

HOLLYWOOD/EUROPE: A TRANSNATIONAL FILM CULTURE

Part 1: Hollywood ≠ Europe (?)

The Logics of Nation & Culture – or why Hollywood is
seen as an American Institution

Department of Film and Audiovisual Culture

Dr. Richard Nowell

Today's Agenda

12:30 – 12:50

Brief Course Overview

12:50 – 14:20

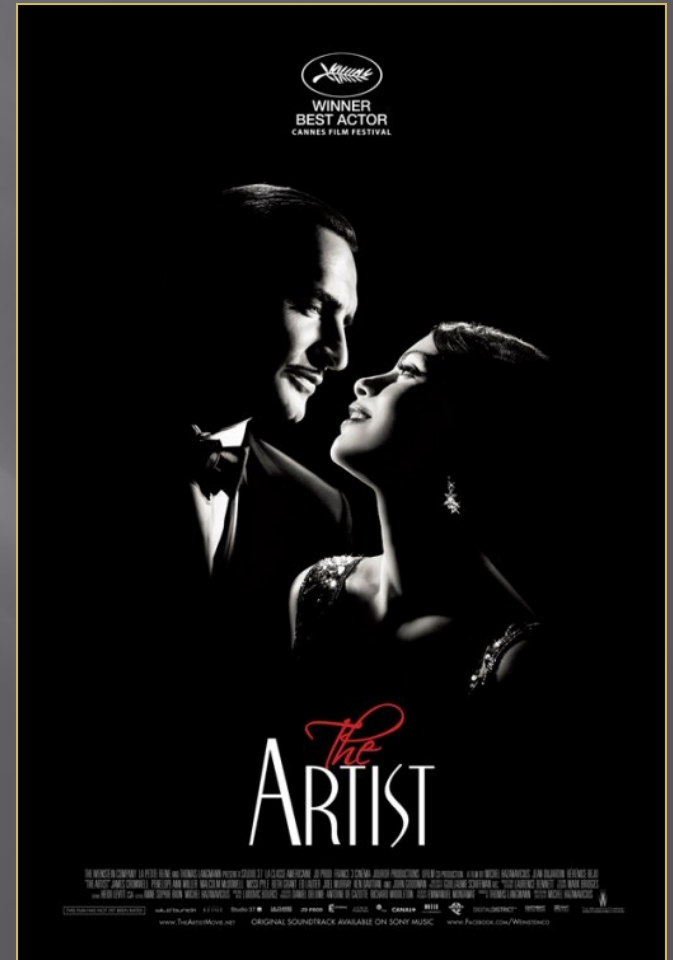
Screening: *The Artist* (2011)

14:20–14:30

Break

14:30 –15:45

The Logics of Nation and Culture



Write down 10 things that come to mind when you hear the word “Hollywood”.

Write down the first ten things that come to mind when you hear the term “European Cinema”?

Course Overview

Structure: Weekly screening and seminar

Preparation: Home Screening and Reading(s)

Organization: Screenings/readings discussed
(student participation encouraged)

Slides: Uploaded within 24 Hours

Assessment: 3 x 1300 word essays (equally weighted gradewise)

Feedback: One Page Grade Rationale Emailed Promptly

Course Topics and Goals

Focus: Relationships between Hollywood and Europe

Structure: Revise dominant understandings of this topic

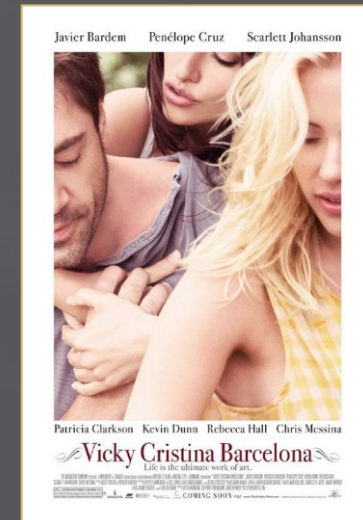
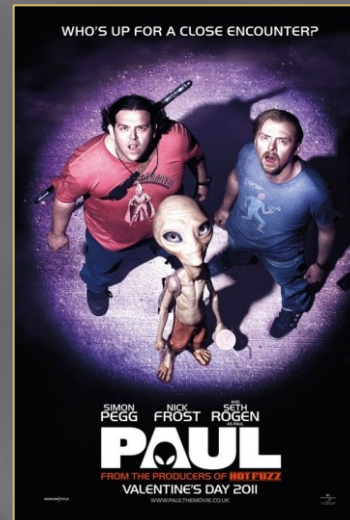
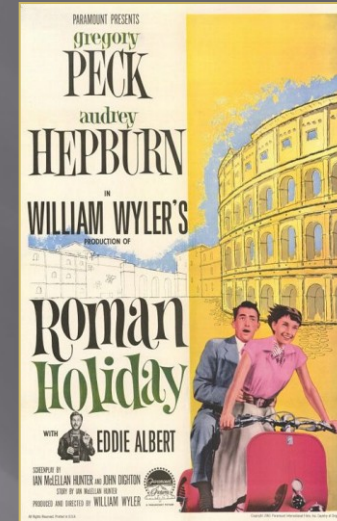
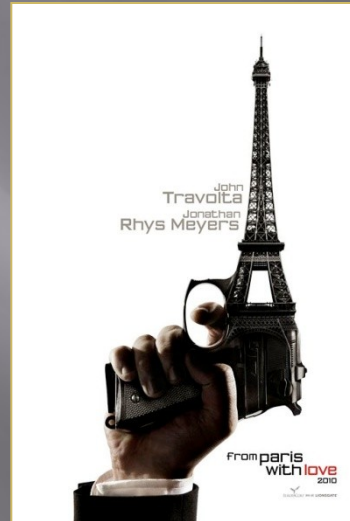
Approach: Conceptual, textual, and contextual analysis

Emphasis: Disparities between reputations and realities

Purpose I: Facilitate nuanced and informed understandings

Purpose II: Question: Distinction, Opposition, and Imperialism

Separation (Weeks 1-2), Difference (Weeks 3-4), Americanization (Weeks 5-6)

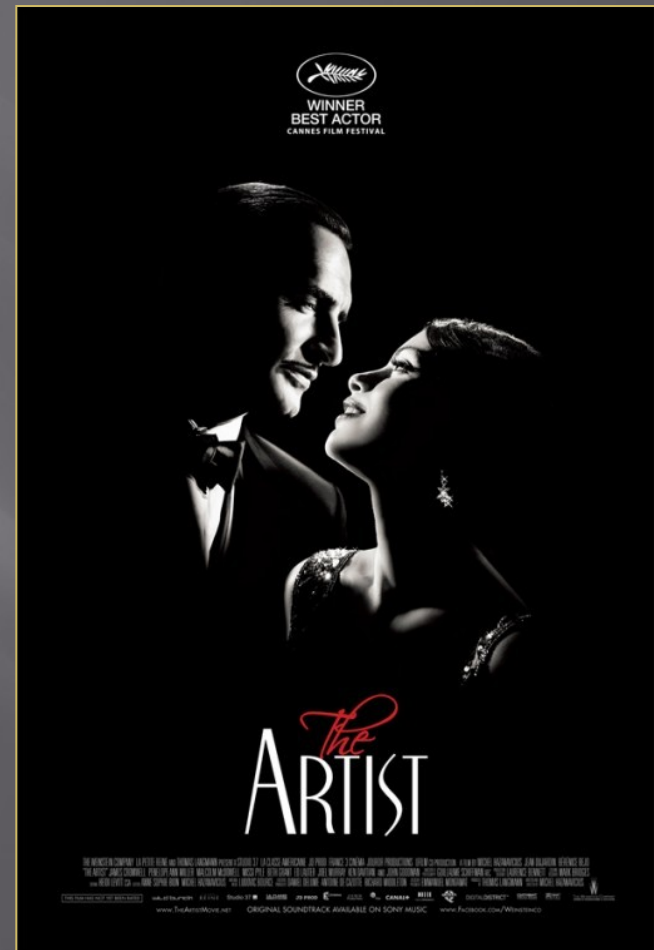


Agenda

Logics of “National
Cinema”

Hollywood and Nation

The case of *The Artist*
(2011)



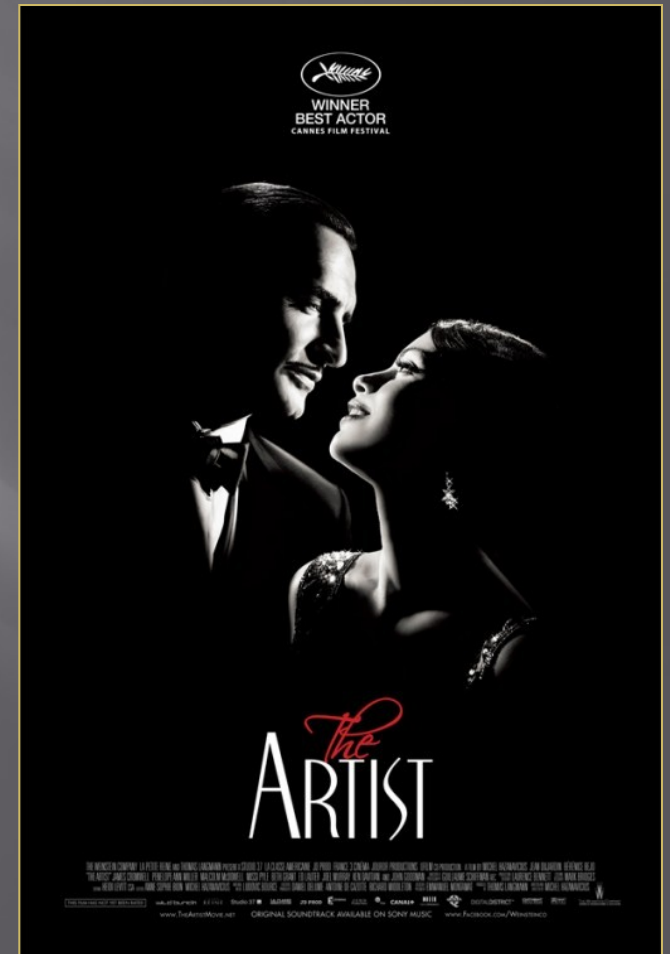
Screening Questions: *Inglourious Basterds*

Do you feel like you are watching an American movie?

If so, what exactly makes it American?

If not, why does it not feel like an American movie?

How else would you classify it?



PART 1

HOLLYWOOD ≠ EUROPE

Session 1

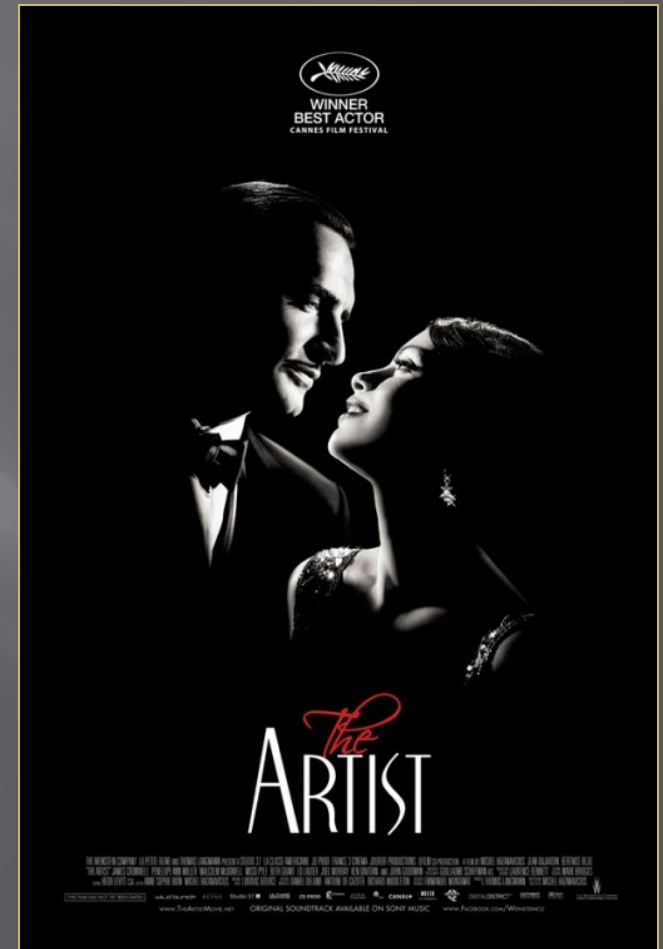
The Logics of Nation & Culture –
or why Hollywood is seen as an American
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Agenda

The Logics of “National
Cinema”

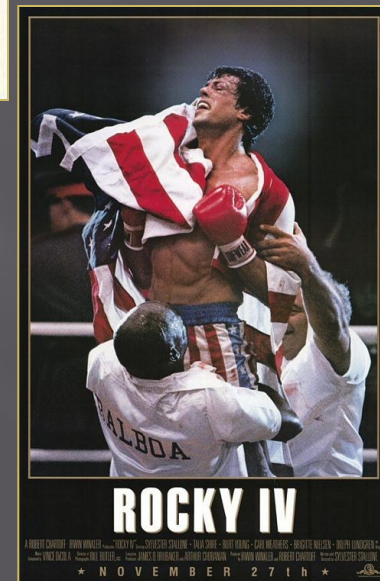
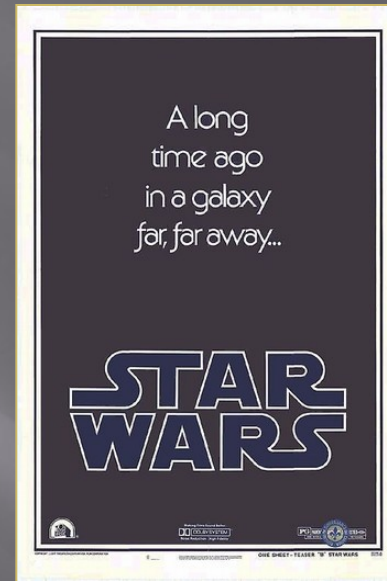
Hollywood and Nation

Case of *The Artist* (2011)



Home Screening: The Quintessential “American Movie” (?)

1. What did you feel was a quintessential American film?
2. Why did you chose this particular film?
3. Did you need to think hard about this decision, or did it simply spring to mind?
4. Do you stand by your decision?



Nation as Organizing Label

Films are often thought of in national terms – American Cinema, French Cinema, Czech Cinema etc...

Hollywood tends to be associated with the United States ...

To say a film is American is to imply that it is not something else; Hollywood is American and therefore is not Dutch, Czech etc ...

Such labels are not inevitable or neutral, or without implications

For example, charges of Americanization/cultural imperialism are presaged on the association of Hollywood and the United States

That Epitome of Received Wisdom Says ...



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Hollywood

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Coordinates: 34°06′N 118°20′W﻿ / ﻿34.1°N 118.3°W﻿ / 34.1; -118.3﻿ ()

This article is about the neighborhood in Los Angeles. For information about the American film industry, see [Cinema of the United States](#). For other uses, see [Hollywood \(disambiguation\)](#).

Hollywood /ˈhɒliwʊd/ is a district in the [central](#) region of [Los Angeles, California](#).

It is notable for its place as the home of the entertainment industry, including several of its historic studios. Its name has come to represent the [motion picture industry of the United States](#). Hollywood is also a highly ethnically diverse, densely populated, economically diverse neighborhood and retail business district.

Hollywood was a small community in 1870 and was incorporated as a municipality in 1903. It merged with the [City of Los Angeles](#) in 1910, and soon thereafter a [film industry](#) began to emerge, eventually becoming dominant in the world. From the late 1990s to 2013, new buildings, roadways and a [subway](#) public transportation system have transformed the neighborhood.

Contents [hide]

- Geography
- Adjacent neighborhoods
- Population
- History
 - Incorporation and merger
 - Motion picture industry
 - Development
 - Revitalization
- Radio and television

Hollywood

Neighborhood of Los Angeles



How Higson Helps us to Explain why folks tend to see Hollywood as American

At the heart of Higson's paper is an explanation of why in everyday life people think of things in national terms.

Higson's piece is effectively a reception study, albeit one lacking empirical research and support; he is nevertheless quite right!

DESCRIPTION:

What THREE ways does Higson suggest cultural products like films were – and are – assigned national status in everyday life?

PRESCRIPTION:

What is the FOURTH “new” way Higson suggests that we might also think about film in terms of national status?

The Concept(s) of National Cinema

Three ways films tend(ed) to be assigned national status

1. Economic (misleading): Nationality of makers and stars
2. Text-based: Content and Address
 - what it is about; to whom it speaks
3. Criticism-based: what elites deem national treasures

Higson suggests we should **ALSO** consider ...

4. Consumption-based : what nationals actually watch

Mette Hjort and “Themes of Nation”

Hjort develops the text-based approach to national cinema, perhaps the most commonly used in film culture

What does she suggest sets apart examples of so-called national cinema from other films?

What does she suggest are the TWO principal “modes” through which filmmakers seek to achieve this end?

Do you have any issues or problems with Hjort’s conceptual frameworks?

Hyort and Thematizing Nation

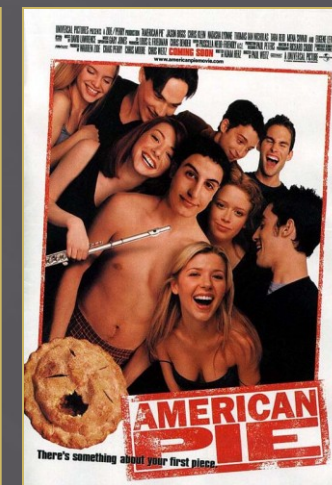
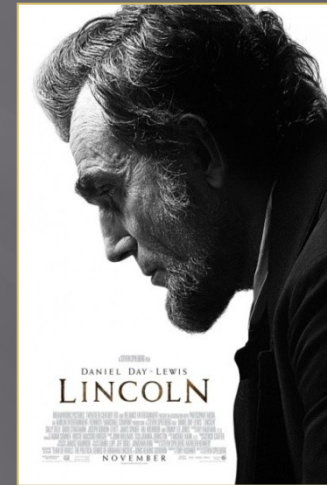
Deliberate, recognizable thematizing of nation

“About-ness” NOT “banal nationalisms”/
“Topical themes” NOT “perennial themes”

Topical: temporally/spatially specific/
Perennial: trans-historical, trans cultural (love etc)

Strategy I: Monocultural – hyper-saturation
of film with flagged national reference points

Strategy II: Intercultural – contrasts different
national discourses



Relativizing Hjort

Hjort purports to talk of intention but oftentimes her model ultimately hinges on the ways individual viewers liker herself engage with a film

The difference between banal nationalism and aboutness is not all that clear cut, and again hinges on our subjective perceptions of the material

Topical themes are always examples of a perennials; distinguishing between them rests yet again on how a viewer engages with a film

Monocultural: Hypersaturation must be spotted to function at all

Intercultural: is multinational in nature

Monocultural and intercultural can coexist in a given film

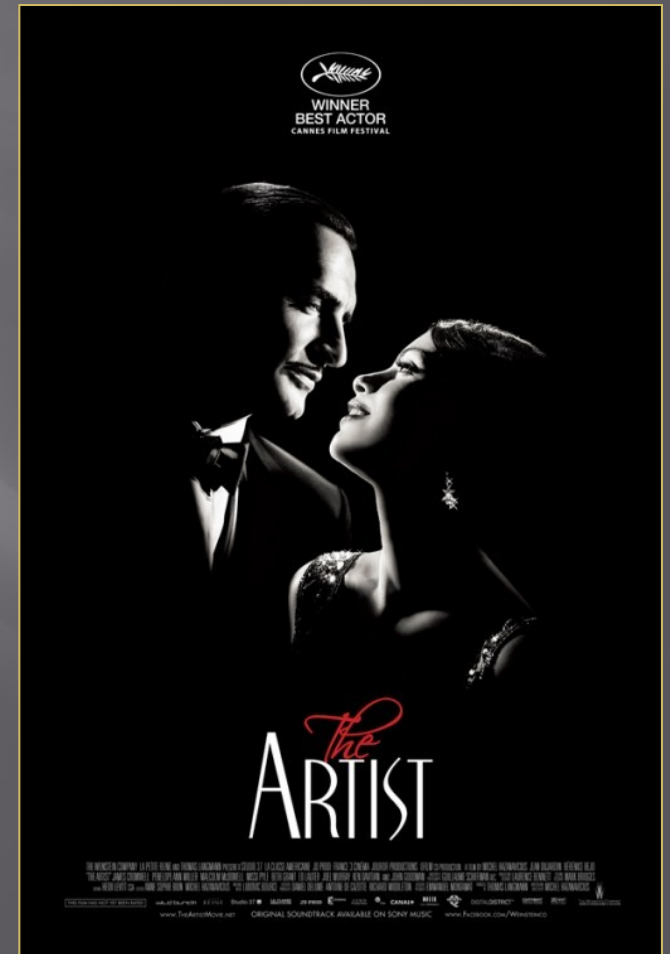
Screening Questions

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The Artist: A Text Based Approach

Themaizes US social history, and mythology;
American Dream and The Wall Street Crash ... but

1. Situates these national discourses into a regional
and transnational framework ...

Concerns a tiny multinational regional community

This “American tale” is experienced by an émigré
whose situation derives from being an immigrant

2. Topicality exemplifies perennials like love, loss

Frames human experience as transcending language



The Artist: Major Creative Personnel

US: Rarely labeled using national markers

UK: Typically described as “French”

Principal Crew:

Writer- Dir.: Michel Hazanavicius
(French)

Producers:

France, USA, Sweden, Belgium

Principal Cast Members:

Jean Dujardin (French)

Berenice Bejo (Argentina)

John Goodman (USA)



Consumption and Critical Approaches

The Artist's location in nationally demarcated cultural space is not monolithic: it is contradictory

The Artist did not attract a large audience anywhere, except for France where it was a moderate hit

But it fared well by the standards of the art house market, making it relevant to an international niche

But it was endorsed by the most public US-based cinematic “taste-making” institution: The Academy

Yet, this publicity has a place within – and places *The Artist* within – international “popular” culture



In Sum

Hollywood is usually seen as a quintessential US institution both in the Academy and more importantly in everyday life

Higson argues this logic usually rests on who we think makes them, what we think they are about, and what elites deem national “treasures”

Hjort adds National Cinema be seen as films about a specific nation; those activating preexisting discourses about a nation...

However, Higson adds we must also consider consumption; what nationals watch and imagine as part of a shared cultural experience

We can use these ideas to shed light on the reasons why Hollywood is typically associated with the US ...

If we consider Hollywood to be American it might be because ...

1. We are used to others doing so – authoritative public sphere claim-makers, but also everyday folks like us (doing so un-selfreflexively)
2. We think of Hollywood as based in and run from a district of the American city of Los Angeles ... but how true is this?
3. We think of Hollywood films as principally financed by, made by, and starring American nationals ... but how true is this?
4. We think of Hollywood films as telling primarily American stories; stories that are *about* America as a nation ... but how true is this?
5. We think of Hollywood films as primarily made for and consumed by the “domestic” US market ... but how true is this?