

CTCS 501 World Cinema Before 1945

Prof. Vicki Callahan Thurs. 10AM-1:50PM



World Cinema Before 1945 investigates the beginnings of the cinema from the late 19th century until the end of World War II. We approach our exploration of cinema through the lens of a series of “local histories.” That is, we examine the complex array of social, cultural, economic and aesthetic factors shaping the development of cinema along paths sometimes not taken or overlooked. While cinema history often privileges a monolithic account of Hollywood filmmaking and sites of authorship, the turn to “local histories” 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.

This course offers Critical Studies MA students an overview and PhD students the opportunity to refresh their knowledge and engage in further research on topics related to this period. MFA students will learn about the cultural and social context in which film emerged and familiarize themselves with filmmaking styles across time and in different locations.