CONFERENCE SYNOPSIS

In the twentieth century, Hollywood films have been central to American popular culture, reflecting and refracting social forces while encapsulating the ambitions, anxieties, and nightmares of American life. The most enduring ideal of America and especially of Hollywood remains the “American Dream,” the promise of opportunity and material success that shaped the cultural and collective identity of this nation of immigrants. More than any other immigrant group, Jews contributed to the making of Hollywood and to the filmic construction of the American Dream through their activities as studio heads, writers, directors, producers, and performers. “Stars of David” examines both the involvement and the portrayal of Jews in American cinema in order to shed new light on the power of the American Dream and the meaning of American ethnic and cultural pluralism.

The Jewish involvement in American cinema manifests the uneasy confrontation between ethnic identity and assimilation. Hollywood recorded this ambivalent struggle, portraying Jews who strove to maintain a sense of their own ethnic identity while simultaneously demanding to be recognized as full-fledged citizens. These images have contributed to the perpetuation of the American Dream as well as America’s understanding of itself as a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. The story of Jews in the American film industry and the representation of Jews in American films is important not only for what it reveals about one of the country’s most prominent minorities but also for what it discloses about the American Dream and ultimately about the very core of American society itself.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16
Lattie F. Coor Hall, 170
7:00-10:00 p.m.
SCREENING AND DISCUSSION OF His People (1925)
A Forgotten Masterpiece of American Jewish Cinema
Lester Friedman (Hobart and William Smith Colleges)

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17
Sessions: Memorial Union, Alumni Lounge (202)
9:00-10:00 a.m.
HOLLYWOOD MOGULS DURING THE NAZI ERA
Thomas Doherty (Brandeis University)
10:15-11:15 a.m.
JEWISH IMMIGRANT DIRECTORS AND THEIR IMPACT ON AMERICAN CINEMA
Catherine Portuges (University of Massachusetts)
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
9/11 IMAGERY THROUGH THE LENS OF HOLOCAUST IMAGERY
David Sterritt (Christian Science Monitor)
12:30-2:00 p.m.
LUNCH
Memorial Union, Cochise (228)
2:00-3:00 p.m.
WHO WAS BUDDY LOVE?: SCREEN PERFORMANCE AND JEWISH EXPERIENCE
Murray Pomerance (Ryerson University)
3:15-4:15 p.m.
ASSIMILATING STREISAND: TOO MUCH AND NOT ENOUGH
Vivian Sobchack (University of California, Los Angeles)
4:30-5:30 p.m.
ROUNDTABLE
Chair: Lester Friedman
Panelists: Conference Presenters

FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES shares the ASU ideals of access, excellence, embeddedness and relevance. Our mission is to offer innovative approaches to the study of film, television, computer games, new media and screenwriting. We embrace the best that historic methods, critical theory and creative expression have to offer our students. Our goal is to empower students to be critical consumers of media, creative industry professionals and rigorous scholars of media texts and culture. Our standards are high, as the demands of the subject we teach are both challenging and lasting. Indeed, the film and media industries are undergoing constant transformation in the face of industry reorganization, globalization, new technologies and increasingly sophisticated forms of artistry, expression and storytelling. Our curriculum aims to put our students on the forward edge of that change.

http://film.asu.edu

JEWISH STUDIES combines research, teaching and community outreach, seeking to enhance knowledge of all facets of Jewish life as developed over time. Committed to critical inquiry and scholarly entrepreneurship, Jewish Studies offers a new and creative model to integrate a Jewish perspective into all relevant disciplines and academic units, including history, religious studies, international relations, film and media studies, and law. Concomitantly, Jewish studies practices the ideal of social embeddedness by conducting outreach programs and serving as an intellectual resource to Jewish life in metropolitan Phoenix.

http://jewishstudies.clas.asu.edu

SPECIAL THANKS TO
Ken Smith for his generous support of this conference.

http://jewishstudies.clas.asu.edu/stars

A RESEARCH CONFERENCE AT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY NOVEMBER 16-17, 2008
The 1950s: Themes and Variations


deserves a seat at the table of media and social structure, literature and film, and he is appointed to the editorial board of Film Quarterly. He is also a member of the board of directors of the National Society of Film Critics and Professor Emeritus of Theater and Film at Long Island University, and until his recent retirement, served on the editorial board of The American Journal of Film Studies.

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