FILM 194D

FILM HISTORY SEMINAR:
CENSORSHIP & THE PRODUCTION CODE
http://film.ucsc.edu/courses/2008-09/spring/194d

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2:30 & by appointment

Spring 09

Tues & Thurs 10 am - 12 pm
Communications 117 & 119

Course Description
This is an advanced senior seminar designed for students interested in an indepth exploration of the Production Code, the Hollywood's industry's main instrument of self-censorship during the 1930s, 40s and 50s. We will consider how and why the Code regulated depictions of sexuality, violence and race relations, comparing Pre-Code films from the early 30s with those made during the era of the Production Code Administration and those made after the Code became unenforceable. Finally, we will consider what changed, if anything, when the current ratings system replaced the Code. Throughout the seminar we will consider how extra-textual discussions surrounding the films helped audiences "read" suppressed content.

Course Format
This is a seminar, not a lecture course. As students you will be responsible for much more of the class than you may be accustomed to. You must be prepared to do the readings each and every week, to come to class armed with questions, comments and queries, and to participate actively in seminar discussions. Each Thursday session will be devoted to an introduction of the week's topic, followed by the screening of a film relevant to the issue. The Tuesday seminar sessions will be devoted to detailed discussions of the assigned readings and the film screened, along with promotional materials and reviews.

Course Components
Readings: The weekly readings constitute the central subject matter of the course. Plan to spend several hours each week reading them carefully so that you come to class informed and prepared.

Reading Responses (20%): Each week you will be responsible for handing in a 1-2 page discussion of the major themes from that week's assigned articles. Your report should summarize the arguments in each of the readings, offer some comparisons between the different approaches each author presents, and pose at least TWO QUESTIONS about the material. Due at the beginning of each Tuesday seminar. Reading Responses will be not accepted late.

Seminar Participation (25%): A significant portion of your work for the course will consist of preparing for and participating in weekly seminar discussions. In addition to submitting your reading report, you should come to class prepared with comments, queries and criticisms.

Marketing and Reception Research (5%): Two students will volunteer each week to find reviews, posters, trailers and other marketing materials for the film(s) under consideration. This will help us understand the larger cultural context in which the films were screened and discussed.

Essays (25% each): You will be required to write two essays for the class on assigned topics. Each essay will be 10 pages (or 2500 words) in length. The first essay is due in class Friday, May 8th. The second essay is due Friday, June 5th.

☆ Any act of academic dishonesty will result in failure of the class ☆
# Class Schedule

## Considering Censorship

**Tues Mar 31**  
Introduction to the class

## Gangster Films and the Origins of the Production Code

**Thurs Apr 2**  
*Screening: Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932) 95 mins

**Tues Apr 7**  
Annette Kuhn, "Investigating Film Censorship"  
Gregory Black, "Beer, Blood and Politics"  
Stephen Prince, "Elaborating Gun Violence"  
"Don'ts and Be Carefuls"; "The 1930 Production Code" & "Compensating Moral Values"

## "Fallen Women" Negotiate the Code

**Thurs Apr 9**  
*Screening: Baby Face* (Alfred E. Green, 1933) 70 mins

**Tues Apr 14**  
Lea Jacobs, "The Fallen Woman Film and the Impetus for Censorship"  
Jacobs, "The Studio Relations Committee's Policies and Procedures"  
Jacobs, "Glamour and Gold Diggers"

## Policing Race Relations

**Thurs Apr 16**  
*Screening: Imitation of Life* (John Stahl, 1934) 106 mins  
*with clips from Pinky* (Elia Kazan, 1949)

**Tues Apr 21**  
Susan Courtney, "'The Un-doable Stories,' the 'Usual Answers,' and other 'Epidermic Drama[s]' coming to Terms with the Production Code"  
Courtney, "Picturizing Race: On Visibility, Racial Knowledge, and Cinematic Belief"  
Cindy Patton, "White Racism/Black Signs: Censorship and Images of Race Relations"

## Policing Sexual Relations

**Thurs Apr 23**  
*Screening: The Uninvited* (Lewis Allen, 1944) 98 mins  
*with clips from Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1941)

**Tues Apr 28**  
Patricia White, "Reading the Code(s)"  
Rhona J. Berenstein, "Adaptation, Censorship and Audiences of Questionable Type: Lesbian Sightings in Rebecca and The Uninvited"  
Chon Noriega, "Something's Missing Here": Homosexuality and Film Reviews During the Production Code Era, 1934-1962"

Excerpted letters from the Hays Office on *Rebecca*
Marrying Sex & Violence

Thurs Apr 30
Screening: The Postman Always Rings Twice (Tay Garnett, 1946) 113 mins
with clips from The Big Sleep (Howard Hawks, 1946)
and Double Indemnity (Billy Wilder, 1944)

Tues May 5
Sheri Chinen Biesen, “Censorship, Film Noir and Double Indemnity”
Biesen, “Raising Cain with the Censors Again: The Postman Always Rings Twice”
Frank Krutnik, "Desire, Transgression and James M. Cain"
Annette Kuhn, "The Big Sleep: Censorship, Film Text and Sexuality"
Excerpted letters from the Hays Office on film noir crime films

HUAC & Political Censorship

Thurs May 7
Screening: Salt of the Earth (Herbert Biberman, 1954) 94 mins
☆ First paper due Friday, May 8th ☆

Tues May 12
Stephen Vaughan, "Political Censorship During the Cold War: The Hollywood Ten"
Steve Boisson, "The Movie Hollywood Could Not Stop"
James Lorence, "The Suppression of Salt of the Earth in Midwest America: The Underside of Cold War Culture in Detroit and Chicago"
Bejamin Balthaser, "Cold War Re-Visions: Representation and Resistance in the Unseen Salt of the Earth"

Breaking the Code

Thurs May 14
Screening: The Man with the Golden Arm (Otto Preminger, 1955) xx mins
with clips from Baby Doll (Elia Kazan, 1956)

Tues May 19
Jon Lewis, “What Everyone Should Know About the Motion Picture Code and Ratings”
Garth Jowett, ”‘A Significant Medium for the Communication of Ideas’: The Miracle Decision and the Decline of Motion Picture Censorship, 1952-1968”
Jerold Simmons, “Challenging the Production Code: The Man with the Golden Arm”

Ratings Replace the Code

Thurs May 21
Screening: Midnight Cowboy (John Schlesinger, 1969) 113 mins

Tues May 26
Justin Wyatt, “The Stigma of X: Adult Cinema and the Institution of the MPAA Ratings System”
Stephen Prince, “After the Deluge”
“The Code of Self-Regulation”
CENSORSHIP IN THE NEW HOLLYWOOD

Thurs May 28
Screening: Basic Instinct (Paul Verhoeven, 1992) 128 mins [unrated version]
☆ Class will run 15 minutes over today ☆

Tues June 2
Kevin S. Sander, “The Naked Truth: Showgirls and the Fate of the X/NC-17 Rating”
Charles Lyons, “‘We Are Not Invisible’: Gays and Lesbians Against Basic Instinct”
Steve Cohan, “Censorship and Narrative Indeterminacy in Basic Instinct: ‘You won’t
learn anything from me I don’t want you to know’”

Thurs June 4
Screening: This Film Is Not Yet Rated (Kirby Dick, 2006) 97 mins

☆ Second paper due Friday, June 5th ☆