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## Paper Standard Abstract Form

### Open Call

#### Title and Summary

#### Title\*

Anti-Semitism and the Postwar Hollywood Social Problem Film

#### Summary\*

In HOLLYWOOD AND ANTI-SEMITISM (2001), I argued that both CROSSFIRE (RKO, 1946) and GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT (20th Century-Fox, 1947) incidentally alluded to the Holocaust and Nazi anti-Semitism by showing anti-Semitism to be a psycho-pathological disorder and "a nasty personal habit" (281), respectively, but with the same result of having a corrupting and corrosive social influence. In this paper, I attempt to situate both of these films within the context of the Hollywood social problem film. While recent discussion has emphasized the film noir elements within CROSSFIRE, less attention has considered the way in which both CROSSFIRE and GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT gain legitimacy through the conventions of the social problem genre. In this respect, both films continue an ethic of assimilationist pluralism where the few bad apples of socially aberrant behavior should not be left to contaminate the basic decency of American democracy. As Parker Tyler observed in 1950, both films show "explicit recognition of the 'race prejudice' which, with respect to Jews, is so irrelevant in the social strongholds of professionalism" (168). As both films suggest, the injustice of anti-Semitism is not that it is directed against those who appear too Jewish, but that it is directed against those Jews who already have so assimilated to an American ideal that they do not at all appear to be Jewish. To address how these films ultimately conformed to the social problem film genre in this particular depiction of anti-Semitism, I use a reception-based approach in considering primary historical documents from the Production Code Administration, film reviews, and newspaper display ads for both of these films.

#### Category\*

Cinema: Race/ethnicity/identity

**Bibliography**

**Source 1\***

Carr, Steven Alan. HOLLYWOOD AND ANTI-SEMITISM: A CULTURAL HISTORY UP TO WORLD WAR II. Cambridge Studies in the History of Mass Communication. Cambridge UK: Cambridge U P, 2001.

**Source 2**

Langdon, Jennifer E. CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE: ADRIAN SCOTT AND THE POLITICS OF AMERICANISM IN 1940S HOLLYWOOD. New York NY: Columbia U P-gutenberg-e, 2008.

**Source 3**

Maltby, Richard. "Film Noir': The Politics of the Maladjusted Text." JOURNAL OF AMERICAN STUDIES 18.1 (1984): 49-71.

**Source 4**

Tyler, Parker. "Hollywood as a Universal Church." AMERICAN QUARTERLY 2.2 (1950): 165-76.

**Source 5****Source 6**

### Author Info

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**Author Bio\***

Steven Alan Carr is Graduate Program Director and Associate Professor of Communication at Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne, a 2002-03 Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies Postdoctoral Fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, and Co-Director of the IPFW Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. His present project explores the response of the American film industry to the growing public awareness of the Holocaust.

None

**Co-Author (optional)****Co-Author Bio**

### Open Call Question

**Open call**

If your paper is selected for an open call panel, would you be willing to chair the panel?

Yes