



CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course title:	Hollywood and Europe
Course code:	FILM 3003 PRAG
Programs offering course:	Business, Arts and Sciences, Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3.00
Contact hours:	45.00
Term:	Fall 2023

Course Description

This course offers insights into the relationships between Hollywood and Europe. The course adopts a revisionist perspective in so much as it seeks to challenge five ideas structuring understandings of the relations between the two. It begins by questioning the notion that Hollywood is strictly American, and therefore separate from Europe. Students then ask if Hollywood and European cinema are really the binary oppositions they tend to be imagined as being. From there, we consider whether Hollywood's engagement with Eastern Europe in the twentieth century supports its reputation as a staunchly anti-Communist institution. The course then focuses on whether Americanization is the most useful explanatory framework for understanding Hollywood's engagement with the continent: first by considering the concessions Hollywood has needed to make to this powerful profit center, then the extent to which Hollywood has used European subject matter to provoke introspection among American audiences. Students work through these topics by employing historical analysis and examining representative films such as *Ninotchka* (1939), *Roman Holiday* (1953), *Rocky IV* (1984), *Taken* (2008), and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014).

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- analyze the dynamic and complex relationships that have existed, and which continue to exist, between Hollywood and Europe;
- discuss how the interaction of Hollywood and Europe can be conceptualized or theorized;
- critically discuss the ways in which deep-rooted contrasts between Hollywood and European Cinema have elided complex exchanges between the two;
- discuss ways in which European-based companies and European-based individuals have contributed to Hollywood and its output;
- illustrate the ambivalent relationships that characterized Hollywood's engagement with Communist Eastern Europe as both a partner and subject matter;
- analyze of the historically specific content-tailoring strategies that Hollywood has employed to make some of its output marketable and attractive to key European audiences, and to market its films to those audiences;
- critically discuss and illustrate how Hollywood has used images of Europe and Europeans to invite Americans to think about themselves and their nation.

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

This course is built around extended sessions usually comprising a film screening, structured discussions, micro-lectures, and sometimes exercises. Students will consider the screened films in relation to specific series of questions and using specific analytical methods (see below). The films will provide concrete reference points intended to facilitate their understanding of the topics introduced in the readings and developed by the instructor. Discussions will be accompanied by detailed PowerPoint slides, which will be emailed to students after the session.

Notes on Film Analysis: It should be stressed that this course is NOT a film appreciation seminar, nor is it – strictly

speaking – a film interpretation seminar. Thematic analysis is a fundamental part of this course, but these analyses are structured around specific approaches and questions in an effort to marshal the ways these audiovisual texts are examined; i.e. to encourage students to treat them as examples, embodiments or iterations of the topics discussed. Broadly speaking, students are encouraged to employ an industrially and culturally sensitive approach, one geared to understanding how commercial enterprise and creative engagement with public-sphere discourse shapes film production and content.

Note on Readings: Students new to Film Studies are sometimes surprised that writings on this well-loved entertainment form can often be quite dry and intellectually challenging. It should be stressed that film scholarship is a very different genre of writing to film journalism. The Film Studies writings used on this course – penned by some of the most influential figures in the field – are valuable for the same reasons that any other academic texts are valuable: because they contribute to knowledge. Accordingly, students should be prepared to study these writings rather than skim through them. A mandatory home screening is set to provide students with a concrete reference point intended to facilitate their understanding of the readings.

Note on Screenings: One of the bigger challenges faced by students new to the academic study of cinema is to resist efforts on the parts of the filmmakers to “lose oneself in the film”. This course treats the films as cultural artifacts, which should be analyzed with a high degree of critical distance. Accordingly, questions about the home screenings and in-class screenings will be provided to students in advance, in order to help focus and structure the analysis of these audiovisual texts. Notes should also be made during screenings.

Note on electronics in class: Except during breaks or unless otherwise stated, electronic devices may NOT be used at any time during this class. It needs to be stressed that there is no valid reason to have phones, tablets, or laptops either turned on or on display in this class, as all slides are made available to students after each session. Any notes that do need to be taken can be made with pen and paper.

Guidelines on each prompt will be issued when students are expected to turn their attention to the assessment in question. Students are also advised to reach out to the instructor to discuss issues related thereto. A twenty-four-hour emailed response is guaranteed, although usually responses will be much swifter than this. Face-to-face meetings can also be arranged upon request.

NB: Films screened on this course may not be used for any of the prompts; students must use different films for each prompt; students may not use the same film another student is using for any given prompt.

Assessment and Final Grade

1.	Paper 1	20%
2.	Midterm Presentation	20%
3.	Paper 2	20%
4.	Final Presentation	20%
5.	Class Participation	20%
	TOTAL	100%

Course Requirements

Paper 1

Students are to submit a circa 1500-1700-word essay in response to a prompt derived from sessions 2-4.

Prompt

Hollywood is typically assumed to be American. However, the work of Higson and Behlil, and Meers, show how transatlantic flows of people, capital, ideas, and products complicate the notion that Hollywood is in fact an American institution, and thus distinct from Europe. With these points in mind, consider the production, content, and circulation of a Hollywood film to support where you stand on this issue.

Areas of Assessment

An understanding of the ways culture has been conceptualized in national terms.

An understanding of how cross-border movements complicate such approaches.

An understanding of how the aforementioned notions relate to Hollywood.

A demonstration of how the example film evinces transatlantic flows, and their implications vis-à-vis the prompt.

Midterm Presentation

Students are to deliver a circa 10-to-15-minute presentation in response to a prompt derived from sessions 5 and 6.

Delivery Date: Week 7

Prompt

Hollywood cinema and European cinema are often considered to be binarily opposed, based on oppositions related to escapist entertainment and cerebral art. However, this notion is complicated by European-based producers supplying Hollywood with examples of "Mid-Atlantic Cinema" and "Imperso-Nation", and Hollywood's handling of films using the art cinema model typically associated with Europe. With this point in mind, use an example of one of these approaches to support where you stand on this issue.

Areas of Assessment

Understanding of how Hollywood cinema and European cinema tend to be imagined.

Understanding of the general phenomena that complicate this notion.

A demonstration of how an example Hollywood film relates to one of the general phenomena.

Paper 2

Students are to submit a circa 1500-1700-word essay in response to a prompt derived from sessions 8-9.

Prompt

Discussion of Hollywood and its relations to Eastern Europe in the twentieth century has tended to spotlight Hollywood's Anti-Communism. However, some scholars have suggested that in terms of its conduct and output Hollywood has at times been more ambivalent about – even supportive of – aspects of state socialism. With this point in mind, use one of Hollywood's communist-themed films to explain where you stand on this issue

Final Presentation

Students are to submit a circa 10-to-15-minute presentation in response to a prompt derived from sessions 10 to 12.

Delivery Date: Week 13

Prompt A

Hollywood's relationships to Europe as a market and as subject matter have usually been understood in terms of Americanization – as a powerful overseas US institution imposing an outside culture onto a sovereign territory. However, some scholars have suggested that the voluntary nature of movie-going and the reliance on international revenue has demanded Hollywood make concessions to the perceived tastes of audiences in Europe. With this point in mind, use a Euro-tailored Hollywood film to support where you stand on this issue.

Areas of Assessment

Understanding of how Americanization has been used to understand Hollywood's relationships to European audiences and subject matter.

Understanding of how (and why) Hollywood has needed to secure major European markets.

Demonstration of how an example film bares the traces of being made with Europeans in mind.

Or

Prompt B

Central to the discussion of Americanization has been the notion that Hollywood promotes "American values" to international audiences such as those in Europe. However, some scholars have shown that Hollywood sometimes uses images of Europe and Europeans primarily to invite Americans to think critically about themselves and their nation. Use a European-centered Hollywood tourist film to support where you stand on this issue.

Areas of Assessment

Understanding of how using Europe to speak to Americans complicates the Americanization thesis.

Understanding of the ways Euro-centered tourist films have been seen to address Americans.

Understanding of how an example Hollywood tourist film uses Europe to invite Americans to think about themselves and their country.

Class Participation

Participation contributes a total of 20 percent towards the final grade. This 20 percent is in turn broken down into 4 blocks corresponding respectively to student participation in sessions 2-3 (22% of participation grade/4.4% of overall grade), 4-6 (33% of participation grade/6.6% of overall grade), 8-10 (33% of participation grade/6.6% of overall grade), and 11-12 (22% of participation grade/4.4% of overall grade).

Students will receive feedback on each block once the block in question has concluded. The overall participation will be the sum of the four scores. Each student's participation overall grade will be determined by the way s/he has contributed across the course to seminar discussions.

Students will be graded on a) the depth and b) the regularity of their insights, as well as their general level of engagement. In this respect, students will be evaluated on their engagement with a) the general topics, b) the set readings, and c) the screened example films.

Attempts to grapple with complex ideas, critical thinking, original ideas, and efforts to facilitate the learning of other students are areas graded particularly highly.

Students deemed to be struggling or falling short in terms of their general participation - unwillingness or inability to contribute, distracted or distracting conduct - will be given opportunities to contribute productively and will, in extreme cases, be contacted individually to draw their attention to their need to improve in this area.

Attendance

To encourage engaged learning, regular class attendance is required throughout the program. This includes any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as internship, service-learning, or other required field placement.

An excused absence in a CIEE course will only be considered if approved by a CIEE Center Director/Academic Director (not the Instructor), and:

- it is a self-certified absence for illness (only once per course, requires formal request before or within 24 hours, cannot miss assessment worth more than 5% of final course grade)
- a doctor's note from a local medical professional is provided
- evidence of a family emergency is provided
- it is a pre-approved observance of religious holiday

Unexcused absences include personal travel and/or travel delays, as well as missing more than 25% of a single class period (including tardiness and early departure). Assessments missed due to unexcused absences will be marked as zero. Students with over 10% unexcused absences will be contacted by CIEE staff. Students with over 20% unexcused absences will be contacted by CIEE staff, receive a formal warning letter (shared with their home institution) and lose 10% of the final course point total (e.g., a final A grade of 93% will be lowered to a B grade of 83%).

For more detail, please consult your CIEE Academic Manual.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to a positive and inclusive teaching and learning environment. All students are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness, respect, and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in grade penalties or disciplinary action. See the CIEE Student Academic Manual for further information on academic integrity.

N.B. Course schedule and co-curriculars are subject to change. The final duration and distribution of content and assignments will be determined and presented to students at the onset of the course.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class: Introduction

This session offers an outline of the course, its methods, and its modes of assessment. We will also begin to consider – from the perspective of the regular moviegoer – the topic examined fully in session two: why we think of Hollywood as American. Helping us to complement this crucial consumer standpoint with a more theoretically informed one will be the film *The Artist* (2011), which will provide a principal reference point in the following session when we think more systematically about how members of audiovisual cultures tend to assign national status to cultural products like films.

Screening: *The Artist* (2011)

Week 2

Class: Part 1: Hollywood ≠ Europe (?)

Sessions 2, 3, and 4 challenge the notion that Hollywood is a solely American institution, and is thus distinct from Europe.

Hollywood ≠ Europe (? I: The Logics of Nation & Culture – or why Hollywood is seen as an American Institution

This session starts to lay a foundation for the remainder of the course, by considering how people have assigned national status to cultural artifacts like films. In so doing, students will begin to think about the types of logic that have led Hollywood – somewhat reductively – to be considered a supremely American institution, and thus as separate from Europe.

Required readings:

Higson 1989, 36–46.

Hjort 2000, 95–109.

Home Screening: The most American film you can imagine (be prepared to justify your choice)

Screening: *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) [First half of the film shown in the second part of the class]

Week 3

Class: Hollywood ≠ Europe (?) II:

Why Hollywood is more than an American Institution – Production and Content

Because the study of Hollywood and Europe involves consideration of cross-border flows, it requires an appreciation of the concept of transnational cinema – a multifaceted notion that relates to who makes movies, what those movies are about, who they address, where they circulate, who actually watches them, and how they are watched. Accordingly, this session and the next session probe how transatlantic border-crossings bring into question the very Americanness of Hollywood, suggesting instead this institution might be better approached as international. This session will place an accent on this issue in terms of production and content.

Required readings:

Higson 2000, 58–69.

Home Screening: *Cloud Atlas* (2012)

In-Class Screening: *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) [Second half of the Film in the first part of the class]

Week 4

Class: Hollywood ≠ Europe (?) III:

Why Hollywood is more than an American Institution - Distribution and Reception

Because the transatlantic dimensions of most of Hollywood films – and thus of Hollywood itself – are so multifaceted and sometimes obscured, our examination of this topic is spread across two sessions. Speaking broadly, this session will shift focus from considerations of production and content toward issues of dissemination and circulation. In this sense, we will think about how Hollywood films are intended to speak to Europeans, the extent to which they are part of European film culture, and the memories and perceptions European citizens hold about Hollywood.

Required Reading:

Meers 2004, 158–174.

Homework:

Conduct a short interview with a European citizen on his or her memories and perceptions of Hollywood, bringing a transcript of the interview to the next session.

Home Screening: *Mamma Mia!* (2008)

In-Class Screening: N/A

Week 5

Class: Part 2: Hollywood Cinema vs. European Cinema

Sessions 5 and 6 challenge the notion that Hollywood's output and that associated with European nations is profoundly different; a notion that rests on the invocation on the one hand of mindless entertainment, and on the other enlightening art.

Hollywood vs. European Cinema I: Hollywood's "European" Cinema

Thus, where Hollywood tends to be characterized as a money-grabbing purveyor of formulaic, stupefying trash, European cinema is usually elevated as an authentic, autonomous, alternative to Hollywood: in short as art. This session, challenges this problematic distinction by considering the institutionalization within Hollywood of Art(y) cinema. By this is meant output heavily indebted to celebrated European productions that came to be seen in American film culture as "European Art Cinema".

Required readings:

Bordwell 2002, 94–102.

King 2011, 131–142.

Home Screening: *In Bruges* (2008)

In-Class Screening: *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014)

Paper 1 due

Week 6

Class: Hollywood vs. European Cinema II: Europe's "Hollywood Cinema"

Midterm Exam Period

This session tackles the Hollywood vs. European cinema problem from a different angle than taken in the previous session. It considers those European-based companies that have specialized in the production of commercially viable transatlantic fare that is intended as much for Hollywood distributors and US theaters as for European eyes. The session focuses on two European firms that are behind some of the most talismanic Hollywood fare of the last twenty years: the UK-based Working Title Films and France's EuropaCorp.

Required readings:

Hochsherf and Ligott 2010, 8–20.

Vanderschelden, 2008, 91–104.

Home Screening: *Taken* (2008)

Screening: *Paul* (2011)

Week 7

Class: Part 3: Anti-Communist Hollywood (?)

In sessions 7 and 8, students challenge a structuring assumption of twentieth-century Hollywood's European relations: that Hollywood was a staunchly anti-Communist institution. This notion will be

examined critically, with reference to the two period in which Hollywood's relations to Eastern Europe were most pronounced: the 1940s and 1950s, and the 1980s.

Anti-Communist Hollywood (?) I: Tinsel Town and the Eastern Bloc.

In this session, students will consider the ways Hollywood demonized and reached out to Eastern Europe during the tumultuous period of the late 1930s to the early 1950s. In so doing, they will develop a more nuanced picture of Hollywood's relationships to this part of the world, than the relevant albeit limiting notion that Hollywood went to the ends of the earth to promote itself as anti-communist.

Required readings:

Doherty 1988, 15–27.

Blahova 2010, 345–357.

Home Screening: *Mission to Moscow* (1943)

In-Class Screening: *Ninotchka* (1939)

Midterm presentations

Week 8

Class: Anti-Communist Hollywood (?) II: New Cold War Cinema

Hollywood's engagement with important geopolitical issues is perhaps nowhere more apparent in the last thirty years than in a high-profile strand of mid-to-late 1980s output known as New Cold War Cinema. This production trend is typically seen as jingoistic and hawkish on the grounds that it supposedly showcased American patriotism and military might in the face of dangerous, in-human enemy from the Eastern Bloc. In this session, we will consider whether these films were really quite as reactionary as they are suggested to have been or whether some of them used depictions of Eastern Europe (ans) to deliver quite forceful critiques of American political, economic, and social systems, and the very act of politicizing entertainment.

Required Reading:

Prince 1992, 49-80.

Home Screening: *Red Dawn* (1984)

In-Class Screening: *Rocky IV* (1985)

Week 9

Class: Part 4 Americanization (?): Concession-Making

Histories of Hollywood's European relations are often explained with resource to charges of Americanization, cultural imperialism, and globalization. However, the notion of imposing "American" values for cultural and economic reasons, only goes so far in accounting for the dynamics of this relationship. Accordingly, Sessions 9 and 10 start to develop our understandings of this topic, in this case by shifting attention towards the concessions Hollywood has made to the Europeans' whose voluntary consumption it has needed to survive.

Concession-Making I: Hollywood's Postwar Tour of Europe

At specific historical junctures, Hollywood has tailored the content of many of its movies to make them specifically marketable and appealing to certain the European audiences upon whom it has relied to remain solvent. Although one might be forgiven for thinking that Hollywood's aggressive courting of major European markets is a new thing – as a product of a recent acceleration in globalizing tendencies – nothing could be further from the truth. This session considers a spate of postwar pictures that courted much-needed European audiences with a timely combination of transatlantic romance and cultural (tact and) diplomacy.

Required reading:

Lev 1993, 17-29.

Kramer 2000, 195–206.

Home Screening: *Roman Holiday* (1953)

In-Class Screening: *It Started in Naples* (1960)

Week 10

Class: Concession-Making II: Recent Euro-Friendly Blockbusters

The strategies with which Hollywood courted European audiences in the postwar years also underwrite the production of almost all of the flagship products of today's Conglomerate Hollywood: the cross-media, international, mass-audience phenomenon known simply as the blockbuster. In this session, students will consider the extraordinary lengths to which Hollywood has been going to make its high-end animated, fantasy-adventure, and superhero films as Euro-friendly as possible during a period of popular Anti-Americanization on the continent. This strategy has seen these films first target key western European markets and appeared poised once again to reach out to Russia.

Required Readings:

Maltby 2003, 212–217.

Kramer 2011, 171–184.

Home Screening: *Muppets Most Wanted* (2014)

Screening: *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted* (2012)

Paper 2 due

Week 11

Class: Americanization (?) 2: US Introspection

In sessions 11 and 12, students will reconsider Hollywood's use of European subject matter from a different perspective. In these sessions, the tourist film will be used to consider the degree to which Hollywood has used this material less for exportation than primarily to address American audiences about their lives, nation, and views.

US Introspection I: Women's Tourist Films

Hollywood has often commodified the idea of Europe as a fantasy space capable of enriching or liberating Americans. This tendency is centralized in the Tourist Film, and especially in a production trend that unfolded in the second half of the 1990s and continued albeit with some important revisions in the twenty first century. This session will look closely at this type of film, and consider whether its images of a pastoral Europe were always used to offer American women fantasies of community, rootedness, and romance, or whether this format was also used to think critically about these very ideas and Hollywood's role in disseminating them.

Required Readings:

Negra, 2002, 82–97.

Home Screening: *Under the Tuscan Sun* (2003)

Screening: *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008)

Week 12

Class: Introspection II: Youth-Oriented Tourist Films

As a means of using Europe to provoke introspection among Americans, the traditional woman-oriented tourist films existed alongside variants recalibrated for different audiences or radically reworked. In this session, we approach two such films – a unique fairy horror movie and an example of a more prolific sub-genre of the 2000s. Here we consider how these European-centered films invite young people to reflect on some of the most pressing issues of American society of the day.

Required Readings:

Middleton: 1-24.

Home Screening: *Hostel* (2005) – you can skip the gory bits if you like.

Week 13

Class: Final Exam Week

Final Paper Consultations

Final Presentations due

This time is set aside for one-on-one meetings with students who would like to discuss the final papers.

Course Materials

Readings

Required Readings (see above for pages of chapters of single-authored books):

Behlil, Meliz. *Hollywood is Everywhere: Global Directors in the Blockbuster Era*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016. Print.

Bordwell, David. "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice." *The European Cinema Reader*. Ed. Catherine Fowler. London: Routledge, 2002: 94–102. Print.

Doherty, Thomas. "Hollywood Agit-prop: The Anti-Communist Cycle, 1948–1954", *Journal of Film and Video* 40.4 (1988):15–27. Print.

Higson, Andrew. "The Concept of National Cinema." *Screen* 30. 1 (1989): 36–46. Print.

Hochsherf, Tobias, and James Ligott. "Working Title Films: From Mid-Atlantic to the Heart of Europe." *Film International* 8. 6 (2010): 8–20. Print.

Kramer, Peter. "'Faith in Relations Between People': Audrey Hepburn, Roman Holiday and European Integration.", in *100 Years of European Cinema: Entertainment or Ideology?* Eds. Diana Holmes and Alison Smith. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000: 195–206. Print.

---. "Hollywood and its Global Audiences: A Comparative Study of the Biggest Box Office Hits in the United States and Outside the United States since the 1970s." *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*. Eds. Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011: 171–184. Print.

Maltby, Richard. *Hollywood Cinema: Second edition*. London: Blackwell, 2003. Print.

Meers, Philippe. "'It's the Language of Film!' Young Film Audiences on Hollywood and Europe." *Hollywood Abroad: Audiences and Cultural Exchange*. Eds. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby. London: BFI, 2004: 158–174. Print.

Negra, Diane, "Romance and/As Tourism: Heritage Whiteness and the (Inter)National Imaginary in the New Woman's Film." *Keyframes: Popular Cinema and Cultural Studies*. Eds. Matthew Tinckom and Amy Villarejo. London: Routledge, 2002: 82–97. Print.

Prince, Stephen. *Visions of Empire: Political Imagery in Contemporary American Film*. New York: Praeger, 1992. Print.

Vanderschelden, Isabelle. "Luc Besson's Ambition: EuropaCorp as a European Major for the 21st Century." *Studies in European Cinema* 5.2 (2008): 91–104. Print.