



# The Gangster and American Culture

CTCS 464 - Dr. Todd Boyd - Thursdays 1:00-5:50pm

This course is a cultural study of the American gangster film from the 1970s forward. While the course is built around several cinematic gangster classics, this class will also analyze the influence of the gangster film on other forms of media and popular culture. This will involve studying both the image of the gangsta in hip hop culture and representation of gangsters in programs such as *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, and *Breaking Bad*.

Screenings will also include *The Godfather* and *The Godfather Part II*, *Super Fly*, *Scarface*, *Goodfellas*, *Donnie Brasco*, *Blow*, and *American Gangster*, among other titles.

FALL 2021  
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS  
Draft as of 03.30.2021

**CTCS 190 Professor George Carstocca**

**“Introduction to Cinema”**

Rated one of the top six USC classes you cannot afford to miss and now fulfilling the GENERAL EDUCATION requirement, this course explores the formal properties of movies: literary design, performance, visual design, composition (framing/staging/ photographing), editing, sound design, genre, style and the production process - that is how movies work and how they should be consumed. A perennial favorite, CTCS 190 fills fast. Screenings include: *Singin' in the Rain*, *The Two Faces of January*, *Sudden Fear*, *Hidden Figures*, *Victor/Victoria*, *Whiplash*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Casablanca*, *His Girl Friday*, *Lover Come Back*, *Two for the Road*, *Moonstruck*, *A Passage to India*. Screenings in 35mm film and/or DCP. **Open to all majors. This course fulfills the general education requirement. You must also register for a discussion section.**

**CTCS 191 Professor Aniko Imre**

**“Introduction to Television and Video”**

This course provides an introduction to the history, institutions, forms and critical analysis of television and its relationship to the cultures around it, including other media and arts. It is designed to expand your knowledge of American and global television by exploring issues such as genre, style programming, branding, industrial structures, and the social and cultural significance of television. We look at television programs as cultural artifacts and industrial products that reflect and refract such issues as class, consumerism, gender, race, sexuality, and national identity. The course is intended to help you develop a historical and critical framework for understanding television and to become critically informed television viewers, media scholars, and media makers. **Open to all majors. You must also register for a discussion section.**

**CTCS 200 Professor Vicki Callahan**

**“History of International Cinema, 1896-1945”**

*History of International Cinema* investigates the emergence of a new technology, industry, and art form from the late 19th century until the end of World War II. We approach our exploration of cinema and the writing of cinema history as unique sites of knowledge production. How did the complex intersection of social, cultural, economic and aesthetic factors shape the types of films made, the kinds of knowledge systems cinema created, and what has been considered historically of value today? Centering our exploration on the way cinema allows access to information and shapes the way we see, experience, and understand the world, foregrounds the role of

film in shaping structures of power as well as, at times, providing resistance to these same systems. Our investigations take us through paths of filmmaking heretofore overlooked, erased, or marginalized, that is, a journey through multiple histories of cinema.

Film history often privileges a monolithic account of Hollywood filmmaking and sites of authorship, but the consideration of multiple histories of cinema offers a place of disruption of singular narratives by valuing different sites, kinds, and outcomes of labor as well as labor rendered invisible via capital or historical accounts. The course examines U.S., national, and international film movements, often in complex conversation but without a default toward any particular filmmaking style or industrial model.

The course addresses issues regarding early cinema “attractions” and the development of “classical” style, the transition to sound, along with various political and “national” film movements. We look at sites of authorship beyond the director and directors less well-known in received or conventional film history.

**CTCS 367      Dr. Nitin Govil**

**“Global Media”**

This undergraduate course examines media globalization from aesthetic, political, and cultural perspectives. We will consider a broad array of historical and contemporary media with an attention to the connections between media forms, practices, and institutions across local and global contexts. Our concern is not just how film/media operate in transnational contexts – we will also investigate how the “global” is imagined and mediated in art and practice. Class discussion and writing are all required in addition to weekly class readings and screenings.

**CTCS 393      Professor George Carstocea**

**“Postwar Hollywood, 1946-1962”**

A look at movies from Hollywood’s Postwar period, when everything began to break up, to identify the significant genres, styles, faces, and voices as an index of American history and culture. Be star struck by Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh in *a Streetcar Named Desire*; Humphrey Bogart in *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*; Doris Day and Rock Hudson in *Pillow Talk*; the pods in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*; Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr in *An Affair to Remember*; Kim Novak and Rosalind Russell in *Picnic*; Glenn Ford and Sidney Poitier in *Blackboard Jungle*; James Stewart in *An Anatomy of a Murder*; Kirk Douglas in *Spartacus*; Montgomery Clift, Frank Sinatra, and Burt Lancaster in *From Here to Eternity*; Paul Newman in *The Hustler*; James Cagney in *Love Me and or Leave Me*; John Wayne in *The Searchers*; Dana Andrews in *Where the Sidewalk Ends*; Lana Turner and Sandra Dee in *Imitation of Life*.

**CTCS 400 Professor Michael Renov**

**“Non-Fiction Film and Television”**

What is documentary? How do documentaries construct “the real” and produce truth claims? What role do ethics play in documentary filmmaking? How has documentary been used for political and propaganda purposes? How do documentary practices compare around the world and over time? This course will search for answers to these and other questions.

**CTCS 411 Professor William Whittington “Audio Culture--Sound Design in Film, TV & New Media”**

As many moviemakers are fond of saying, “Sound is half the picture.” This course will bridge the gap between the history and theory of sound design and the various production practices used to create film and television soundtracks. Areas of particular interest will be the influence of sound and music on storytelling, the evolution of recording and mixing technologies, and the interplay between production practices and film styles and genres. Screenings will include: *King Kong*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Diva*, *The Birds*, *Making Waves: The Art of Cinematic Sound*, *Arrival*, *Alien* and clips from YouTube and other sources.

**CTCS 412 Professor Giancarlo Cornejo**

**“Gender, Sexuality and Media”**

**Transgender Studies and Trans of Color Critique**

This course offers an introduction to transgender studies and trans of color critique. This course will engage primarily with the innovative work of transgender scholars. Transgender studies and trans of color critique provides us with compelling frameworks for thinking anew the intersections (and collisions) of race, gender, embodiment, class, desire, vision, affect and power. Most of the transgender scholars, particularly trans of color theorists, we will engage in this class offer us imaginaries to envision the world beyond the pull of normative whiteness and cisgender heteronormativity.

**CTCS 414 Professor Laura Isabel Serna**

**“Latinx Media”**

This course examines the production and impact of Latinx Media in the U.S. Over the course of the semester, we will survey the history of Latinx media in the U.S., explore issues of access and representation, and consider the place of Latinx media produced by or addressed to the diverse Latinx community, in the contemporary U.S. We'll explore a range of genres and format from documentary and experimental film to television and social media. Readings from the course will be drawn from scholarship in history, sociology, cultural studies, and other fields.

**CTCS 464 Professor Ellen Seiter**

**“Musicals and Music Video”**

This course looks at the genre conventions of musicals and music videos, the history of MTV and Soul Train, and distribution through streaming platforms. Films include *Hamilton*, *Queen and Slim*, *Rent*, *Cabaret*, *Footloose*, *42nd Street* and *Singing' in the Rain*. Music video directors *Dave Meyers*, *Director x*, *Hannah Lux Davis*, *Melina Matsoukas*, *Sophie Muller*, *Mark Romanek*, and *Anthony Mandler*.

**CTCS 464 Dr. Todd Boyd**

**“The Gangster and American Culture”**

This course is a cultural study of the American gangster film from the 1970s forward. While the course is built around several cinematic gangster classics, this class will also analyze the influence of the gangster film on other forms of media and popular culture. This will involve studying both the image of the gangsta in hip hop culture and representation of gangsters in programs such as *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, and *Breaking Bad*. Screenings will also include *The Godfather and The Godfather Part II*, *Super Fly*, *Scarface*, *Goodfellas*, *Donnie Brasco*, *Blow*, and *American Gangster*, among other titles.

**CTCS 464 Professor J.D. Connor**

**“Megacinema”**

History and theory of great big movies. Cinerama, 3D, IMAX, and VR; immersion, landscape, expanded cinema, worldbuilding; national epics, World's Fairs, roadshows; the quest for a personal megacinema. Films include: *Napoleon*, *The Big Trail*, *Rebel without a Cause*, *This is Cinerama*, *2001*, *Playtime*, *The Dark Knight*, *Voyage of Time*, *Pandas*, and *The Wandering Earth*.

**CTCS 466 Professor Leonard Maltin**

**“Theatrical Film Symposium”**

Theatrical Film Symposium, taught by world renown film critic Leonard Maltin, brings you face-to-face with leading film directors, writers, producers, and actors working today. Each week, students watch sneak previews of upcoming movies, followed by exclusive Q&As with the creative teams behind the films. 2020/2021 screenings included *Judas and the Black Messiah*, *One Night in Miami*, *The White Tiger*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Dissident*, *I'm Your Woman*, *Project Power*, *Residue*, *Charm City Kings*, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, *Boys State*, *The Devil All the Time*, *The Half of It*, and *Sergio*. Guests in recent years include Viggo Mortensen, Deepa Mehta, Kemp Powers, Bryan Fogel, Julia Hart, Poppy Hanks, Auli'i Cravalho, Henry Joost & Ariel Schulman, Jessica Barden, Angel Manuel Soto, Wagner Moura, Alice Wu, Courtney B. Vance, Aneesh Chaganty, Isabel Sandoval, Antonio Campos, Merawi Gerima, Barry Jenkins, Chloe Grace Moretz, Melina Matsoukas, Joe & Anthony Russo, Guillermo del Toro, Benedict Wong, Zazie Beetz, Errol Morris, James Gray, Rian Johnson, Damien Chazelle, Taika Waititi, Lee Unkrich, JJ Abrams, Ryan Coogler, Sylvester Stallone,

Patricia Rigen, Kevin Feige, and Judd Apatow.

**CTCS 467 Professor Mary McNamara**

**“Television Symposium”**

Modeled after the popular Leonard Maltin course, Theatrical Film Symposium, the Critical Studies department offers an exciting counterpart focusing on the television industry, taught by Pulitzer Prize-winning television critic Mary McNamara. Each week, students are shown selected television programming, followed by a moderated Q&A with guests from the show, often including the series creator. Previous guests include Kelsey Grammer, Bryan Cranston, Lisa Kudrow, Laura Dern, Helen Mirren, Lily Tomlin, Tracey Ullman, Annie Potts, Donald Sutherland, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Garry Shandling, Ray Romano, Ken Burns, Damon Lindelof (*Lost*), Matt Weiner (*Mad Men*), Marc Cherry (*Desperate Housewives*), Josh Schwartz (*Gossip Girl*), Doug Ellin (*Entourage*), director Michael Apter, and Steve Levitan (*Modern Family*). Other featured shows have included *Game of Thrones*, *Vampire Diaries*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Dexter*, *CSI*, *Big Love*, *The L Word*, *Weeds*, *The Simpsons*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Damages*, *Breaking Bad*, *The Wire*, *Justified*, *True Blood*, *Homeland*, *How to Get Away with Murder*, and *The Walking Dead*.

**CTCS 469 Professor Katherine Steinbach**

**“Romance, Stylized”**

This seminar will explore romance in its various styles and sub-categories. From fairytales to Regency romps to paranormal paramours, we'll analyze how and why these stories make our hearts race. Films and series screened will also push the boundaries of romance, reaching into other genres and asking critical questions about romantic form and function. Students should expect to chart narrative beats, participate in a workshop on slash fiction, and write reflection essays on readings and screenings. Those screenings may include: *All the Real Girls* (2003), *The Bodyguard* (1992), *Bridgerton* (2020-), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *Carol* (2015), *Crazy Love* (2007), *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), *In the Mood for Love* (2000), *Mansfield Park* (1999), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Outlander* (2014-), *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), *The Shape of Water* (2017), *Three Times* (2005), *Warm Bodies* (2013), *The X Files* (1993-2002), and obviously, *Dirty Dancing* (1987).

**CTCS 469 Professor Thomas Kemper**

**“Pixar and Dreamworks”**

This course explores the world of contemporary animation through the industrial rivalry between Pixar and Dreamworks, and some of their competitors. In doing so, we will examine artistry and innovation, artistic and market competition, the culture of production, as well as gender and race politics. Both Pixar and Dreamworks amount to the creation of a new and significant market within the entertainment ecosystem. The field of modern

animation allows us to study how innovation occurs within an industry and how it gets diffused or developed. They contributed to, if not created, a new mini-industry and the creation of new studios: Pixar, Dreamworks, Illumination, and others. In turn, this new market created new jobs, new career paths, and an expansion of educational services (new majors, classes, and degrees). These elements allow us to study individual jobs and how they get created and fulfilled within an industry. At the same time, while these novel developments transformed aspects of the industry, in many ways traditional approaches to race, sexuality, and gender sustained themselves even in this groundbreaking field.

**CTCS 473      Professor Priya Jaikumar      “Film and Media Theory”**

Influential ideas and theoretical approaches that have shaped the making and study of film, television, and other audiovisual media. Students are encouraged to take this course in their junior year.

**CTCS 494      TBA      “Advanced Cinema and Media Studies Seminar”**

Rotating topics involving detailed study of the historical, cultural and aesthetic analysis of film, television, and new media technologies.

**CTCS 500      Professor Giancarlo Cornejo      “Seminar in Film Theory”**

This course introduces key theoretical paradigms to the study of the cinematic arts. Our approach to film will mobilize a wide array of contemporary critical theories, with a special emphasis on feminist theory, transgender and queer theory, critical race theory, postcolonial theory and psychoanalysis.

**CTCS 502      Professor Lan Duong      “World Cinema After WWII”**

This graduate seminar focuses on a wide range of international films produced on the global stage after 1945. We take as our beginning the end of World War II, which left in its wake, social and economic devastation, the redrawing of borders, and mass displacements across the globe. Cinema and the concept of the “national” came into being when nation-states started to rebuild their economies, bolster their borders, and fortify their cultural industries in the years following the war. We will interrogate how national identities have been constructed through film, analyzing the film styles and innovative technologies that underlie major cinematic movements, such as Italian Neorealism, the French New Wave, and Third Cinema. Our lens will widen considerably to include works by directors who originate from Cuba, Iran, Senegal, India, Japan, Mainland China, New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong, and South Korea, in thinking through how these inter/national films were produced in the shifting contexts of the Cold War (its beginning and demise), decolonization, and globalization.

Other topics will include such events as China's Cultural Revolution in 1966, the formation of the Iranian diaspora in 1979 and Hong Kong's Handover to China in 1997. We will discuss different national industries and their modes of production and distribution as well as various categorizations of film—for example, independent/art cinema, state-sponsored films, and the blockbuster. In particular, we will interrogate the representational politics of these works and pay attention to images of indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and race, in terms of what they signify and how they impact us as spectators of film.

**CTCS 504      Professor Ellen Seiter**

**“Survey of Television History”**

This course examines television shows as cultural artifacts and industrial products that reflect and refract such issues as class, consumerism, gender, race, sexuality, and national identity. This course will focus on four topics: US television 50s-80s; European public broadcast television and the rise of US imports; Korean television; and the rise of streaming platforms. Screenings include game shows, crime dramas, family sitcoms, prime time serials and "quality" HBO and Amazon series. We will focus on understanding business models, the public interest standard, deregulation, the international TV marketplace and changes brought about by streaming platforms. The course is intended to help you develop a critical framework for understanding television as a cultural, economic, and political institution, and it will encourage you to become critically informed television viewers.

**CTCS 505      TBA**

**“Survey of Interactive Media”**

In this course, we will examine the history, aesthetics, and cultural implications of interactivity through media. Pursuing a spectrum of interactive modes and technologies—cinematic, literary, ludic, transmedial—we will consider the ways in which interactive media work to mobilize creativity and extend individual and collective agency. Our exploration will involve critical analyses of media artifacts including films, television shows, arts exhibitions, games, and virtual/immersive experiences; we will be particularly interested in the ways in which these artifacts simultaneously produce and are produced by the cultural contexts within which they are situated. We will also experience, play, and create interactive media works, and discuss practices in the field with industry, academic, and artistic specialists.

**CTCS 506      Professor J.D. Connor**

**“Colloquium/Professional Seminar”**

Provides orientation to graduate work, the division and the profession as a whole as well as opportunities for academic and professional growth and development. Recommended for entering students.



**CTCS 510 Professor Aniko Imre**

**“(Post)Socialist Media”**

Socialism functions as both historical models and a set of ideas in this course. We will discuss film, television and other media made under fully or partially socialist political regimes around the world as well as contemporary media that evokes socialism as an alternative to capitalism. Discussions will be supported by readings from across disciplinary areas, from film theory, media industry studies and communications to history, critical race studies, transnational feminist and decolonial paradigms, political science, critical data studies, environmental studies, to postcolonial studies. The course will be equally capacious in its range of media forms and will be flexible enough to accommodate various student interests.

**CTCS 564 Dr. Todd Boyd “The Black 80s (Race and Popular Culture in the Reagan Era)”**

This course is a historical study of Black popular culture during the Ronald Reagan Era. Working across film, music, and television the course will study cultural figures such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, Oprah Winfrey, and Michael Jordan among others. Topics to include the emergence of Black cinema, MTV and the music video, the rise of hip hop, and the crack epidemic, among other topics. Screenings to include, *Coming to America*, *The Last Dance*, *Snowfall*, *The Color Purple*, *Purple Rain*, *Straight Outta Compton*, *Paid in Full*, *Hollywood Shuffle*, and *Do the Right Thing*, among other titles.

**CTCS 677 Professor Nitin Govil**

**“Media and the Speculative Imagination”**

This advanced graduate course looks at media culture's relationship with narrative, industrial, and affective investments in conjecture. Our attention will be on the speculative forms imagined and staged in and through media, with particular emphasis on futurity, globality and other concepts of emergence. Our materials will include politics/ontologies/ecologies, genres/objects, histories/territories, narratives/identities, industries/markets and the many encounters across these configurations. In terms of methods and commitments, we will think about the speculative mobilization of media for engaging with and imagining counter-histories, other nows and alternative futures.

**CTCS 688 Professor Henry Jenkins**

**“The American Film Comedy”**

Across the semester, we will explore the American film comedy tradition -- from the role of slapstick in early cinema to the role that contemporary screen comedies play in fostering debates around gender, race and sexuality. My approach is decisively revisionist with canonical figures and text read alongside those that history has tended to forget -- for example, what happens when we recenter silent film comedy from Chaplin, Keaton, Lloyd and Langdon, to incorporate a broader range of recently rediscovered silent performers including a

number of women who had their own followings at the time? Performance is a recurring focus here in speaking not only about comedian-centered comedies but also romantic and social comedies. Performance is understood in relation to a broader range of media traditions -- particularly those associated with popular theater (the circus, Vaudeville, music hall, Commedia Del 'Arte) but also radio, records, nightclubs, and television. Through this focus on performance, we gain core insights into bodies, pleasure, and emotions, but also disruption and transgression, as central attractions of the cinema. Along the way, we will be asking what it means to write the history of a film genre as pervasive as comedy.