

# Marshall University

## Communication Studies CMM 239:

"Development & Appreciation of Film to 1930"

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Office hours: By appointment a week or more in advance.

### Philosophy:

The historical development of basic silent motion pictures into an established, commercial, & widely popular art/entertainment form will give you opportunity to analyze early technical, economic, dramatic, & cultural factors which resulted rapidly in a totally new medium -- which (while attaining remarkable status) was then suddenly transfixed into a nearly entirely different medium upon the addition -- not of sound, but rather spoken dialogue. This course will provide a unique opportunity to learn more on this basic, important motion picture form, & how to use your communication skills to discuss its growth & development with logic, reason, & persuasion.

"The greatest challenge in communication is the illusion it has been achieved."

-- Captain Roger Donlan, USA (recipient of 1st Vietnam war Medal of Honor)

### Attendance:

Most college film courses are held in conjunction with a university film series. Students buy tickets & attend a dozen film showings IN ADDITION to coming to class every week to discuss films they've seen. This opportunity is not available at Marshall in Martinsburg nor in Huntington. Class attendance is almost the only way you can view these films. You may be able to rent videos of some (via NETflix or ??), but many are not easy to find. Due to length of many silent feature films, lectures will be limited, but both the number & length of handouts will be increased. We will also try to expand our film coverage via Turner Classic Movies' (TCM) "Silent Sunday" -- a late Sunday night showing of one or two classic (seldom available) silent films -- often foreign & frequently obscure.

Absences due to illness, death in immediate family, serious or unexpected work conflict (including Guard duty/travel) will be excused -- particularly when reported in advance. Alert instructor to known absences. Yet you must also strive to see assigned films missed during absence, since you can hardly discuss what you have not seen!

### Grading:

All work will be graded on elements of structure, substance, quality, & persuasiveness. What you say or write, how you planned it, & how well you presented it is key!! There will be four papers done outside class, & no tests. Papers will relate to groups of film.

### Textbook:

*An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Feature Picture 1915-28.* University of California Press. ISBN 978-0-520-08535-0. All reading assignments due week following assignment! Reading assignments will have direct bearing on current paper assigned for that period & films seen during that time. Include short summary of director or star in text for each film viewed.

## CMM 239 Silent Film Schedule Spring 2014

(Subject to change; time for many films uncertain.)

#1-01/15:	None -- registration night		
#2-01/22:	<i>The General</i> /Keaton	(1'28")	1926
	<i>The Fireman</i> /Chaplin short	(21")	1916
#3-01/29:	<i>The Freshman</i> /Lloyd	(1'15")	1925
	Several Lloyd shorts	(50")	1916-9
#4-02/05:	<i>The Gold Rush</i> /Chaplin	(2')	1927
	<i>Li'l Rascals</i> /Roach short	(20")	1923

Paper #1: "Contrast Three Comedians," "Slapstick vs. Realism,"  
"What Makes Me Laugh?," or try your own.

#5-02/12:	<i>Tarzan of the Apes</i> /Lincoln	(1'53")	1918
#6-02/19:	<i>The Eagle</i> /Valentino	(1'16")	1923
	Betsy Ross/Brady	(58")	1925
#7-02/26:	<i>Beau Brummel</i> /Barrymore	(1'20")	1924
	<i>The Cure</i> /Chaplin short	24")	1916
#8-03/05:	<i>Phantom of the Opera</i> /Chaney	(1'8")	1925
	<i>The Rink</i> /Chaplin short	(24")	1916
#9-03/12:	<i>Flesh &amp; the Devil</i> /Garbo	(1'52")	1927
	<i>The Narrow Road</i> /Pickford	(20")	1912

Paper #2: "Silent Acting," "Silent vs. Sound Films,"  
"Actors vs. Actresses," or try your own.

#### 03/19: Spring Vacation

#10-03/26:	<i>The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari</i> /Veidt	(1'16")	1923
	<i>Derby Day</i> /Roach short	(20")	1923
#11-04/02:	<i>Metropolis</i> /Lang	(2'4")	1926
	<i>Love Pangs</i> /Chaplin short	(8")	1914
#12-04/09:	<i>Nanook of the North</i> /Flaherty	(1'9")	1922
	<i>Origins of Animation</i>	(1'24")	1900-21

Paper #3: "Contrasting Film Locations," "Of Film &  
Time," "Realism, Expressionism, or Documentary,"  
or try your own."

#13-04/16:	<i>Greed</i> /von Stroheim	(2'13")	1925
#14-04/23:	<i>Intolerance</i> /Griffith	(1'57")	1916
#15-04/30:	<i>The Big Parade</i> /Vidor	(2'31")	1925

Paper #4: "Multi-story or theme," "Is longer bigger, better,  
or worse?," "Truth vs. Length," or try your own.

#16-05/7:	<b>FINAL: <i>The Birth of a Nation</i></b> /Griffith	(3'7")	1915
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### Class Reading Assignments

Week #1 -- 15 Jan: Order textbook.

Week #2 -- 22 Jan: Receive text, Read chapter 1, pp 1-8

Week #3 -- 29 Jan: Read chapter 2, pp 9-28

Week #4 -- 05 Feb: Read chapter 2, pp 29-61

Week #5 -- 12 Feb: Read chapter 4, pp 95-115

Week #6 -- 19 Feb: Read chapter 4, pp 116-37

Week #7 -- 26 Feb: Read chapter 6, pp 163-74

Week #8 -- 05 Mar: Read chapter 6, pp 175-90

Week #9 -- 12 Mar: Read chapter 7, pp 191-210

Week #10 -- 19 Mar: Spring vacation (catch up on ALL you missed)

Week #11 -- 26 Mar: Read chapter 5, pp 131-61

Week #12 -- 2 Apr: Read chapter 8 write ups for Griffith, Sennett, DeMille, Vidor, von Stroheim, & Ingram

Week #13 -- 09 Apr: Read chapter 8 write ups for Flaherty, Goldwyn, Lubitsch, Thalberg, Murnau, & von Sternberg

Week #14 -- 16 Apr: Read chapter 9 write ups for Chaplin, Pickford, Fairbanks, White, Hart, & Chaney

Week #15 -- 23 Apr: Read chapter 9 write ups for *Gish*, *Valentino*, *Keaton*, *Lloyd*, *Bow*, & *Gilbert*  
Week #16 -- 30 Apr: Review text

### Themes for Class Papers

You can point out examples of photography movement, editing, & sound (not speech) in each film you are writing about. You may also consider or compare acting, drama, & story or writing, ideology, & theory as handled in various films.

It is also not improper to continue to point out prior examples from films seen throughout the course or of special films -- you may have seen, as well.

### Suggestions for your Paper Writing -- Have you?

(1) **Analyzed each film?** Have you selected & named the films you want to analyze? Have you analyzed these films as film, as well as using them to illustrate your argument, example, or concept?

(2) **Connection of films to a theme?** Have you selected & made clear some theme or concept for each paper? A unifying idea, or set of criterion -- to which you will measure or compare each film?

(3) **Exposition?** Have you worked out logical exposition? Do you state clearly what you are trying to do, do it, & then summarize what you've done -- all in clear, simple prose?

(4) **Mechanics?** Have you checked carefully your English mechanics? Are all sentences complete? Do you have any run-on sentences? Have you punctuated your compound & complex sentences correctly? Have you used the right word? Example: "to" instead of "too" or "two"?