



National Cinemas, Global Meanings

A panel on 'National Cinemas, Global Meanings'

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Type	Pre-Constituted Panel
When	Sep 19, 2010 from 04:45 PM to 04:45 PM
Venue	
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Panel Title: National Cinemas, Global Meanings

Panel Organizer: Steven Alan Carr, IPFW Associate Professor of Communication, carr@ipfw.edu

Panelists: Walter Metz, Southern Illinois U - Carbondale Professor and Chair of Cinema and Photography, wmetz@siu.edu; Nancy E. Virtue, IPFW Associate Professor of French, virtue@ipfw.edu; and Steven Alan Carr (Panel Chair)

Technical Accommodations: Due to the panel's focus on film and film history, panelists will require audio-visual equipment including a video projector with VGA connector and externally powered audio speakers to show specific examples from films. Panelists will coordinate in advance and among themselves having at least one (1) personal laptop available to play clips and/or DVDs.

Description: This panel engages the "historical conjuncture" as addressed in the Call for Proposals through consideration of "crises and uncertainties" between the paradigm of a "national cinema" on the one hand, and the possibilities and actuality of rapidly emergent globalized and trans-border meaning-making on the other. The paradigm of national cinemas particularly emphasizes the country of origin at the production stage of the filmmaking process. However, more recent scholarship has considered the importance of audience reception in this process. With rapid advancement of new communication technologies at increasing economies of scale, the possibilities of new, divergent and contradictory forms of globalized meaning-making also can occur at a rapidly accelerating rate.

This panel addresses the crisis and uncertainty of National Cinemas and Global Meanings through a series of case studies, presented in reverse chronological order. Walter Metz will present work he is conducting on the Pixar animated film and globalization. Nancy Virtue will present her research on the art-house film hit *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (Landau, 1964) and the possibilities of audiences performing allegorical readings to better understand the film's relevance to the French-Algerian War. Finally, Steven Alan Carr will address the role of the foreign art-house film in shaping and framing American audiences' understanding of Nazi anti-Semitism during and immediately after World War II.

In presenting these case studies as three (3) instances of a destabilizing tension between the conceptual frameworks of national cinema on the one hand, and the globalization of meaning formation and production on the other; the panel neither assumes an evolutionary chronological model, nor a binary opposition pitting these two productive forces against one another. Possibilities for globalized meaning-making already were occurring with the exhibition of Lumière films in New York in 1896; and the category of national cinemas still provides a useful framework for helping audiences to make sense of their interpretive activities, such as selecting which DVDs to rent from Netflix.

While the category of national cinemas arguably constitutes a dominant interpretive mode for both scholarly and popular attention, this panel explores new possibilities for understanding large-scale social and cultural processes of film and audience through both the conceptual frameworks of "national cinemas" and "globalized meaning." Rather than posit an evolutionary or oppositional model that considers an arc or tension existing between national cinemas and globalization, this panel considers through specific case studies how to better illuminate the complex and entangled ways in which national identity can coexist with globalized media and meaning-making across a variety of boundaries, whether those boundaries exist politically, geographically, or historiographically.

Abstracts

“A Great Artist Can Come From Anywhere”: Globalization in Disney/Pixar Cinema

Walter Metz

The images of globalization that subtend *Ratatouille* offer a case study for the historically changing meanings of nationalism in the American animated cartoon. In this paper, I will compare and contrast the centripetal aspects of national identity in classical Hollywood Disney cartoons with their centrifugal counterparts in the Pixar films. In the foundational classical Hollywood feature-length animated films—*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Pinocchio* (1940)—European civilization is cannibalized by the American movie-making machine. Hollywood's adaptational grasp drags in the Old World cultural material to recast it in an American idiom. However, in the mid-period Pixar films—*Finding Nemo* (Andrew Stanton, 2003) and *Ratatouille*, the world draws out the Americans, giving testament to a very different world half a century after the World War II-era Disney cartoons. The significance of this difference is the topic of my paper, which builds toward an understanding of these films as globalization allegories.

Jacques Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*: A National Allegory of the French-Algerian War

Nancy E. Virtue

This paper will analyze the representation of the Algerian war in Jacques Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964), a film long criticized for not having treated the subject of the war more overtly. The paper will examine the representation of the domestic sphere in *Umbrellas* through the lens of the socio-political context in wartime France. It will argue that the film treats the question of Algerian independence and self-determination allegorically as a veiled criticism of the French occupation of Algeria during a period of state censorship.

Hollywood, Foreign Films, and the Birth of the Holocaust Film

Steven Alan Carr

Hard to imagine today, Hollywood and the Holocaust film once seemed like antithetical categories. By the 1930s, conventional wisdom held that Hollywood studiously avoided treating the topic of Nazi anti-Semitism for fear of alienating popular audiences; while treatment of the Holocaust and Nazi anti-Semitism seemed to emerge from the relatively unfettered constraints of international cinemas. To be sure, Hollywood did indeed make a number addressing anti-Semitism of anti-Nazi films before U.S. entry into World War II; and art house films such as *Night and Fog* (1955) had to undergo French government censorship downplaying French collaboration during the war before the film's release. Nonetheless, most American audiences encountered explicit fictional representations of Nazi anti-Semitism and the Holocaust through foreign film exhibition. This paper considers how this encounter, mediated through the foreign art film, might have helped shape an American understanding and interpretation of the Holocaust Film for decades to come. The paper will focus on the exhibition and reception of two films in New York, *Professor Mamlock* (Lenfilm, 1938) as well as the postwar *Last Stage* (1948; Times, 1949) which was shot on location in Auschwitz and based on the personal experiences of director Wanda Jakubowska as well as some 3,500 extras who appear in the film.

Final Review

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