

CTCS412:

Stars + Celebrity

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From talk shows to the Internet to *The Enquirer* to the countless star biographies scattered across cable and bookstores, fascination with celebrities permeates our culture. We can all name favorite stars, and our desire to learn more about them can fuel our engagements with popular media. This course revolves around a critical investigation of the role of the star in historical and contemporary U.S. culture. In an attempt to analyze the star phenomenon, this class will focus on the role of the star within the 'machinery' of cinema and other media. We will examine the ways in which stars function in the entertainment industry, within cinematic and extra-cinematic texts, and at the level of individual fantasy and desire. The paradoxes posed by cinematic stars – figures who are represented as both like and unlike us, mythical yet real, public but intimately known, commodities as well as people – suggest a number of important issues which are crucial to the understanding of film as an industrial, textual, and psychological product. By employing historical, feminist, psychoanalytic, and sociological theories of the cinema and of acting, we'll explore some of the many issues raised by the Hollywood star machine.