

THE HISTORY OF U.S. AMERICAN FILM III, 1980 - TODAY

Course instructor: PD Dr. Stefan Brandt, Guest Professor

Course number: VS 32 104

Room and Time: R 201, Tuesdays, 14-16 Uhr

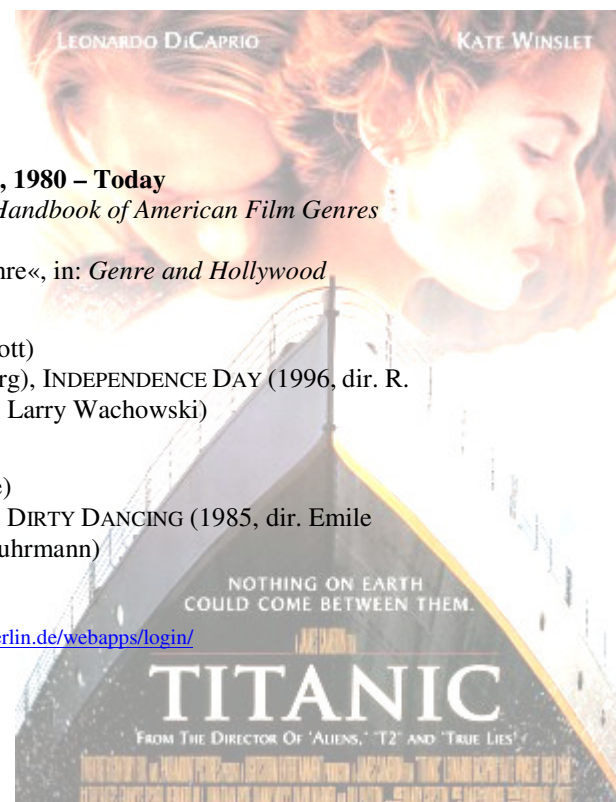
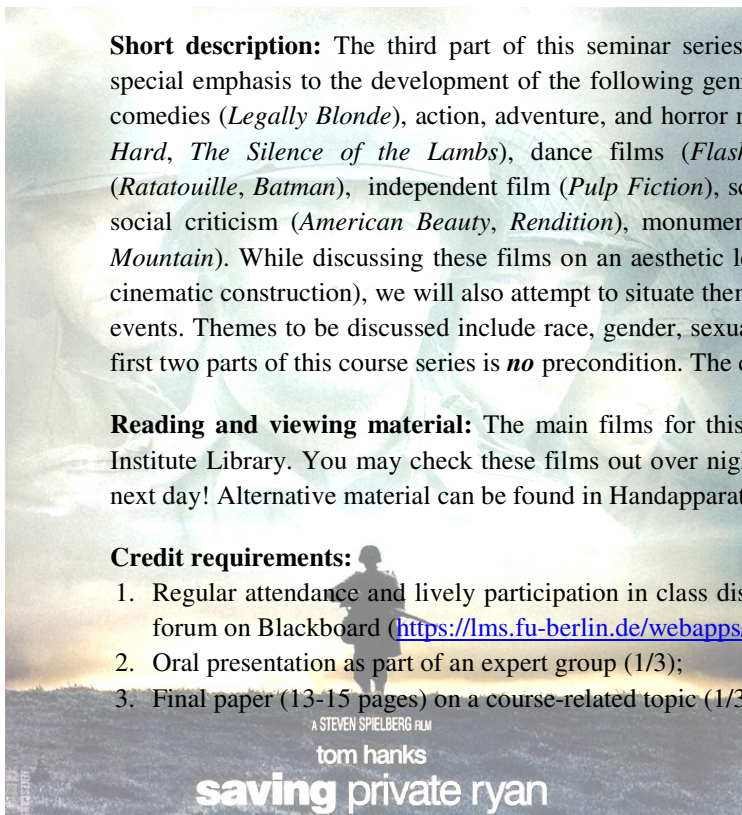
Basic information: BA Vertiefungsmodul B, Vertiefungsseminar und PS im Grundstudium, 2 SWS, 7 CP

Short description: The third part of this seminar series concentrates on the period after 1980, paying special emphasis to the development of the following genres and production types: blockbusters (*Titanic*), comedies (*Legally Blonde*), action, adventure, and horror movies (*Saving Private Ryan*, *The Departed*, *Die Hard*, *The Silence of the Lambs*), dance films (*Flashdance*) animated films & comic adaptations (*Ratatouille*, *Batman*), independent film (*Pulp Fiction*), science-fiction movies (*Blade Runner*), politics & social criticism (*American Beauty*, *Rendition*), monumental film (*Troy*), and queer cinema (*Brokeback Mountain*). While discussing these films on an aesthetic level (examining their strategies of narration and cinematic construction), we will also attempt to situate them within the framework of political and historical events. Themes to be discussed include race, gender, sexuality, class, and (hyper)reality. Attendance of the first two parts of this course series is **no** precondition. The course will be held in English and German.

Reading and viewing material: The main films for this course will be made available at the Kennedy Institute Library. You may check these films out over night (!) and have to return them by 10 a.m. on the next day! Alternative material can be found in Handapparat 28 (JFKI Library).

Credit requirements:

1. Regular attendance and lively participation in class discussions plus at least 9 entries in the discussion forum on Blackboard (<https://lms.fu-berlin.de/webapps/login/>) (1/3);
2. Oral presentation as part of an expert group (1/3);
3. Final paper (13-15 pages) on a course-related topic (1/3).



SYLLABUS

- Oct. 16 Introduction: The History of U.S. American Film, 1980 – Today**
Main text: Wes D. Gehring, »Introduction«, in: *Handbook of American Film Genres* (available online)¹
Additional text: Steve Neale, »Definitions of Genre«, in: *Genre and Hollywood*
- Oct. 23 Science Fiction & Fantasy**
Main film: BLADE RUNNER (1982, dir. Ridley Scott)
Alternative films: E.T. (1982, dir. Steven Spielberg), INDEPENDENCE DAY (1996, dir. R. Emmerich); THE MATRIX (1999, dir. Andy & Larry Wachowski)
- Oct. 30 Dance Films and Musicals**
Main film: FLASHDANCE (1983, dir. Adrian Lyne)
Alternative films: FAME (1980, dir. Alan Parker), DIRTY DANCING (1985, dir. Emile Ardolino); MOULIN ROUGE (2001, dir. Baz Luhrmann)

¹

All texts for this seminar can be found on the Blackboard at <https://lms.fu-berlin.de/webapps/login/>

PULP FICTION

FILM BY QUENTIN TARANTINO / PRODUCED BY LAWRENCE BENDER

Nov. 6 Action & Adventure Movies

Main film: DIE HARD (1988, dir. John McTiernan)

Alternative films: RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (1981, dir. Steven Spielberg); SPEED (1994, dir. Jan de Bont), ENEMY OF THE STATE (1998, dir. Tony Scott)

Nov. 13 Comic Adaptations

Main film: BATMAN (1989, dir. Tim Burton)

Alternative films: SIN CITY (2005, dir. Frank Miller); 300 (2006, dir. Zack Snyder)

Nov. 20 Thrillers & Horror Movies

Main film: THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (1991, dir. Jonathan Demme)

Alternative films: NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (1984, dir. Wes Craven); SE7EN (1995, dir. David Fincher), SAW (2004, dir. James Wan)

Nov. 27 Independent Film

Main film: PULP FICTION (1994, dir. Quentin Tarantino)

Alternative films: DOWN BY LAW (1986, dir. Jim Jarmusch); BARTON FINK (1991, dir. Ethan & Joel Coen); BEING JOHN MALKOVICH (1999, dir. Spike Jonze)

Dec. 4 Romance

Main film: TITANIC (1997, dir. James Cameron)

Alternative films: WHEN HARRY MET SALLY (1989, dir. Rob Reiner); PRETTY WOMAN (1990, dir. Gary Marshall); THE ENGLISH PATIENT (1996, dir. Anthony Minghella)

Dec. 11 War Movies

Main film: SAVING PRIVATE RYAN (1998, dir. Steven Spielberg)

Alternative films: RAMBO: FIRST BLOOD (1982, dir. Ted Kotcheff); JACOB'S LADDER (1990, dir. Adrian Lyne); LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA (2006, dir. Clint Eastwood)

Dec. 18 Drama

Main film: AMERICAN BEAUTY (1999, dir. Sam Mendes)

Alternative films: RAIN MAN (1988, dir. Barry Levinson); FALLING DOWN (1993, dir. Joel Schumacher); CRASH (2004, dir. Paul Haggis)

Jan. 8 Comedy & Satire

Main film: LEGALLY BLONDE (2001, dir. Robert Luketic)

Alternative films: THE NAKED GUN (1988, dir. David Zucker); AMERICAN PIE (1999, dir. Paul Weitz); SCARY MOVIE (2000, dir. Keenen Ivory Wayans)

Jan. 15 Monumental

Main film: TROY (2004, dir. Wolfgang Petersen)

Alternative films: GLADIATOR (2000, dir. Ridley Scott); THE PASSION OF CHRIST (2004, dir. Mel Gibson); ALEXANDER (2004, dir. Oliver Stone)

Jan. 22 Queer Cinema

Main film: BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN (2005, dir. Ang Lee)

Alternative films: DESERT HEARTS (1985, dir. Donna Deitch); BOUND (1995, dir. Andy & Larry Wachowski); BOYS DON'T CRY (1999, dir. Kimberly Peirce)

Jan. 29 Gangster Movies

Main film: THE DEPARTED (2006, dir. Martin Scorsese)

Alternative films: BLOOD SIMPLE (1984, dir. Ethan & Joel Coen); ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA (1984, dir. Sergio Leone); GET SHORTY (1995, dir. Barry Sonnenfeld)

Feb. 5 Politics and Social Criticism

Main film: RENDITION (2007, dir. Gavin Hood)

Alternative films: AMERICAN HISTORY X (1998, dir. Tony Kaye); NATURAL BORN KILLERS (1994, dir. Oliver Stone); WAG THE DOG (1997, dir. Barry Levinson)

Feb. 12 Animation

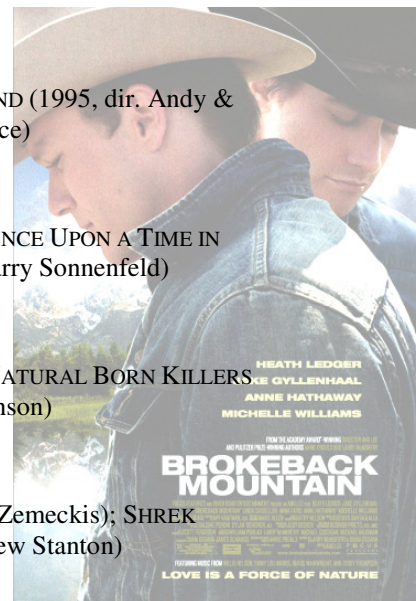
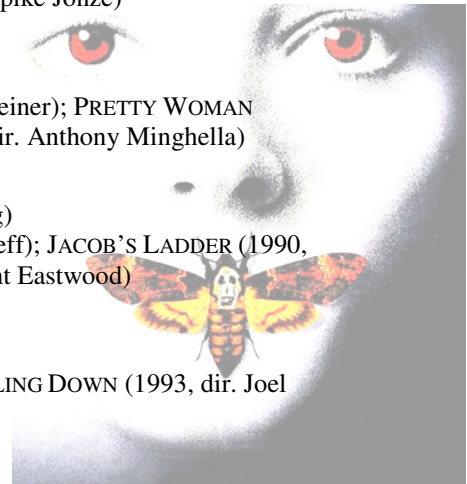
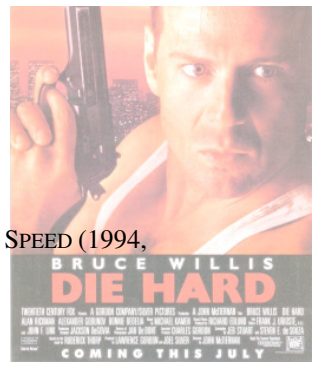
Main film: RATATOUILLE (2007, dir. Brad Bird)

Alternative films: WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT (1988, dir. Robert Zemeckis); SHREK (2001, dir. Andrew Adamson); FINDING NEMO (2003, dir. Andrew Stanton)



IN THEATERS JUNE 29

EMILE



Deadline for Final Papers:
Monday, March 2, 2009.
There is no (!) extension of this deadline.