

M.A. Seminar
Hurray for Hollywood
HS 2017, Thur. 16.15-18.00
Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen

Nowhere is the American Dream more forcefully embodied than in Hollywood. Here, on the edge of the continent, framed by the desert and the ocean, American culture mirrors and reflects on itself. It is the American heterotopia par excellence, contesting cultural conflicts, negotiating public fantasies and anxieties. Melodramas, musicals and crime stories are some of the key film genres we will discuss. At the same time, we will look at the way American fiction interrogates issues of stardom and celebrity culture, even while writing a history of Hollywood.

(01./ 21 Sep): Introduction
– Grob, Norbert and Elisabeth Bronfen. “Einleitung”. *Classical Hollywood*. (on Olat)

(02./ 28 Sep): A new type of academic writing – the visual essay

(03./ 05 Oct): Hollywood in the silent film era (novel)
– *Merton of the Movies* (1919/1921) Harry Leon Wilson

(04./ 12 Oct): The transition into sound film (films)
– *What Price Hollywood* (1932) George Cukor
– *The Artist* (2011) Michael Hazanavicius

(05./ 19 Oct): Vicissitudes of stardom (films)
– *A Star is Born* (1937) William Wellman
– *A Star is Born* (1954) George Cukor

(06./ 26 Oct): The fate of the Hollywood studio producer (novel)
– *The Last Tycoon* (1941) F. Scott Fitzgerald

(07./ 02 Nov): Hollywood and catastrophe (novel)
– *The Day of the Locust* (1939) Nathanael West

* 3 Nov and 4 Nov: Workshop with Prof. Richard Dienst (Rutgers University) on the visual essay as a form of academic writing. Students are encouraged to attend this workshop.

(08./ 09 Nov): The fate of the silent film diva (film)
– *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) Billy Wilder

(09./ 16 Nov): Star rivalries (film)
– *All About Eve* (1950) Joseph Mankiewicz

(10./ 23 Nov): Revisiting the transition into sound film (film)
– *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) Stanley Donen

(11./ 30 Nov): The Hollywood machine (film)
– *Mulholland Drive* (2001) David Lynch

(12./ 07 Dec): Celebrity and Catastrophe (film)
– *Maps to the Stars* (2014) David Cronenberg

(13./ 14 Dec): Cold War Cinema (film)
– *Hail, Caesar!* (2016) Joel and Ethan Cohen

(14./ 21 Dec): Discussion of the visual essays

Background reading:

Ames, Christopher. *Movies About the Movies: Hollywood Reflected*. University Press of Kentucky, 1997

Braudy, Leo. *The Hollywood Sign*. Yale University Press, 2011.

Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Home in Hollywood. The Imaginary Geography of Cinema*. Columbia University Press, 2004.

Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Stanley Cavell. Zur Einführung*. Junius, 2009.

Grob, Norbert und Elisabeth Bronfen. *Classical Hollywood*. Reclam, 2013.

Williams, Gregory Paul. *The Story of Hollywood. An Illustrated History*. BL Press, 2005.

Wood, Michael. *America in the Movies*. Columbia University Press, 1975.

Requirements for the class:

- All students must prepare a one-page preliminary discussion for each class session. These are to be posted on Olat (course forum) by Wednesday, 9 am of the respective week. This can entail a thesis, a series of questions, comments or associations. This will count towards your class participation. Writing this preliminary discussion is, thus, compulsory for each session. **Neglecting to hand in 12 thesis papers will result in a fail.**
- This course is a pilot seminar for the project "Multimedial Textual Analysis in Anglo-American Literary and Cultural Studies". This project aims to teach students techniques for the conceptual work with multimedial material (such as paintings, photographs, films, and TV series) as well as its usage in academic writing. In lieu of a class presentation, **all students are asked to partake in a visual essay exercise**. Given that this is an innovative new teaching/writing project, we will be discussing this assignment in several class sessions. All students are encouraged to take the tutorial offered as part of this project to help them develop this visual exercise.
- While standard written essays are possible, students taking the class for **9 KP are encouraged, building on this exercise, to produce a visual essay**. Written and visual essays are to be handed in by **February 19, 2017** (hard copy in pigeonhole, pdf to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi (morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch)). As with any written assignment, it is wise to use the class discussions to test your ideas for your essay.
 - Tutorials for the visual essay: Mondays 14:00-15:45, PLH-1-102 (Weeks 2-5)
 - Office hours for the visual essay: Starting Week 6, 14:00-15:00, PLH-1-102
 - Tutor: Luca Bianchi (luca.bianchi@uzh.ch)