

Some guiding questions

- ⌘ What were early film technologies, and how did film become a mass medium?
- ⌘ How did the Hollywood Studio System arise?
- ⌘ What has been the dominant mode of storytelling through film?
- ⌘ What has been the role of the U.S. movie industry in the global village?

EARLY TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

- ⌘ Celluloid film stock
 - ☑ Goodwin, 1889, who sold patents to Eastman
- ⌘ Kinetograph and kinetoscope
 - ☑ Dickson and Edison, 1890s
- ⌘ Projection system
 - ☑ Lumiere Brothers, 1895
- ⌘ Vitascope
 - ☑ Edison, 1896
- ⌘ Nickelodeons boomed 1907-1910

Early film styles

- ⌘ Lumiere Brothers in Paris shot documentary scenes of everyday life.
- ⌘ French magician Georges Melies: fairy tales and science fiction stories
- ⌘ American cameraman Edwin S. Porter created early narrative structures.

Three basic economic divisions of the movie industry

- ⌘ PRODUCTION: camera and projector technology, scripting, filming
- ⌘ DISTRIBUTION: marketing and delivering films into theaters
- ⌘ EXHIBITION: the theater industry that delivers movies to the public

THE MOTION PICTURE PATENTS COMPANY (MPPC)

- ⌘ Thomas Edison formed MPPC (the "Trust") in 1908 as a *Patents Pool*.
- ⌘ Cooperative of leading U.S. and French film companies
- ⌘ Dominated the film industry from 1908-1915

How the MPPC controlled the motion picture industry:

- ⌘ Controlled (but did not *own*) means of production, distribution, and exhibition.
- ⌘ The MPPC was a monopoly (also called a *trust*), and excluded other film studios from the available technology.

WHY did the MPPC fail?

- ⌘ Could not meet product demand
- ⌘ Independent producers bought film stock from overseas.
- ⌘ Independent producers attracted viewers with longer feature films and recognizable stars.
- ⌘ Independent distributors set up a non-MPPC distribution network.
- ⌘ 1912 Antitrust case in Supreme Court (Fox)

End of the MPPC

In 1915, by Supreme Court order, the MPPC disbanded.

However, by that time, it had already fallen apart due to challenges of "independents."

Ironically, the very same people who would institute a far more effective and long-lived oligopoly to control the industry --the *Hollywood Studio System*

THE RISE OF THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIO SYSTEM (1925-1948)

From Monopoly (the MPCC) to Oligopoly (the Studio System)

The "Big Five" and the "Little Three"

⌘ The "Big Five" or the Majors:

- ☑ Warner Brothers
- ☑ Paramount
- ☑ 20th Century Fox
- ☑ Loew's (MGM)
- ☑ RKO (owned by RCA)

⌘ The "Little Three" or the Minors:

- ☑ United Artists
- ☑ Columbia
- ☑ Universal

How did Hollywood studios control all levels of industry?

VERTICAL INTEGRATION of:

- **Production**
- **Distribution**
- **Exhibition**

CONTROL OVER PRODUCTION

- ⌘ Established long-term contracts with most popular actors
- ⌘ Directors, editors, writers, and other film personnel were also under contract
- ⌘ Produced 60 percent of all U.S. feature films and 75 percent of "A" films (blockbusters).
- ⌘ Each of these studios produced about fifty movies a year.

CONTROL OVER DISTRIBUTION

- ⌘ Eight studios collected 95 percent of all national film rental fees.
- ⌘ Trade practices effectively closed the market to films made outside the studio system.
- ⌘ Block booking
- ⌘ Marketing U.S. films in Europe

CONTROL OVER EXHIBITION

- ⌘ Studio ownership of theaters created a need for studios to produce films for them.
- ⌘ Much money was invested in the building of theaters themselves, especially movie palaces.

How did the studios control exhibition?

- ⌘ Studio-owned theaters (first-run): the studios owned only 15 percent of U.S. theaters, but 90 percent of nation's box office receipts
- ⌘ Movie palaces
- ⌘ Mid-city theatres

CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD CINEMA: The Hollywood Narrative Style

Comprises three distinctive ingredients:

- ⌘ Narrative
- ⌘ Genre
- ⌘ Author (Director)

Hollywood Narrative

- ⌘ Story and discourse (plot structure)
- ⌘ Continuity editing: a visual language
- ⌘ Focus on psychological motives and conflicts of individual characters
- ⌘ Classical themes of good vs. evil

GENRES (Categories of Films)

- ⌘ GENRE = category in which conventions regarding similar characters, scenes, structures and themes reoccur.
- ⌘ Genres benefit industry by *product standardization* and *product differentiation*.
- ⌘ What are some Hollywood genres?

Hollywood Directors

⌘ Although a cooperative effort, commercial films carry director's stylistic signature:

- ☒ Themes or topics
- ☒ Cinematic style or techniques
- ☒ Particular genres

⌘ *Barriers of race and gender still exist for directors.*

ALTERNATIVES to HOLLYWOOD FILMS

- ⌘ Foreign films
- ⌘ Documentary (nonfiction) films
- ⌘ Independent film industry

WHAT WENT WRONG in HOLLYWOOD?

⌘ ***No one reason : four large factors came together in late 1940s***

- ☒ The Red Scare (The Hollywood Ten)
- ☒ The Paramount Decision of 1948
- ☒ Postwar Changes in Society
- ☒ The Rise of Television

THE RED SCARE AND HUAC HEARINGS

- ⌘ Cold War paranoia about Communist messages in mass entertainment
- ⌘ Congress formed **House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC)**
- ⌘ 1947 HUAC hearings were "witch hunts" to remove so-called subversives from the industry (led by Senator Joseph McCarthy).

EFFECT OF HUAC HEARINGS

- ⌘ Blacklisting of talented members of Hollywood community
- ⌘ Tarnished the Hollywood "Dream Machine" image
- ⌘ Created a climate of fear and dampened creativity within the industry
- ⌘ Wounds continue even today (e.g. 1999 Elia Kazan Oscar controversy)

THE PARAMOUNT DECISION

- ⌘ In 1948, Supreme Court ruled studio violation of Sherman Anti-trust Act, restricting fair trade.
- ⌘ Court ordered the Big Five studios to divest their theater chains.
- ⌘ EFFECTS: studios cut their film production by half; opened the way for independent producers.*

POSTWAR CHANGES in SOCIETY

- ⌘ Returning soldiers
- ⌘ Baby boom
- ⌘ Suburbanization and new lifestyle
- ⌘ Nuclear families with young children
- ⌘ Changing patterns of consumption
- ⌘ Less disposable income
- ⌘ Decreased attendance at downtown movie palaces

THE RISE OF TELEVISION

- ⌘ Decline in motion picture attendance
- ⌘ Film industry's technological gimmicks to emphasize the spectacle of the big screen
- ⌘ Film industry cooperation with TV
- ⌘ Movies on TV became a continuous competitor with theatre for film customers

HOLLYWOOD TODAY

- ⌘ Marriage of TV and movies: watching movies now takes place on the home VCR and DVD player as well as at the box office.
- ⌘ New Hollywood studios produce TV shows as well as feature films.
- ⌘ Most new movies flop at the box office, but losses are recouped through video and DVD market.

Sources of studio income today

- ⌘ Box office revenues
- ⌘ Video/DVD sales and rentals
- ⌘ Cable and television outlets
- ⌘ Distribution of films globally
- ⌘ Studio distribution of independent films
- ⌘ Product placement in movies

The Modern Movie Oligopoly

- ⌘ Warner Brothers
- ⌘ Paramount
- ⌘ Twentieth Century Fox
- ⌘ Universal
- ⌘ Columbia
- ⌘ Walt Disney

Concept of SYNERGY

- ⌘ *Synergy = the promotion and sale of a media product through the various subsidiaries of a media conglomerate.*
- ⌘ Movies, books, soundtrack CDs, magazine reviews, toy action figures, T-shirts, posters, web sites, newspapers, TV interviews, cartoons, etc.*