The Hollywood Novel and the Hollywood Movie
FILM S180 (CRN: 30087)
Instructor: Swagato Chakravorty (swagato.chakravorty@yale.edu / Zoom office hrs. by appt.)
Dates: Session A, June 7 – July 9
Meeting Times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 6:00 – 9:00PM
Distributional Requirements: Humanities

Overview:
This course surveys the “Hollywood novel” and the “Hollywood movie,” exploring how literary
and visual texts turn their gaze back onto Hollywood itself—the “dream factory” of the United
States. We begin with the emergence of American cinema and conclude with some recent (c.
2000—) films about Hollywood which, in the post-studio era, often approach the nostalgic (The
Artist, 2011); the horrific (The Neon Demon, 2016), or the satirical (Maps to the Stars, 2014).
Books range from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Last Tycoon, Horace McCoy’s They Shoot Horses,
Don’t They?, Dorothy Hughes’ In a Lonely Place, and Bruce Wagner’s I’m Losing You.
Readings are excerpts. All films are streamed; all texts are provided in digital copy (PDF, etc.). 1

Course expectations:
1. Brief responses (2 pages doublespaced) ahead of each class meeting. These responses
should identify, with examples, key issues in the text and the film(s) that stood out to
you, with some attention to how they may speak to each other. (20%)
2. Midterm essay (4-5pages doublespaced) OR presentation: analysis of a single text or
film, dealing with any topic covered to that point. (30%)
3. Final paper (8-10 pages doublespaced) OR presentation: any aspect of Hollywood self-
reflexivity as developed through screenings, texts, and course discussion. (30%)
4. Participation/class discussion. (20%)

Academic integrity policy:
Please abide by all Yale College regulations on academic integrity and plagiarism, including the
use of original work, appropriately citing sources, and restriction of collaboration unless given
the permission of the instructor. Yale defines academic dishonesty as including: “…cheating on a
test or an examination, plagiarism, improper collaborating on assignments, or the submission of
the same essay to two instructors without the explicit consent of both.” Details at:
http://catalog.yale.edu/undergraduate-regulations/regulations/academic-dishonesty/

Syllabus:
June 7: Introduction / Early cinema, the star, the spectator
Short Films: Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show (Porter, 1902)
The Story the Biograph Told (Biograph, 1903)
Mabel’s Dramatic Career (Sennett, 1913)
His New Job (Chaplin, 1915)
June 9: Silent-era stardom and fandom
Film: souls for Sale (Hughes, 1923)
Texts: Harry Leon Wilson, Merton of the Movies (1922)

June 14: The Great Depression / The American Dream
Text: Horace McCoy, They Shoot Horses, Don’t They? (1935)

June 16: The Studio
Film: Stand-In (Garnett, 1937)
Text: Budd Schulberg, What Makes Sammy Run? (1941)

June 9: The Writer
Film: Sunset Boulevard (Wilder, 1950)
Texts: F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Last Tycoon; “Pat Hobby and Orson Welles”

June 21: Postwar Hollywood
Film: In a Lonely Place (Ray, 1950)
Text: Dorothy Hughes, In a Lonely Place (1947)

June 23: The Stars Fade
Films: The Star (1952) / The Artist (Hazanavicius, 2011)
Text: Rick Altman, Film/Genre (excerpts)

June 28: Hollywood and Excess
Films: Maps to the Stars (Cronenberg, 2014) / The Neon Demon (Reynolds, 2016)
Text: Bruce Wagner, I’m Losing You (1996)

June 30: Hollywood Nostalgia
Films: Hail, Caesar! (Coens, 2016) / Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood (Tarantino, 2019) / Hollywood (Ryan Murphy TV show, Netflix, 2020)

July 5: Hollywood in the Streaming Era