

# **Educator's Guide For HOLLYWOOD'S GREATEST DIRECTORS**

For Advanced Placement and College

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**MATERIALS IN THE SERIES**

**Educator's Guide** – This Educator's Guide has been prepared to aid educators in utilizing materials contained within this series. In addition to this introductory material, the guide contains the following:

- Suggested Instructional Notes
- Student Learning Goals

## **INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES**

It is suggested that you preview the series and read the Student Goals and Educator Points. By doing so, you will become familiar with the materials and be better prepared to adapt the series to the needs of your class. Please note that each program is set up to be played continuously and you will probably find it best to follow the series and the programs in the order in which they are presented, but this is not necessary. Each program can be divided into chapters accessed through the DVD's Menu Screen under Chapter Selects. In this way each chapter can be played and studied separately. It is also suggested that the series presentation take place before the entire class and under your direction. As you review the instructional programs outlined in the Educator's Guide, you may find it necessary to make some changes, deletions, or additions to fit the specific needs of your students.

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF SERIES**

As film studies is rapidly replacing literature as the primary vehicle for studying every aspect of the human condition, *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* is intended to be a historical compendium of America's unparalleled role in the creation of cinema. American filmmakers have been the dominant force in shaping the film industry and its artistry since its inception at the turn of the 20th Century. The newness of the art form fit the newness of the country. The history of American filmmakers is in essence the history of America for the last 100 years, and every generation of filmmakers reflects the Zeitgeist of each generation in that period. They combined the power of storytelling, theater, and visual art to mold the most intense and striking art form of the modern era. *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* begins with the first directors, such as D.W. Griffith and Charlie Chaplin, who created the foundation of Hollywood with stunning visual works in the Silent Era. It next looks at the arrival of sound and the creation of the studio system, Hollywood's Golden Age, and the introduction of spectacular cinematic techniques by acclaimed directors like Howard Hawks, George Cukor and Dorothy Arzner. The series then discusses Hollywood's nadir with the end of the studio system and its rebirth through directors such as Mike Nichols, Sam Peckinpah and Martin Scorsese. Finally the series ends with the Modern Era and the New Wave of cinematic greatness, led by *avant garde* directors – Spike Lee, David Aronofsky and Kathryn Bigelow.

The five programs are laid out so they can be viewed in their entirety, or by selecting individual chapters, be viewed separately. Each chapter presents a story of American cinema through its outstanding directors. Most importantly, cinematic history and figures are clearly presented using state of the art visuals that make learning easy and fun.

Below is a list of the series' programs and their chapters. Using these programs, educators can create a lesson plan to cover the specific issues, themes and historical figures mentioned.

### **Program 1: The Silent Era**

- The Invention of Film and Hollywood
- 1910 – D.W. Griffith Establishes Hollywood
- 1912 – Mac Sennett Founds Keystone Studios
- 1913 – Lois Weber, Pioneering Female Director
- 1924 – Buster Keaton, an American Original
- 1925 – Charlie Chaplin, the First Auteur

### **Program 2: The Coming of Sound**

- Growth of the Studio System
- 1932 – Howard Hawks Directs *Scarface*
- 1939 – Oscar Micheaux, First Black Feature Film Director
- 1940 – George Cukor Directs *The Philadelphia Story*
- 1940 – Dorothy Arzner, Hollywood's Greatest Female Director
- 1941 – Orson Welles, *Citizen Kane*

### **Program 3: The Golden Age of Hollywood**

- America Dominates World Cinema
- 1941 – John Huston Brings Film Noir to Hollywood
- 1944 – Vincente Minnelli Directs *Meet Me in St. Louis*
- 1946 – Frank Capra, *It's a Wonderful Life*
- 1956 – John Ford, Master of the Western

### **Program 4: The New Hollywood**

- Hollywood's Second Golden Age
- 1967 – Mike Nichols, *The Graduate*
- 1969 – Sam Peckinpah Redefines the Western
- 1973 – Terrence Malick, Existential Philosopher
- 1974 – Mel Brooks, King of Comedy
- 1976 – Martin Scorsese Directs *Taxi Driver*
- 1976 – Sidney Lumet Gives Expression to America's Angst

### **Program 5: The Modern Era**

- The New Wave
- 1986 – Oliver Stone Wins his First Oscar for Directing
- 1989 – Spike Lee, Black Auteur
- 1992 – Clint Eastwood Receives His First Oscar for Best Director
- 2007 – P.T. Anderson Writes and Directs *There Will be Blood*
- 2008 – Darren Aronofsky, *The Wrestler*
- 2010 – Kathryn Bigelow Wins the Oscar for Best Director

## **SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS FOR *HOLLYWOOD'S GREATEST DIRECTORS***

### **Program 1: The Silent Era**

The art of making motion pictures matured in the Silent Era from 1895 – 1927. Program one examines the Silent Era's most outstanding directors who created Hollywood and laid the foundation for the great American cinematic tradition.

Chapter one describes how the art form of American cinema's origins stem from many places, including ancient Greek theater and literature, while on the technical side the marriage of film and the motion picture camera produced the movie.

Chapter two looks at the decisive impact D.W. Griffith had not only making movies but the creation of Hollywood.

Chapter three shows how Mack Sennett invented the Silent Era's unique slapstick comedy with the Keystone Kops.

The influence of the Silent Era's greatest female director, Lois Weber is depicted in chapter four.

Chapter five shows how Buster Keaton earned the rank of the seventh greatest director of all time.

The life and significance of the Silent Era's greatest comedic actor, Charlie Chaplin, is discussed in chapter six.

### **Chapter 1: The Invention of Film and Hollywood**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Today, Hollywood and world cinema go together like hand in glove
- It was the genius of the American entrepreneurial system that gave rise what is now known as American Cinema
- The genius of American cinema begins in the nineteen teens when a couple of things happen simultaneously that work synergistically together
  - One, people like D.W. Griffith really established the grammar of cinema and showed the power of cinema
  - At the same time the development of Hollywood's studio system, a whole industrial apparatus that mass-produces feature films
- American Cinema's origins extend back in a number of different directions
  - Theatrical dramas and comedies, which include staging and dialogue, go back to at least the ancient Greeks
  - And a parallel development in literature that moved stories forward through dialogue, action, settings and characters
- On the technical side Americans George Eastman and Thomas Edison helped pioneer, continuous celluloid photographic film and the motion picture camera

- By the turn-of-the-century, technology had advanced to the point where scenes could be projected on a screen
- The industry early on was dominated by an Edison monopoly centered in New York
- That changed when director D.W. Griffith was sent to Los Angeles
- Wishing to escape Edison's monopoly, America's greatest cinematic talents followed Griffith
- As a result Hollywood was born and the creation of the American art form of film

## **Chapter 2: 1910 – D.W. Griffith Establishes Hollywood**

### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- D.W. Griffith is really the pioneer of the American cinema
- He created the basic grammar of fictional filmmaking that spread throughout the world and is still with us a hundred years later
- Griffith also established the basic idea that the movie is created in the editing room
- A brief biography of D.W. Griffith
- Griffith met film pioneer Edwin S. Porter in New York City
- Porter had directed what many consider to be the first two genuine narrative films in history
  - The 1902 *The Life of an American Fireman*
  - The 1903 western, *The Great Train Robbery*
- Griffith learned much from Porter before joining the rival company Biograph
- In 1910 Griffith began taking his company from New York to California for seasonal filming
- He quickly built a stock company of young actors and actresses that included Mary Pickford, Blanche Sweet, Mae Marsh, Lillian and Dorothy Gish, and Lionel Barrymore
- Griffith would go on to make many pictures
- In 1915 he directed his masterpiece, *The Birth of a Nation*
- The movie electrified audiences across the country, and became American Cinema's biggest box-office hit prior to the 1920s
- Ever the innovator, Griffith would conquer sound with his 1930 biopic, *Abraham Lincoln*
- Upon Griffith's death in 1948 Orson Welles hailed the brilliant director as "the premier genius of our medium"

## **Chapter 3: 1912 – Mac Sennett Finds Keystone Studios**

### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Son of Irish immigrants, Mack Sennett went to work for Biograph as an actor, singer, dancer, clown, set designer, and director
- In 1912 he founded Keystone Studios in Los Angeles and also established the basic principles of the Silent comedy
  - There will be a chase usually almost all through the film
  - There's going to be food fights and pie fights

- The main characters in the Keystone films are disreputable characters
- The main characters are often times being pursued by the police, the so-called Keystone Kops
- Sennett eventually produced over 1000 Silent Era films
- He stands as one of the great innovators of early Hollywood

#### **Chapter 4: 1913 – Lois Weber, Pioneering Female Director**

##### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood’s Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Lois Weber was the equal of any male director in early Hollywood and has been deemed "the most important female director the American film industry has known"
- Her films were ground breaking
- She made films on subjects that were central to the lives of women, such as birth control, abortion and prostitution
- A brief biography of Lois Weber
- She is credited with with directing 135 films, writing 114, and acting in 100
- The 1921 film *The Blot* is considered to be her masterpiece

#### **Chapter 5: 1924 – Buster Keaton, an American Original**

##### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood’s Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Buster Keaton was known as "The Great Stone Face," and recognized as the seventh greatest director of all time
- A brief biography of Buster Keaton
- Buster Keaton entered the film business in 1917 through Roscoe Fatty Arbuckle, a friend from Vaudeville
- By 1920 he’s making films
- As seen in his 1924 movie, *Sherlock Jr.*, there is perhaps no more haunting image in American cinema than Keaton himself
- Gilberto Perez describes Keaton's genius as an actor, “To keep a face so nearly deadpan and yet render it, by subtle inflections, so vividly expressive of inner life”
- Orson Welles touted Keaton’s *The General* as perhaps the greatest film ever made
  - On the one hand, it’s a historical drama, it’s a portrait of the Civil War
  - At the same time the film underscores Keaton’s love hate relationship with modernity in his relationship with the railroad
- Keaton earned an Academy Honorary Award in 1958

#### **Chapter 6: 1925 – Charlie Chaplin, the First Auteur**

##### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood’s Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Charlie Chaplin was involved in every aspect of filmmaking
- Chaplin was an actor, director, film editor and he ultimately started composing the music
- He brought to comedy the blend of sadness and laughter

- Chaplin's films tell the story of the permanent outsider from the society, who struggles mightily to be part of something and most of the time fails
- A brief biography of Chaplin's life and his rise to becoming a movie star
- In 1913 Chaplin began working for Mack Sennett of Keystone Studios
  - Under Sennett's tutelage, Chaplin invented what is perhaps the most iconic character in all of cinema: the Tramp
  - The Tramp embodied Chaplin's unique perspective of the world
  - The Tramp, is not some sort of superman, he's the guy on the bottom of the social order
  - A lot of people, particularly in the nineteen teens' cinema audience could identify with the struggles of the Tramp
- In 1925 Chaplin, reprising his role as the Tramp, wrote, directed, and starred in *The Gold Rush*, which he considered to be his best film
- Chaplin co-founded the successful distribution company United Artists with D. W. Griffith, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks
- With the coming of sound, his stardom waned

## **Program 2: The Coming of Sound**

When Warner Brothers Studios released *The Jazz Singer*, the first 'talkie', in 1927, it spelled the end of the Silent Era. Program two shows how sound revamped Hollywood, creating the 'studio system' and introducing spectacular cinematic techniques by acclaimed directors like Howard Hawks, George Cukor and Dorothy Arzner.

Chapter one examines the growth of Hollywood's 'Studio System' into a vertically integrated industry dominated by a handful of studios.

How director Howard Hawks earned the mantle of Hollywood's first 'auteur' is shown in chapter two.

Starting in Harlem in the 1920s, black culture in America underwent a renaissance, and how as a part of that renaissance, Oscar Micheaux became the first Black feature film director is depicted in chapter three.

Chapter four examines the mastery of director George Cukor in staging a scene and placing the camera to bring out a movie's emotion and drama.

Chapter five looks at Dorothy Arzner, the only female director working in Hollywood during the 30s and the first female to direct a sound motion picture, *Manhattan Cocktail*.

Chapter six examines directorial brilliance of *wunderkind* Orson Welles with his directorial debut, the immortal *Citizen Kane*.

## **Chapter 1: The Growth of the Studio System**

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- In the 1920s and 30s, American Cinema firmly established itself in the mold of a vertically integrated industry
  - The industry was dominated by a handful of studios
  - 20th Century Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Paramount, Warner Brothers, Columbia, Universal, Republic Pictures, RKO, and Disney
  - These studios had total control
  - All the different aspects of film making – preproduction, production, post-production, distribution, exhibition - were linked together
  - The all-powerful studio heads, such as Louis B. Mayer, Darryl F. Zanuck, Samuel Goldwyn, and David O. Selznick, exerted influence over everything
- At the same time the big time studios introduced the star system ... Actors and actresses who would go on to become Hollywood legends
- The 30's also saw a revolution in technology ... primarily in sound and color
  - The change to sound pictures began in 1927, when the *The Jazz Singer* ended the Silent Era and introduced sound pictures known as 'Talkies' to the world
  - Also there was the introduction of Technicolor
- Just as important, the '30s saw the development of film genres that are still with us today
  - Gangster films, musicals, newspaper-reporting films, dramas, historical biopics, social-realism films, romantic comedies, screwball comedies, westerns, and horror
- In the 1930s there were also emerging directors who today have been given the label of auteur
  - These directors had a singular cinematic style and vision
  - They included King Vidor, Fritz Lang, Ernst Lubitsch, William Wellman, and Howard Hawks
- During this time this American art form truly came to dominate the world

## **Chapter 2: 1932 – Howard Hawks Directs *Scarface***

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Many say that Howard Hawks was the first director working in the Classical Era to carry the mantle of American auteur
- A brief biography of Hawks
- He directed silent films but with the coming of sound he found his calling through a brilliant use of sound and dialogue
- He redefined the gangster genre in his early masterpiece: *Scarface*
  - *Scarface* was the first film to bring to the screen a theme that is still in play today: the dark side of the American dream reaching for wealth for its own sake
- Six years after *Scarface*, Hawks showed his genius and versatility by redefining the screwball comedy with the Hepburn-Grant classic, *Bringing up Baby*
  - In this movie, Hawks introduced his innovative comedic technique of overlapping dialogue

- Hawks would go on to work in other genres including Westerns with his John Wayne Trilogy

### **Chapter 3: 1939 – Oscar Micheaux, First Black Feature Film Director**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood’s Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Starting in Harlem in the 1920s, black culture in America underwent a renaissance that included filmmaking
- In the 1920s and 1930s, there was something called the “Race Film Circuit” - films made by African American directors for African American audiences
  - They depicted not only Black gangster stories but also stories of middle-class, Black American life
- The most famous director on the race film circuit was Oscar Micheaux
- A brief biography of Micheaux
- Around 1919 he founded the Micheaux Film and Book Company of Sioux City and Chicago
- Its first project was the production of *The Homesteader* - the first feature film directed by an African-American
- Micheaux made films that were important to Black people
  - He made films about the ‘Back to Africa Movement’ and films about people, light skinned Black people trying to pass
- Micheaux introduced actors such as Paul Robeson and Robert Earl Jones
- Oscar Micheaux was working against very difficult odds
  - He had shoestring budgets, and some of his films were later subject to censorship

### **Chapter 4: 1940 – George Cukor Directs *The Philadelphia Story***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood’s Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- George Cukor was a master of staging a scene and placing the camera to bring out the scene’s emotion and drama
- Born in Manhattan's lower East side in 1899, George Cukor, to the chagrin of his parents, turned to acting and went to Hollywood in 1928
- He learns filmmaking at Paramount and eventually begins making films
- His career lasts from the 30s to the 80s
- It was an open secret in Hollywood that Cukor was gay
- Like the many literary intellectuals who frequented his lavish home, Cukor was deeply interested in the theme of social class
- He satirized class in his 1940 masterpiece, *The Philadelphia Story*, starring Cary Grant, Jimmy Stewart and Katharine Hepburn

### **Chapter 5: 1940 – Dorothy Arzner, Hollywood's Greatest Female Director**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood’s Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Dorothy Arzner was the only female director working in Hollywood during the 30s
- She was the first female to direct a sound motion picture, *Manhattan*

- She was famous for being a kind of star maker director
  - Particularly female stars, including Katharine Hepburn, Rosalind Russell, Joan Crawford, Lucille Ball and Maureen O'Hara
- She has a kind of proto feminist sensibility to her films
- Arzner stopped directing in the 40s but went on to teach at UCLA, where she influenced the new wave of film school directors such as Francis Ford Coppola

### **Chapter 6: 1941 – Orson Welles, *Citizen Kane***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- At the remarkable age of 25, Orson Welles acted in, produced and directed what is considered to be the greatest film ever made: *Citizen Kane*
  - All elements of filmmaking are elevated to the greatest heights ever seen in cinema
- The movie itself not only transformed filmmaking, but the making of the movie transformed Hollywood
  - At a time when Hollywood was producing happy endings, *Citizen Kane* had an unhappy ending that questioned American heroes, character, and the use of power
- A brief biography of Orson Welles
- Welles gained national fame when his 1938 *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast convinced many people that America was under attack by Martians
- RKO Theatres then gave Welles complete control over his picture *Citizen Kane*
  - *Citizen Kane* stars Orson Welles as Charles Foster Kane, a wealthy, megalomaniacal newspaper publisher whose life is at the heart of the film
  - The film's story follows a newspaper reporter in charge of finding out the meaning of Kane's last word, "Rosebud"
  - The non-linear story structure of *Citizen Kane* was totally novel at the time
- Orson Welles would go on to have a long career in Hollywood as an esteemed actor, producer, director, writer and voice talent

### **Program 3: The Golden Age of Hollywood**

Program three discusses the Golden Age of American Cinema and how internationally acclaimed directors such as John Huston, John Ford and Frank Capra gave the world unparalleled films for over twenty years.

How Hollywood asserted its dominance in World Cinema is shown in chapter one.

Chapter two examines how legendary director John Huston introduced film noir to Hollywood with *The Maltese Falcon*.

Chapter three shows how acclaimed director Vincente Minnelli set the standard for big budget films in Hollywood, putting all the money on the screen.

How Frank Capra showed movies could be used to tell stories about Americans values is depicted in chapter four.

Chapter five tells the story of John Ford, the master of the American western who directed over 140 films and won four Oscars.

### **Chapter 1: America Dominates World Cinema**

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Following WWII Hollywood asserted its dominance in World Cinema in an era that has come to be known as the Golden Age of Hollywood
  - It was the place for the best producers, the best directors, the best technicians, the best writers, and the best actors
  - It was the golden age because the Hollywood studio system proved so efficient at mass producing high quality movies
  - It also allowed many really wonderfully creative filmmakers to work and produce some pretty great movies
- It was a time when directors from all over the world made their mark in Hollywood
  - Foreign directors, including Billy Wilder, Alfred Hitchcock, Elia Kazan, William Wyler, and Otto Preminger enriched Hollywood's Golden Age
- The Golden Age boasted superstars
- It was an exciting time for the exploration of old and the creation of new genres
  - These included film Noir, comedy duos, Christmas movies, big-budget musicals, the Golden age of Disney animation, social satires, and westerns
- It also investigated social themes with ground breaking films
- But the years following WWII were also a dark time for Hollywood
  - The House Committee on Un-American Activities, blacklisted members of the American film industry for alleged communist associations

### **Chapter 2: 1941 – John Huston Brings Film Noir to Hollywood**

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- John Huston began as a writer then became a director
- His film *The Maltese Falcon* in 1941 helped to establish the American *film noir* genre and the 1950s style for the hard-boiled detective fiction hero
  - Sam Spade was a detective created by fiction writer Dashiell Hammett in his 1930 mystery, *The Maltese Falcon*
  - Eleven years later, John Huston brought *film noir* to the Golden Age of Hollywood, casting Humphrey Bogart as the gritty Sam Spade
- A brief biography of John Huston
- Huston, as a writer, actor, and man-about-town, was always the Hollywood rebel
- But as a director, Huston had one spectacular film success after another
- The *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* is considered a classic John Huston film
  - It is about a group of kind of down and out ex-patriot Americans in Mexico, who dream of and actually achieve the idea of finding a fabulous gold strike
  - Things do not work out as they planned
- The failure of characters to achieve their dreams would become a characteristic of Huston's films

- John Huston was always portraying very ambitious, even driven characters who do not achieve the thing they've gone out for
- However, maybe they've learned a lesson that they really shouldn't have gone out for what they sought, or it wasn't the most important thing in life

### **Chapter 3: 1944 – Vincente Minnelli Directs *Meet Me in St. Louis***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Born to traveling musical performers, Vincente Minnelli grew up in the theater
- By the age of 30 he was directing musicals on Broadway
- Minnelli was a brilliant filmmaker who worked for MGM
  - MGM made the films that were usually had the highest average budget every year of any studio
  - MGM also specialized in making color musicals
  - These were things that Minnelli really exploited
- He was brilliant with the big budget, with great stars, with color, if necessary with wide screen
- Minnelli has a great sense of composition as seen in his spectacular 1944 film, *Meet Me in St. Louis*
- Minnelli in many ways set the standard for big budget films in Hollywood by putting all the money on the screen
- He won the 1958 Academy award for Best Director with his movie *Gigi*

### **Chapter 4: 1946 – Frank Capra, *It's a Wonderful Life***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Frank Capra showed how movies could be used to tell stories about who we are as human beings, as well as, who Americans were by the values they held
- After 1932 Capra decided to make films that reflected real social concerns
  - The quest for justice, the quest for values that everybody can share and live with is at the heart of the Capra story
- In 1939 Capra directed his homage to American democracy: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*
- A brief biography of Frank Capra
- In 1946 Capra directed what many call his greatest film, *It's A Wonderful Life*
  - On one level, *It's a Wonderful Life* is a simple story of a small-town everyman, George Bailey
  - On another level *It's a Wonderful Life* is about the value of each individual, of the void we leave if we had not existed
- It is the celebration of the ordinary that Capra brings to the forefront and that's a gift that he has from an Italian American, Catholic background
- Capra explained that the art of Frank Capra is very simple - It's the love of people, the freedom of each individual and the equal importance of each individual

## **Chapter 5: 1956 – John Ford, Master of the Western**

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- John Ford is one of America's most influential directors
- Ford is credited with directing over 140 films between 1917 and 1968
- He won four Academy Awards, more than any other director
- They include the 1935 *The Informer*, the 1940 *The Grapes of Wrath*, the 1941 *How Green Was My Valley*, and the 1952 *The Quiet Man*
- In spite of diverse themes and genres, Ford is known as a director of Westerns and a director who grappled with what it meant to be an 'American male hero'
- John Ford tells the story about the making and the consolidation of the U.S.
  - It's history written at the level of the family and the small community
- A brief biography of John Ford
- Ford pioneered location shooting, particularly in the American desert Southwest, and the long shot, as well as landscape wide angle shots
- Ford uses landscape as a sign for something else, the presence of something
- Ford consistently worked with John Wayne, the legendary actor who personified the iconic American male
- At first, Ford's films dealt with the male hero and the formation of the United States in the West
- Later, Ford used the Western to deal with contemporary issues, such as racism
- In his 1956 masterpiece, *The Searchers*, Ford perfected this cinematic style
- Ford influenced every director in the modern age

## **Program 4: The New Hollywood**

In the 1950s with the arrival of television, the Studio System began a decade long decline that brought Hollywood to its knees. Program four, examines how a few great directors revitalized Hollywood and American Cinema, producing some of the greatest movies of all time.

Chapter one examines how in the 1960s Hollywood changed dramatically with the end of the studio system and the recognition that the director was the creative force behind the movie.

Chapter two looks at the life and career of Mike Nichols, one of the great *actors' directors*.

The impact of director Sam Peckinpah on realism in movies is shown in chapter three.

Chapter four looks at the significance of Hollywood's leading existential director, Terrence Malick on American cinema.

The life and movies of one of America's great comedic auteurs, Mel Brooks, is depicted in chapter five.

Chapter six examines how film school brat Martin Scorsese defined the Second Golden Age of Hollywood.

Chapter seven discusses how Sidney Lumet helped to fashion American cinema's New Wave in dealing with the nation's social themes.

### **Chapter 1: Hollywood's Second Golden Age**

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- The 60s brought a new age in America, propelled by the civil rights movement, the women's movement, antiwar movement and the environmental movement
  - It was a time of departure from traditional values and an opening up to new ideas
  - Hollywood would not escape this change
  - The new Hollywood is embodied by a new type of director, men such as John Frankenheimer, Robert Altman and Sidney Lumet
  - But the biggest change in the new Hollywood was the recognition that the director, not the producer, was the creative force behind a movie
  - It was also a time when the traditional Hollywood studio ownership came to an end, as more and more studios were acquired by business conglomerates
  - The age of "packaged" films and the independent producer and production company were beginning
- With the end of the first Golden Age of Hollywood, the old film masters such as Hawks, Capra, Ford, and Huston, were finally being acclaimed as true auteurs
  - Standing on their shoulders would come a new wave of American auteurs
  - These included Stanley Kubrick, Sidney Lumet, Robert Altman, Peter Bogdanovich, Woody Allen, Sydney Pollack, Irvin Kershner, Sam Peckinpah, George Roy Hill, Arthur Penn, John Cassavetes, William Friedkin, and John Frankenheimer
- After dismal box office showings in the 60s, a Hollywood revival was brought about by the studios investing in brilliant new directors
  - They pioneered advances in film techniques, reworked old genres, and directors became a major social force in the evolution of American culture and values

### **Chapter 2: 1967 – Mike Nichols, *The Graduate***

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- The moment of flowering for Mike Nichols is really in the 60s, when he finds cinematic ways to make theatrical plays come to life
- Mike Nichols' 1967 film *The Graduate* captured a sea change in American cultural values
  - *The Graduate* deals with the discontent of a younger generation and the older suburbanites who are now seeing the emptiness of their lives
  - The film has resonance because it taps into so many things, including alienation in the family and the deadness of suburban life
  - In retrospect, the movie is about the rise of postmodern America

- The graduate ends as Benjamin and Elaine, like America itself, are embarking on a very uncertain future
- A brief biography of Mike Nichols
- After *Catch-22* and *Carnal Knowledge*, Nichols changed his emphasis as a cinematographic director toward becoming one of the great ‘actor’s directors’
  - He let the actors probe deeply into their characters’ mannerisms and motivations
- A true renaissance man, Nichols has won an Oscar for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, as well as a Grammy, and multiple Tonys and Emmys

### **Chapter 3: 1969 – Sam Peckinpah Redefines the Western**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood’s Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- During Hollywood's Second Golden Age, Sam Peckinpah was its ‘larger-than-life’ director
  - He drank hard, abused drugs, fought with producers and actors
  - He loved casting Hollywood tough guys in his movies
- A brief biography of Sam Peckinpah
- He learned his craft from master action director, Don Siegel
- Peckinpah believed that violence was very much at the heart of the American experience
  - Because so many of his narratives were set in the west, that was a key factor in his use of violence
  - He was somebody who saw violence as something very close to the core of the American experience and his films reflected that
- *The Wild Bunch* is one of the films he’ll be remembered by
  - *The Wild Bunch* marks a moment in American film history in a way that none of his other films do
- Sam Peckinpah is also remembered as inspiring the next generation of great action directors around the world

### **Chapter 4: 1973 – Terrence Malick, Existential Philosopher**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood’s Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Terrence Malick studied philosophy when he was attending university and wrote about German philosopher Martin Heidegger
- His films have a lot of philosophical questions about the basic issues of existence
- Terrence Malick, Hollywood's existential philosopher-director burst onto the cinematic stage with his debut film in 1973, the groundbreaking *Badlands*
  - It is based on the 1957 Charles Starkweather/Caril Ann Fugate killing rampage across Nebraska
  - *Badlands’* unique pictorial style and first-person narratives established Malick as one of the most influential directors to come out of Hollywood's second Golden age
- Malick is less interested in well-developed plots and characters and extremely interested in using cinematic language for a poetic and philosophical exploration
- His 2012 film, *The Tree of Life* is ambitious and philosophical

- The film essentially begins with the beginning of time
- So whatever human tale it offers to us, the more interesting piece of it is how tiny it feels
- Our lives as reflected on the screen are contained within the much more enormous story of the birth and death of the universe
- Malick pulls it off by virtue of the beauty of his work, the beauty of the compositions he creates

### **Chapter 5: 1974 – Mel Brooks, King of Comedy**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood’s Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Mel Brooks became one of the great American auteurs of the New Hollywood era by working his way up through the ranks of television
- Eventually, he formed a partnership with legendary sitcom creator, comedian, and film director Carl Reiner
- Brooks would go on to become the groundbreaking writer/director of comic parodies of Hollywood's Second Golden Age
- Brooks has an interest in taking established Hollywood genres and undermining them from within
  - *Young Frankenstein* is a sort of demolition of old horror film tropes
  - *High Anxiety* is an extended parody of Alfred Hitchcock
  - *Blazing Saddles* is an attempt to take some of the familiar ideas of the American western and really demolish them
- Not necessarily an elegant filmmaker, Brooks is really looking to make audiences laugh in whatever fashion he can
- Brooks is one of an elite group of artists to win an Oscar, an Emmy, a Tony, and a Grammy

### **Chapter 6: 1976 – Martin Scorsese Directs *Taxi Driver***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood’s Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Martin Scorsese, along with Francis Ford Coppola, and George Lucas, formed the trinity of film school brats that defined the second Golden Age of Hollywood
- Growing up Catholic in New York, as a filmmaker Scorsese explores Catholic guilt and anxiety about sexuality in films from the early part of his career
- The Scorsese film that is most studied is his 1976 landmark *Taxi Driver*
  - It was one of the first films actually to use very highspeed film stock
  - This allowed him to shoot on location in New York at night and capture this kind of dark gritty cityscape that hadn’t been able to be captured before
- Scorsese continually explores the themes of masculinity, violence, and faith in family against a backdrop of tension
- This is the tension between the gritty New York world of Catholic guilt, limitations of ethnic enclaves, and the impossible pull for his characters toward a brighter more beautiful future
- In the 21st Century Martin Scorsese has continued to be one of America's most productive and beloved directors

- He is a champion of film preservation and independent cinema, and a superb documentarian

### **Chapter 7: 1976 – Sidney Lumet Gives Expression to America's Angst**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- No speech in cinema better captured the angst of American culture in the 70's than news anchor Howard Beale's rant in Sidney Lumet's landmark 1976 film, *Network*
- Sidney Lumet is a man of contradictions
  - He helped shape Hollywood's New Wave, yet rarely worked there
  - He dealt with social themes troubling the country, yet seldom left his beloved New York City
  - He told stories about rebels whose decisions need not to be right, only genuine
- Lumet was beloved by actors
  - It's no accident that so many actors had their finest performances under his direction
  - There is no better example of this, than Lumet's *Dog Day Afternoon*
- No director captured the essence of the American Jewish experience of community and guilt better than Sydney Lumet
  - Lumet's film, *The Pawnbroker*, released in 1965 was one of the very first efforts in the United States to confront the Holocaust
- Sydney Lumet was a master at portraying the kinetic energy and rhythms of America's gritty urban life with a resolute vision of social justice

### **Program 5: The Modern Era**

Program five shows how in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century a New Wave of American cinema has introduced the movie director as the novelist and how this new kind of author has propelled film into the world's greatest art form.

Chapter one examines how American Cinema's New Wave virtually changed every aspect of movie making and made director's household names equal in celebrity to movie stars.

Chapter two depicts the decade of director superstar Oliver Stone and his eclectic group of films from the iconic *Platoon* to the groundbreaking *Natural Born Killers*.

Chapter three looks at the works of Spike Lee, the first black to be nominated for an Academy Award in Screen Writing.

The significance of Clint Eastwood and his groundbreaking films is discussed in chapter four.

Paul Thomas Anderson's status as a wunderkind in directing is discussed in chapter five.

Chapter six shows how Darren Aronofsky uses film to explore American ideas and themes.

Chapter seven examines the film career of Kathryn Bigelow, the first woman to win an Academy Award for directing.

### **Chapter 1: The New Wave**

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- The New Wave in American cinema has seen many changes in American Cinema
  - It is the era of the big expensive film vs. the low budget Indie
  - It is also an era when the viewing and ownership of movies has become democratized through cable movie channels and movie rentals for home viewing
  - Studios have been bought and sold by large business conglomerates
  - New studios such as Miramax, DreamWorks and Hemdale made their appearance
  - Even feature-length documentaries found a lucrative place on America's big screen
  - However, the biggest change was the emergence of a new breed of director
- The 21st Century the director has become the author of what has become the world's main art form
- Hollywood is actually two Hollywoods
  - There is the Hollywood of the big film, the action packed blockbuster
  - There is the Hollywood of thought provoking Indie film

### **Chapter 2: 1986 – Oliver Stone Wins his First Oscar for Directing**

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Oliver Stone made a brilliant series of political films from 1986 to 1994
  - These films had a left-wing political view and were both critical and box office successes
- His first critical success as a director came with his 1986 Academy award-winning film, *Platoon*
  - The film was based on his own experiences in Vietnam
- It is a visceral experience of the moral crisis soldiers face when confronted with the horrors of war
- Oliver Stone's last masterful film was the groundbreaking, *Natural Born Killers*, in 1994
  - Based loosely on the rampage killing spree of Charles Starkweather and Caril Ann Fugate
  - *Natural born killers* is such an interesting film because it's disturbing, it's violent and funny, which is in and of itself a kind of signature element of Stone's films
- Stone's films pioneered cinematic visual culture
- In the decades following the mid-90s, Stone has continued to be an uncompromising voice for freedom, commenting on American culture, war and politics

### **Chapter 3: 1989 – Spike Lee, Black Auteur**

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Spike Lee is a second-generation film school brat, having graduated from NYU
- Spike Lee's earlier films focus on the details of African American life that's relatively unique in American filmmaking
- Spike Lee is really the first filmmaker to achieve mainstream success in films that portray African American life
- Lee is not only interested in black characters, but in the strange and contradictory place race and ethnic relations hold in American society
- Many critics say his film masterpiece occurred early in his career with *Do the Right Thing*
  - It captures the moment of the eighties in a really great way in terms of music, costuming and drawing upon current events happening in New York at that time
- Spike Lee would go on to direct over 25 films including the biopic *Malcolm X*, *The Summer of Sam*, and *Miracle at St. Anna*
- Spike Lee remains a groundbreaking theatrical director, a master documentarian, and an avid sports enthusiast

### **Chapter 4: 1992 – Clint Eastwood Receives His First Oscar for Best Director**

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Clint Eastwood career has taken an unusual path to becoming a director
  - He started as an actor in Television
  - Then he starred in a series of brutal westerns that became very popular
  - Then he started directing films
- By the age of 41, Eastwood directed his first feature - the thriller, *Play Misty for Me*
- His directing has explored the nature of violence and guns, particularly in his 1992 masterpiece, *Unforgiven*
  - *Unforgiven* really examines how violence works in films
  - *Unforgiven* is a western that shows what happens when you don't forgive
  - Clint Eastwood has managed to make the western emblematic of the times
- Clint Eastwood would go on to show his versatility by directing and starring in the romantic love story, *The Bridges of Madison County*
- He won his second directing Academy Award for the boxing story, *Million Dollar Baby*
- Also paralleling his own life, he examined what it meant to be an aging iconic American hero in *Gran Torino*

### **Chapter 5: 2007 – P.T. Anderson Writes and Directs *There Will be Blood***

**Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will learn:**

- Paul Thomas Anderson is one of America's great new cinematographic directors
- His works shows panache as well as brashness and boldness that is often lacking
- At the age of 27 his feature debut was the acclaimed *Boogie Nights*

- His films fall into two periods
  - In the earlier period he's really interested in telling these large frame epic stories about people coming together and breaking apart
  - In the later stage he ends up crafting this entire other style which is much more static
- His *There Will be Blood* is about an ambitious and unscrupulous oil developer, in the American West at the turn-of-the-century
- It provides Anderson the chance to develop two of his overarching themes
  - He explores outsized personalities who have oversized ambitions that goes to the heart of American history
  - The film also represents people who are in themselves not necessarily great men but have these visions that are just overwhelming and how it affects their lives and relationships

### **Chapter 6: 2008 – Darren Aronofsky, *The Wrestler***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will**

##### **learn:**

- Darren Aronofsky, one of the new film school brats, uses cinema to explore important ideas
- His first two films dealt with interior states
  - In *Pi* and *Requiem for a Dream* he tried to chart and describe the mental landscape of his protagonists
- In 2008 he directed his masterpiece, *The Wrestler*
  - The film explores the world of pro wrestling and the people who are in it
  - It looks at the reasons the people involved did it, their relationships with each other and the people who went to see these matches
  - It is really a portrait of a sector of American society that really is fascinated by this spectacle
- Both *The Wrestler* and Aronofsky's next film, *The Black Swan*, explore interiors by using the physicality of wrestling and dance to get at the essence of the mind

### **Chapter 7: 2010 – Kathryn Bigelow Wins the Oscar for Best Director**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Hollywood's Greatest Directors* chapter the students will**

##### **learn:**

- In 2010 Kathryn Bigelow became the first woman to win the Oscar for directing
- Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* and *Zero Dark Thirty* explore American myth making and history making, as well as the mythos of the male American hero
- After earning a Masters degree in film studies at Columbia University, Bigelow began directing feature-length films
- After, moderate financial and critical successes with her films, she broke through with her critically acclaimed *The Hurt Locker*
  - It is the story of psychologically damaged American male hero who is head of an Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team in Iraq
- *Zero Dark Thirty* is a semi-historical movie focusing on a female protagonist who leads the search for Osama bin Laden
- Bigelow uses her films to hold up a contemporary mirror to movie goers