Course title: Hollywood and Europe
Course code: FILM 3003 PRAG
Programs offering course: Summer Central European Studies
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Summer Session I 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 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 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;
- critically discuss and illustrate how Hollywood has used images of Europe and Europeans to invite Americans to think about themselves and their nation.

Course Prerequisites

No formal 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-
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
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 is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program.

If you will miss a class for any reason, notify the Program Coordinator and your instructor beforehand via Canvas. You are responsible for any materials covered in class during your absence, and except in the specific cases listed below, credit will not be granted for missed assessments.

Excessive absences will result in a notification letter, and finally a warning letter, sent to you and your home school, based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of course hours missed</th>
<th>Number of CIEE classes</th>
<th>Minimum penalty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>One to Three 90-min. classes; or One 180-min. class</td>
<td>No penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% - 20%</td>
<td>Four 90-min. classes</td>
<td>Written notification* to the student, followed by a warning letter to the student and home school; 3% reduction in the final grade</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five 90-min. classes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Two 180-min classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>Six 90-min. classes; or Three 180-min. classes</td>
<td>Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion with notification to the home school</td>
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* The notification letters are intended to ensure that you are well advised in advance of any potential for failure or dismissal, so that you can take steps to avoid this.

As the table shows, **missing more than 20% of any class (e.g., due to undocumented illness, travel delays, flight cancellations, over-sleeping, etc.) results in automatic failure of the course.**

If you miss an assessment in class due to an absence, you will be able to make it up in the following instances:

- You provide a relevant doctor’s note from a local medical professional to your Program Coordinator within 24 hours of your absence (a scan or photograph sent via e-mail are acceptable)
- A CIEE staff member verifies that you were too ill to attend class.
- You provide evidence of a family emergency to your Program Coordinator.
- You have an approved absence related to the observance of a religious holiday from the Academic Director based on a request submitted before you arrived onsite.

Please note: Absences incurred due to documented illness, documented family emergency or the observance of a religious holiday approved before arrival onsite do not count towards the total of absences. Students may self-
certify one absence due to illness without providing a doctor's note as long as they notify the Program Coordinator within 24 hours of their absence by e-mail or a text message.

Other attendance-related policies

If you transfer from one CIEE class to another during the Add/Drop period, you will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of the new class provided you were marked present for the first session(s) of the original class.

If you are over 15 minutes late for a class, the instructor is required to mark you absent.

In case of class conflicts (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips and make-up classes), always contact the Academic Department to decide the appropriate course of action.

Please remember to track your attendance on the Canvas Course Sites and report any errors in the record to the Academic Department within one week of the discrepancy date, as later claims may not be considered.

These attendance rules also apply to any required co-curricular excursion, activity, or event, and to for-credit internships.

CIEE staff does not manage absences at partner institutions providing direct enrolment classes (FAMU, ECES and FSV), but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.

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: [ ]

Day 1: Introduction

This session offers an outline 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)

Day 2: 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]

Day 3: Hollywood ≠ Europe (?) II: Why Hollywood is more than an American Institution – People and Film 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.

**Week 2**

**Class:** 

**Day 4: 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 this session.

**Home Screening: Mamma Mia! (2008)**

**In-Class Screening: N/A**

**Paper I Deadline:**


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 reading:**


**Home Screening: Before Sunset (2004)**

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

This session tackles the Hollywood vs. European cinema problematic from a different angle than that 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)

**In-Class Screening:** *Paul* (2011)

**Week 3**

**Class: Day 7: 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 periods in which Hollywood’s relations to Eastern Europe were most pronounced: the 1940s and 1950s, and the 1980s.

**Anti-Communist Hollywood (?) I: Classical Hollywood 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:**


**Home Screening:** *Mission to Moscow* (1943)

**In-Class Screening:** *Ninotchka* (1939)

**Day 8: 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 critique American political, economic, and social systems, and the very act of politicizing entertainment.

**Required Reading:**


**Home Screening:** *Moscow on the Hudson* (1984)

**In-Class Screening:** *Rocky IV* (1985)

**Paper III Deadline: Midnight CET Friday 17 November**

**Day 9: Part 4 Americanization (?)**

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 develop our understandings of this topic, by shifting attention towards the concessions Hollywood has made to the Europeans’ whose voluntary consumption it has needed to survive. In sessions 11, students reconsider Hollywood’s use of European subject matter from a different perspective, considering the degree to which Hollywood has used this material less for exportation than primarily to address American audiences about their lives, nation, and views.

**Concession-Making I: Hollywood’s Postwar Euro-Romances**

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 4**

**Day 10: 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:** *Cars 2* (2011)

**In-Class Screening:** *Madagascar 3: Europe’s Most Wanted* (2012)

**Day 11: US Introspection: 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:**


**Home Screening:** *Under the Tuscan Sun* (2003)

**In-Class Screening:** *Leap Year* (2010)

**Day 12: Final Paper Consultations**
This time is set aside for one-on-one meetings with students who would like to discuss the final papers.

**Paper IV Deadline**

**Course Materials**

**Readings**

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


