



Masarykova Univerzita Brno, Department of English and American Studies, Spring Semester 2018

Intensive course
Hollywood High School: A History of American Teen Films

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SYNOPSIS

In this seminar, we will retrace the cultural history of 'the teenager' in the USA using the perspective suggested by so-called teen films and television shows. While there have always been young people, *the teenager* as a term and as an idea is a 20th century invention. Especially in the USA, the cinematic teenager has been a projection screen for hopes and fears, inspiring 'youth problem films' about violent, drugged-out and over-sexed juvenile delinquents, as well as narratives about teens who see through the lies of their morally corrupt teachers and parents. American teen films have since their inception after the 2nd World War depicted and prescribed ideal types and roles, set up models and patterns, and echoed, affirmed or subverted the cultural climate of their times.

We will watch and analyze examples and protagonists from different eras: from the rebellious youngsters in post-war America like James Dean and Marlon Brando to the teen movie boom in the 1980s (with its various forms between the John Hughes comedies and dramas and the infamous horror classics). From the 1990s with the first wave of African-American teen films and postmodern/revisionist comedies, to recent productions such as *Twilight*, *High School Musical*, *The DUFF*, or *Dope*.

We will approach these films as artifacts that help us retrace the broader cultural history of the USA and watch them against the backdrop of historical, political, and societal shifts; and we will read different theoretical texts to decipher and deal with (pop)cultural phenomena and apply them to the films we'll be watching, from film theory to psychoanalysis to gender studies (e.g. Laura Mulvey, Carol Clover, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser).

TIME & PLACE

MON 26.3.	9:00 - 12:00	Department Conference Room (G316, Gorkého 7, 3rd Floor)
	13:00 - 15:00	
TUE 27.3.	9:00 - 12:00	
	13:00 - 15:00	
WED 28.3.	9:00 - 12:00	
	14:00 - 16:00	
THU 29.3.	9:00 - 12:00	
	13:00 - 15:00	



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REQUIRED TEXTS

All texts are available in ELF course AJ17075/AJ27081: HOLLYWOOD HIGH SCHOOL: A HISTORY OF AMERICAN TEEN FILMS.

Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Toward an Investigation)" (1971)

Judith Butler: excerpts (pages 1-36, 175-203) from *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (1990)

Hélène Cixous: *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975)

Carol Clover: "Her Body, Himself" (1987)

Barbara Creed: excerpt from *The Monstrous-Feminine* (1993)

Michel Foucault, the "Panopticism" chapter from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975)

Phoebe Gloeckner: excerpt from *The Diary of a Teenage Girl: An Account in Words and Pictures* (2002)

Roz Kaveney: excerpt from *Teen Dreams* (2006)

Laura Mulvey: *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975)

Björn Sonnenberg-Schrank: excerpts from *TeenAgency: Watching Teen Films With Bruno Latour* (2017)

Required Films & Suggested Viewing

→ see below



Block 1: Mon 26.3.

- INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION: ... and God made The Adolescent. The Pre-History of "The Teenager"

FROM THE 1940S TO THE 1950S

- US Culture getting to know the Teenager: "Clean Teens" vs "Juvenile Delinquents," Teensploitation, the *Andy Hardy* films, cultural hopes and fears

FROM THE 1950S TO THE 1960S

- discussion of *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955): masculinity, blocked sexuality, and the reproduction of ideology in postwar suburbia and of *Blackboard Jungle* (Richard Brooks, 1955) as urban "youth problem film"
 - **Reading: Louis Althusser**, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes Toward an Investigation)" (1971)
 - [suggested further viewing](#): *The Wild One* (László Benedek, 1953)
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BLOCK 2: TUE 27.3.

FROM THE 1970S TO THE 1980S: TEEN HORROR, TEENAGE SEXUALITY

- *Carrie* (Brian De Palma, 1976); teenage bodies: the sexualization of the teenager
- History: the "porn chic" and David Hamilton's imagery
- **optional Reading: Barbara Creed**: excerpt from "The Monstrous-Feminine" (1993)
- *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978); suburban teens as horror protagonists, the "slasher formula"
- From Jacques Lacan's *mirror stage* to Laura Mulvey's *male gaze* to Carol Clover's *final girl*.
- **Reading: Laura Mulvey**: Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975);
Carol Clover: "Her Body, Himself" (1987)
- [suggested further viewing](#): *American Graffiti* (George Lucas, 1973) and *Grease* (1978, Randal Kleiser) as examples for early strategies of postmodernism & nostalgia



THE 1980S: JOHN HUGHES AND THE REINVENTION OF THE TEEN FILM

- *The Breakfast Club* (John Hughes, 1985), *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (John Hughes, 1986)
 - Inventing and Subverting Archetypes / Stereotypes: Teen Typologies & Taxonomies;
Reading: Excerpt from **Roz Kaveney**: *Teen Dreams* (2006)
 - **suggested further viewing:** *Pretty In Pink* (John Hughes, 1986), *Some Kind Of Wonderful* (Howard Deutch, 1987)
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BLOCK 3: WED 28.3.

FROM THE 1980S TO THE 1990S

- *Boyz N The Hood* (John Singleton, 1991) as a black perspective on cinematic adolescence

THE MAKEOVER: LITERALIZING THE METAPHOR & TRANSFORMING TEENAGERS

- *She's All That* (Robert Iscove, 1999), *She's The Man* (Andy Fickman, 2006)
 - **Reading:** the "Panopticism" chapter from **Michel Foucault**: *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975);
 - excerpts (pages 1-36, 175-203) from **Judith Butler**: *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (1990)
 - **suggested further viewing:** *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995), *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004)

 - **suggested further viewing** for an overview of THE 1990S TO THE 2000S: *Scream* (Wes Craven, 1996), *Not Another Teen Film* (Joel Gallen, 2001): pastiche, postmodernism and meta-film: intertextuality and the rewriting of the canon
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BLOCK 4: FRI 29.3.

THE 2000s - NOW

- *The DUFF* (Ari Sandel, 2015): making over the makeover
- **Reading: Björn Sonnenberg-Schrank:** 'The DUFF' chapter from *TeenAgency: Watching Teen Films With Bruno Latour* (2017)
- *Dope* (Rick Famuyiwa, 2015): African-American coming of age in a postracial USA
- **suggested further viewing:** *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* (Alfonso Gomez-Rejon, 2015) as a 'serious teen film,' *Napoleon Dynamite* (Jared Hess, 2004) as a *rural* teen film, *Winter's Bone* (Debra Granik, 2010) as a 'teen film for adults,' *Boys Don't Cry* (Kimberly Peirce, 1999) as negotiation of LGBT identities in a coming of age story, the *Twilight Saga* (2008-2012) as a teen film against the backdrop of the neoconservative backlash of the Bush era and its strategies of addressing and policing sexuality, *High School Musical* (Kenny Ortega, 2006) as an example for the generic hybridity of the (postmodern) teen film

FEMALE SEXUALITY & ÉCRITURE FEMININE

- *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* (Marielle Heller, 2015)
- **Reading:** excerpt from **Hélène Cixous:** *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975)
- excerpt from **Phoebe Gloeckner** *The Diary of a Teenage Girl: An Account in Words and Pictures* (2002)

FINAL DISCUSSION

- summary: the American teen film as cultural barometer *and* as a heterogeneous and complex film genre
- representation vs reference: the relation of actual teen realities to teen films
- coming-of-age narratives in other media
- teen film as an arena to test out teen identities, sexualities, politics
- anything else you'd like to talk about.