

Star Studies
Seminar in Moving Image Studies
Comm 8750
Mondays, 4:30-7:00

Instructors:

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The phenomena of stardom and/or celebrity represent a rich nexus for scholarly investigation. Stars are a commercial product; they are the “brand names” used to market films and other media products. Stars are created by commercial texts, and yet they circulate outside of those texts in ways that are not entirely within the control of the mechanisms that produced them. Stars are both ordinary and extraordinary. They can represent fans’ aspirations, and/or they can be seen as a breed apart, at a godlike remove from the common. They provide a focal point for society to argue over important ideological tensions. They seem to embody those tensions, and yet their individual histories complicate such symptomatic readings.

This seminar asks the student to engage with the growing body of scholarship on the nature of stardom and to add to this literature by doing a specific research project on some aspect of stardom/celebrity. The readings for the course focus mostly on Hollywood stardom for two reasons: because the celebrity mechanisms of the American film industry are the most highly developed, and because the scholarship on those stars is the most robust and wide-reaching. We are interested in investigating other forms of stardom: stars in other media (computer games, music, politics, literature, online, etc.) and in other cultures.

Required Texts:

Graeme Turner, Understanding Celebrity (London: Sage, 2004)
Richard Dyer, Stars (London: BFI Publishing, 1990)
Charles Maland, Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image
(Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989)
Coursepack (available at Bestway Copies, 18 Decatur St.)

Course Requirements:

Final Paper	50%
Final Presentation	20%

Reading reports	20%
Participation	10%

The bulk of the credit for the course is based on a final 20 page research paper and on an in-class presentation of that research. It is assumed that most students will do a case study of a single star, but students could also do a research paper on some theoretical aspect of stardom/celebrity or on a metaphenomenon that deals with multiple stars (the coverage of stardom in Life magazine, for instance).

Star research tends to be very data intensive, and so students need to decide quickly on a topic/star to investigate, thus leaving the bulk of the semester to gather data and analyze it. Students must declare their research topic by September 26. On October 17 students will hand in a paper proposal, discussing what aspects of the star/topic the paper will examine; what sources will be consulted; and what the student's preliminary investigation has uncovered about the star/topic. Student presentations will be scheduled for the last three sessions of class, and the final paper is due December 5.

In addition, students will complete two-page reading reports (following model format we will distribute) on five weeks' reading assignments – on Dyer, Maland, and weeks of October 3, 10, 24 (choose two of the week's articles to analyze and compare). In the reports you will concentrate on authors' questions, thesis arguments, methodology, use of sources, and how its approach compares to other readings. Bring completed reports to class the week reading is due.

The participation grade is based on your in-class performance in oral discussions. Factors include: the quality of your comments (do they contribute to the discussion and reveal insight into the reading?); the quantity of your comments (do you participate regularly without monopolizing conversation?); and participatory style (do you promote other people's participation?). There is no formal attendance record taken, but missing class will obviously affect your participation grade, as will perennial lateness or coming to class unprepared, since all of these factors negatively influence the quality and quantity of your participation in oral discussion.

Class Policies:

It is expected that the student will: attend all classes having read the required material for the day; give his/her full attention to the in-class learning activities; and participate in class sessions with civility and respect for others. Plagiarism/cheating in any form will not be tolerated and will result in failure for the entire course (see the Policy for Academic Honesty, Section 409, GSU Faculty Handbook: <http://www.gsu.edu/~wwwfhb/fhb.html>). The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. Please turn off cell phones, pagers, etc. at the beginning of class.

The last day to withdraw from the course and possibly receive a W is October 14.

If the research paper is handed in late, your grade will decrease by 10% for every business day (Monday-Friday) the paper is late. For example, if the paper is due Monday and you hand it in the following Monday, then the paper gets a 50% late penalty (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Monday). A student's presentation cannot be done at a later date than scheduled unless there are extraordinary circumstances (illness, death in the family, etc.).

Grade Breakdown:

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	below 60

Course Schedule

August 22 **Introduction**

29 Turner, Understanding Celebrity

September 5 **Labor Day Holiday**

September 12 **Cinema Stars**
Reading report due on Dyer

Richard Dyer, Stars
John Ellis, "Stars As a Cinematic Phenomenon," in Visible Fictions: Cinema: Television: Video (London: Routledge, 1982)

September 19 **A Case Study: Chaplin**
Reading report due on Maland

Maland, Chaplin and American Culture

September 26 **The Star As Commodity**
Paper topic due

- Richard deCordova, "The Emergence of the Star System in America," Wide Angle 6.4 (1985).
- Cathy Klaprat, "The Star as Market Strategy," in Tino Balio, ed., The American Film Industry, rev. ed. (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985)

- Charles Eckert, "The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window," in Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body (New York: Routledge, 1990)
- Charles Eckert, "Shirley Temple and the House of Rockefeller," in Christine Gledhill, ed. Stardom: Industry of Desire (London: Routledge, 1991)
- Jane Gaines, "In the Service of Ideology: How Betty Grable's Legs Won the War," Film Reader 5 (Winter 1981-1982)

October 3 **Promotion/Publicity**

Reading report due analyzing/comparing two of these articles

- Robert Allen, "The Role of the Star in Film History," in Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, Film History: Theory and Practice (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1985)
- Charles Wolfe, "The Return of Jimmy Stewart: The Publicity Photograph As Text," in Gledhill, Stardom
- Simon Dixon, "Ambiguous Ecologies: Stardom's Domestic Mise-en-scene," Cinema Journal 42.2 (Winter 2003) 81-100.
- Adrienne L. McLean, "'New Films in Story Form:' Movie Story Magazines and Spectatorship," Cinema Journal 42.3 (Spring 2003) 3-26.
- Greg M. Smith, "Choosing Silence: Robert DeNiro and the Celebrity Interview," in Stars in Our Eyes: The Star Phenomenon in the Contemporary Era, edited by Angela Ndalians and Charlotte Henry (Praeger, 2002). Available at <http://www.gsu.edu/~jougms>

October 10 **The Star As Actor/Labor**

Reading report due analyzing/comparing two of these articles

- Barry King, "Articulating Stardom," in Jeremy G. Butler, ed., Star Texts: Image and Performance in Film and Television (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991)
- Susan Roberts, "Melodramatic Performance Signs," Framework 32/33 (1986) 68-75.
- Janet Staiger, "The Eyes Are Really the Focus: Photoplay Acting and Film Form and Style," Wide Angle 6.4 (1984) 14-24.
- Natalie Crohn Schmitt, "Stanislavski's Nature, Stanislavski's Art," in Actors and Onlookers: Theater and Twentieth-Century Views of Nature (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1990)
- Virginia Wright Wexman, "Masculinity in Crisis: Method Acting in Hollywood," in Creating the Couple: Love, Marriage, and Hollywood Performance (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993)
- Barry King, "Stardom As an Occupation," in Paul Kerr, ed. The Hollywood Film Industry (London: Routledge, 1986)
- Danae Clark, "The Subject of Acting" and "The Politics of (Self-) Representation," in Negotiating Hollywood: The Cultural Politics of Actors' Labor (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995)

October 17 **Fandom**
 Paper proposal due

- Joli Jenson, "Fandom as Pathology," in Lisa Lewis, ed., The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media (New York: Routledge, 1992)
- Jackie Stacey, "Feminine Fascinations: A Question of Identification?" in Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Marsha Orgeron, "Making It in Hollywood: Clara Bow, Fandom, and Consumer Culture," Cinema Journal 42.4 (Summer 2003) 76-97.
- Denise Mann, "The Spectacularization of Everyday Life: Recycling Hollywood Stars and Fans in Early Television Variety Shows" in Private Screenings, eds. Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1992)

October 24 **The History of the Individual: The Star As Body**
 Reading report due analyzing/comparing two of these articles

- Leo Braudy, The Frenzy of Renown (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 340-389, 491-514
- Mark Jancovich, "Charlton Heston Is an Axiom: Spectacle and Performance in the Development of the Blockbuster," in Film Stars: Hollywood and Beyond, ed. Andrew Willis (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004)
- Vivian Sobchack, "Thinking through Jim Carrey," in More Than a Method: Trends and Traditions in Contemporary Film Performance, ed. Cynthia Baron, Diane Carson, and Frank P. Tomasulo (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2004)
- Scott Bukatman, "Paralysis in Motion: Jerry Lewis's Life As a Man," in Comedy/Cinema/Theory, ed. Andrew Horton (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991)

October 31 **Gender/Sexuality**

- Richard Dyer, "Monroe and Sexuality," in Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society (New York: St. Martin's, 1986)
- Richard Dyer, "Don't Look Now: The Male Pinup," in The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality (London: Routledge, 1992)
- Miriam Hansen, "Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship," in Butler, Star Texts
- Roland Barthes, "The Face of Garbo," in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen, Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979)
- Andrea Weiss, "'A Queer Feeling When I Look at You': Hollywood Stars and Lesbian Spectatorship in the 1930s" in Gledhill, Stardom
- Lucy Fischer, "Greta Garbo and Silent Cinema: The Actress as Art Deco Icon," Camera Obscura 48 (2001)
- Kathleen Rowe, "Roseanne: The Unruly Woman as Domestic Goddess," in The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter (Austin: U. of Texas P, 1995)

November 7 **Race/Ethnicity**

- Mark Winokur, “Improbable Ethnic Hero: William Powell and the Transformation of Ethnic Hollywood,” Cinema Journal 27 (Fall 1987): 5-22.
- Diane Negra, “Immigrant Stardom in Imperial America: Pola Negri and the Problem of Typology,” in Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom (London: Routledge, 2001)
- Adrienne McLean, “From Cansino to Hayworth to Beckworth,” from Being Rita Hayworth: Labor, Identity, and Hollywood Stardom (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2004)
- Shari Roberts, “‘The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat:’ Carmen Miranda, a Spectacle of Ethnicity,” Cinema Journal 32.3 (Spring 1993)
- Eva Illouz, “The Success of a Self-Failed Woman,” in Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery (New York: Columbia UP, 2003)

November 14 **International Stardom**

- Ginette Vincendeau, “The French Star System,” in Stars and Stardom in French Cinema (London: New York, 2000)
- Judith Williamson, Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising (London: Marie Byars, 1978) 24-31
- Guy Austin, “Red Woman/White Woman,” Jeanne Moreau and Catherine Deneuve,” in Stars in Modern French Cinema (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003)
- M. Madhava Prasad, “Reigning Stars: The Political Career of South Indian Cinema,” in Stars: The Film Reader, Lucy Fischer and Marcia Landy, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2004)
- Sabina Hake, “Stars: Heinz Rühmann and the Performance of the Ordinary,” in Popular Cinema of the Third Reich (Austin: U of Texas P, 2001)

November 21 **Negative Fame**

- James Lull and Stephen Hinerman, “The Search for Scandal,” Media Scandals: Morality and Desire in the Popular Culture Marketplace (New York: Columbia UP, 1997)
- Mary Desjardins, “Maureen O’Hara’s ‘Confidential’ Life: Recycling Stars through Gossip and Moral Biography,” in Small Screens, Big Ideas: Television in the 1950’s, ed. Janet Thumim (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002)
- Mark Lynn Anderson, “Shooting Star: Understanding Wallace Reid and His Public,” in Headline Hollywood: A Century of Film Scandal, ed. Adrienne L. McLean and David A. Cook (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2001)

November 28 **Alternate sites of star discourse**
Student presentations

- Amelie Hastie, "History in Miniature: Colleen Moore's Dollhouse and Historical Recollection," Camera Obscura 48 (2001)
- Paul McDonald, "Stars in the Online Universe: Promotion, Nudity, Reverence," in Contemporary Hollywood Stardom, Thomas Austin and Martin Barker, eds. (London: Arnold, 2003)
- Jane Gaines, "Dracula and the Right of Publicity," in Contested Culture (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1991)

December 5 **Student presentations**
Final paper due

December 12, 5:00 p.m. **Student presentations**