honesty. These are related to the fundamental tenet that one should not present the work of another person as one’s own.

The first principle is that final examinations, quizzes and other tests must be done without assistance from another person, without looking at or otherwise consulting the work of another person, and without access to notes, books, or other pertinent information (unless the professor has explicitly announced that a particular test is to be taken on an “open book” basis).

The second principle applies specifically to course work: the same written paper may not be submitted in two classes. Nor may a paper for which you have already received credit at your home institution be submitted to satisfy a paper requirement while studying overseas.

The third principle is that any use of the work of another person must be documented in any written papers, oral presentations, or other assignments carried out in connection with a course. This usually is done when quoting directly from another’s work or including information told to you by another person. The general rule is that if you have to look something up, or if you learned it recently either by reading or hearing something, you have to document it.
The penalty ranges from an F grade on the assignment, failure in the course to dismissal from the program. The Academic Director is consulted and involved in decision making in every case of a possible violation of academic honesty.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for short-term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences will lead to the following penalties:
N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class  Introduction

This session offers an outline of the course, its methods, and its modes of assessment. We will also begin to consider – from the perspective of the regular moviegoer – the topic examined fully in session two: why we think of Hollywood as American. Helping us to complement this crucial consumer standpoint with a more theoretically informed one will be the film The Artist (2011), which will provide a principal reference point in the following session when we think more systematically about how members of audiovisual cultures tend to assign national status to cultural products like films.

Screening: The Artist (2011)

Week 2

Class  Part 1: Hollywood ≠ Europe (?)
Sessions 2, 3, and 4 challenge the notion that Hollywood is a solely American institution, and is thus distinct from Europe.

Hollywood ≠ Europe (? I: The Logics of Nation & Culture – or why Hollywood is seen as an American Institution

This session starts to lay a foundation for the remainder of the course, by considering how people have assigned national status to cultural artifacts like films. In so doing, students will begin to think about the types of logic that have led Hollywood – somewhat reductively – to be considered a supremely American institution, and thus as separate from Europe.

Required readings:


Home Screening: The most American film you can imagine (be prepared to justify your choice)

Screening: Inglourious Basterds (2009) [First half of the film shown in the second part of the class]

Week 3
Class

Hollywood ≠ Europe (?) II:

Why Hollywood is more than an American Institution – Production and Content

Because the study of Hollywood and Europe involves consideration of cross-border flows, it requires an appreciation of the concept of transnational cinema – a multifaceted notion that relates to who makes movies, what those movies are about, who they address, where they circulate, who actually watches them, and how they are watched. Accordingly, this session and the next session probe how transatlantic
border-crossings bring into question the very Americanness of Hollywood, suggesting instead this institution might be better approached as international. This session will place an accent on this issue in terms of production and content.

Required readings:


In-Class Screening: Inglourious Basterds (2009) [Second half of the Film in the first part of the class]

Week 4
Class Hollywood ≠ Europe (?) III:

Why Hollywood is more than an American Institution - Distribution and Reception

Because the transatlantic dimensions of most of Hollywood films – and thus of Hollywood itself – are so multifaceted and sometimes obscured, our examination of this topic is spread across two sessions. Speaking broadly, this session will shift focus from considerations of production and content toward issues of dissemination and circulation. In this sense, we will think about how Hollywood films are intended to speak to Europeans, the extent to which they are part of European film culture, and the memories and perceptions European citizens hold about Hollywood.

Required Reading:


Homework:
Conduct a short interview with a European citizen on his or her memories and perceptions of Hollywood, bringing a transcript of the interview to the next session.

Home Screening: Mamma Mia! (2008)

In-Class Screening: N/A

Week 5
Class

Part 2: Hollywood Cinema vs. European Cinema

Sessions 5 and 6 challenge the notion that Hollywood's output and that associated with European nations is profoundly different; a notion that rests on the invocation on the one hand of mindless entertainment, and on the other enlightening art.


Thus, where Hollywood tends to be characterized as a money-grabbing purveyor of formulaic, stupefying trash, European cinema is usually elevated as an authentic, autonomous, alternative to Hollywood: in short as art. This session, challenges this problematic distinction by considering the institutionalization within Hollywood of Art(y) cinema. By this is meant output heavily indebted to celebrated European productions that came to be seen in American film culture as “European Art Cinema”.

Required readings:


King 2011, 131–142.

Home Screening: In Bruges (2008)

In-Class Screening: The Grand Budapest Hotel (2014)

Paper 1 due
Week 6
Class Hollywood vs. European Cinema II: Europe’s “Hollywood Cinema”

Midterm Exam Period

This session tackles the Hollywood vs. European cinema problem from a different angle than taken in the previous session. It considers those European-based companies that have specialized in the production of commercially viable transatlantic fare that is intended as much for Hollywood distributors and US theaters as for European eyes. The session focuses on two European firms that are behind some of the most talismanic Hollywood fare of the last twenty years: the UK-based Working Title Films and France’s EuropaCorp.

Required readings:


Home Screening: Taken (2008)

Screening: Paul (2011)

Week 7
Class Part 3: Anti-Communist Hollywood (?)

In sessions 7 and 8, students challenge a structuring assumption of twentieth-century Hollywood’s European relations: that Hollywood was a staunchly anti-Communist institution. This notion will be examined critically, with reference to the two period in which Hollywood’s relations to Eastern Europe were most pronounced: the 1940s and 1950s, and the 1980s.

Anti-Communist Hollywood (?) I: Tinsel Town and the Eastern Bloc.
In this session, students will consider the ways Hollywood demonized and reached out to Eastern Europe during the tumultuous period of the late 1930s to the early 1950s. In so doing, they will develop a more nuanced picture of Hollywood's relationships to this part of the world, than the relevant albeit limiting notion that Hollywood went to the ends of the earth to promote itself as anti-communist.

Required readings:


Blahova 2010, 345–357.

Home Screening: Mission to Moscow (1943)

In-Class Screening: Ninotchka (1939)

Midterm presentations

Week 8

Class Anti-Communist Hollywood (?) II: New Cold War Cinema

Hollywood’s engagement with important geopolitical issues is perhaps nowhere more apparent in the last thirty years than in a high-profile strand of mid-to-late 1980s output known as New Cold War Cinema. This production trend is typically seen as jingoistic and hawkish on the grounds that it supposedly showcased American patriotism and military might in the face of dangerous, in-human enemy from the Eastern Bloc. In this session, we will consider whether these films were really quite as reactionary as they are suggested to have been or whether some of them used depictions of Eastern Europe (ans) to deliver quite forceful critiques of American political, economic, and social systems, and the very act of politicizing entertainment.

Required Reading:

Histories of Hollywood’s European relations are often explained with resource to charges of Americanization, cultural imperialism, and globalization. However, the notion of imposing “American” values for cultural and economic reasons, only goes so far in accounting for the dynamics of this relationship. Accordingly, Sessions 9 and 10 start to develop our understandings of this topic, in this case by shifting attention towards the concessions Hollywood has made to the Europeans’ whose voluntary consumption it has needed to survive.

Concession-Making I: Hollywood’s Postwar Tour of Europe

At specific historical junctures, Hollywood has tailored the content of many of its movies to make them specifically marketable and appealing to certain the European audiences upon whom it has relied to remain solvent. Although one might be forgiven for thinking that Hollywood’s aggressive courting of major European markets is a new thing – as a product of a recent acceleration in globalizing tendencies – nothing could be further from the truth. This session considers a spate of postwar pictures that courted much-needed European audiences with a timely combination of transatlantic romance and cultural (tact and) diplomacy.

Required reading:


Home Screening: Roman Holiday (1953)

In-Class Screening: It Started in Naples (1960)
Week 10
Class Concession-Making II: Recent Euro-Friendly Blockbusters

The strategies with which Hollywood courted European audiences in the postwar years also underwrite the production of almost all of the flagship products of today’s Conglomerate Hollywood: the cross-media, international, mass-audience phenomenon known simply as the blockbuster. In this session, students will consider the extraordinary lengths to which Hollywood has been going to make its high-end animated, fantasy-adventure, and superhero films as Euro-friendly as possible during a period of popular Anti-Americanization on the continent. This strategy has seen these films first target key western European markets and appeared poised once again to reach out to Russia.

Required Readings:

Maltby 2003, 212–217.


Home Screening: Muppets Most Wanted (2014)

Screening: Madagascar 3: Europe’s Most Wanted (2012)

Paper 2 due

Week 11
Class Americanization (?) 2: US Introspection

In sessions 11 and 12, students will reconsider Hollywood’s use of European subject matter from a different perspective. In these sessions, the tourist film will be used to consider the degree to which Hollywood has used this material less for exportation than primarily to address American audiences about their lives, nation, and views.

US Introspection I: Women’s Tourist Films
Hollywood has often commodified the idea of Europe as a fantasy space capable of enriching or liberating Americans. This tendency is centralized in the Tourist Film, and especially in a production trend that unfolded in the second half of the 1990s and continued albeit with some important revisions in the twenty first century. This session will look closely at this type of film, and consider whether its images of a pastoral Europe were always used to offer American women fantasies of community, rootedness, and romance, or whether this format was also used to think critically about these very ideas and Hollywood’s role in disseminating them.

Required Readings:


Screening: Vicky Cristina Barcelona (2008)

Week 12
Class Introspection II: Youth-Oriented Tourist Films

As a means of using Europe to provoke introspection among Americans, the traditional woman-oriented tourist films existed alongside variants recalibrated for different audiences or radically reworked. In this session, we approach two such films – a unique fairly horror movie and an example of a more prolific sub-genre of the 2000s. Here we consider how these European-centered films invite young people to reflect on some of the most pressing issues of American society of the day.

Required Readings:


Home Screening: Hostel (2005) – you can skip the gory bits if you like.

Week 13
Class Final Exam Week

Final Paper Consultations

Final Presentations due

This time is set aside for one-on-one meetings with students who would like to discuss the final papers.

Course Materials
Readings

Required Readings (see above for pages of chapters of single-authored books):


