

Dr. Todd Boyd

'90s Hollywood: American Cinema at the End of the Century

CTCS 469/Wednesdays 1:00-5:50/SCA 108/Spring 2106

The 1990s, the last decade of the twentieth century, is only now starting to come into focus. Though the phrase “90s cinema” might conjure up images of blockbusters, “tent pole” movies, and other larger-than-life like “event” films, this course is interested in going in a different direction. The decade in question was particularly strong in terms of substantive dramatic films of many genres. Upon reconsideration it becomes apparent that the 1990s offers a much more compelling American cinematic decade to consider than perhaps previously assumed. The era itself is certainly significant with the end of the Cold War, the first Gulf War, the return of a Democratic administration to the White House, the profound shift from analog to digital, the proliferation of the internet, the L.A. Riots, the O.J. Simpson trial, and the Oklahoma City bombing, serving as but a few of the events, occurrences, and themes that defined this particularly interesting era. The course will study the cinema of the period in relationship to the overlapping issues that define the 1990s, as a way of understanding the larger relationship between culture, history, and society.

In Hollywood blockbusters such as *Jurassic Park* and *Titanic* came to occupy an especially dominant place within the industry’s economy and the larger cultural zeitgeist, yet this decade also featured a number of important dramatic films that upon reflection suggest a much more important overall cinematic decade than previously noted. Hollywood of the 1990s offers a compelling selection of titles across genres and styles, demonstrating for instance the increasing influence of film festivals like Sundance, and independent producers such as Miramax, in shaping the overall landscape.

This course looks back on some of the highlights of 1990s cinema, using individual films as specific case studies that reveal the overlapping cultural, social, political and industrial elements specific to this era.

Screening List:

1/13/16

JFK (Oliver Stone, 1991)

1/20/16

Thelma & Louise (Ridley Scott, 1991)

1/27/16

Goodfellas (Martin Scorsese, 1990)

2/3/16

The Player (Robert Altman, 1992)

2/10/16

Pulp Fiction (Quentin Tarantino, 1994)

2/17/16

Dead Presidents (The Hughes Brothers, 1995)

2/24/16

The Ice Storm (Ang Lee, 1997)

3/2/16

Malcolm X (Spike Lee, 1992)

3/9/16

Midterm

Malcolm X, cont. (Spike Lee, 1992)

3/16/16

Spring Break

3/23/16

L.A. Confidential (Curtis Hanson, 1997)

3/30/16

Boogie Nights (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1997)

4/6/16

Three Kings (David O. Russell, 1999)

4/13/16

Any Given Sunday (Oliver Stone, 1999)

4/20/16

Eyes Wide Shut (Stanley Kubrick, 1999)

4/27/16

No Screening: Final Class Lecture