

National Tertiary Education Union

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STRIKE & PICKET

24 hours

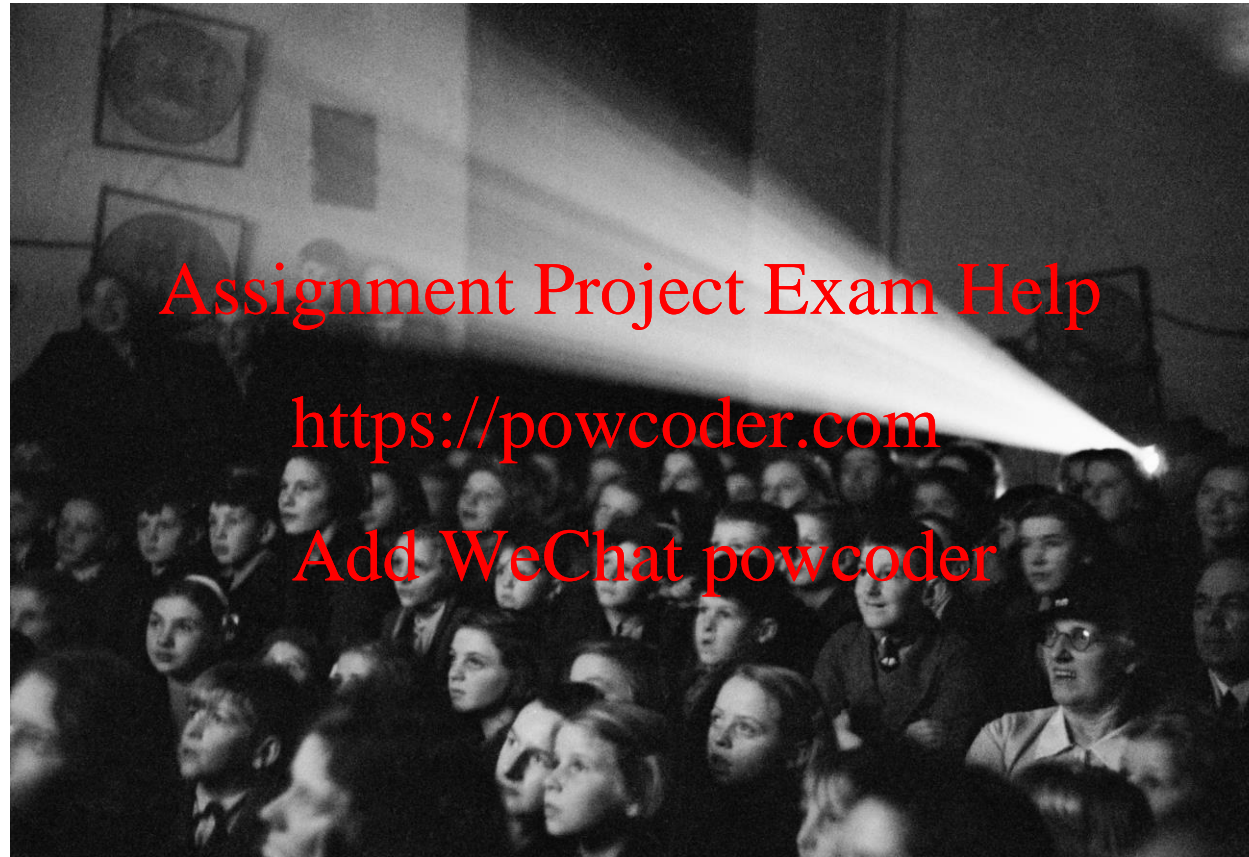
Wednesday August 17



Better Workplaces
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GCST1603 Screen Cultures and Gender: Film to Apps



Week 2: The Impact of Popular Cinema

Part 1:

- Look at screen culture around the first mass screens – early cinema
- Think about film as (a part of) the public sphere

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Part 2:

Looking at some contemporary film culture examples, we will think about:

- How does film culture today form a part of a public sphere?
- How does film culture look the same as it did in the past, and how does it look different today?

Menti moment

<https://www.menti.com/rnh6hwp7r2>

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If you like to watch movies, why do you like to watch movies?

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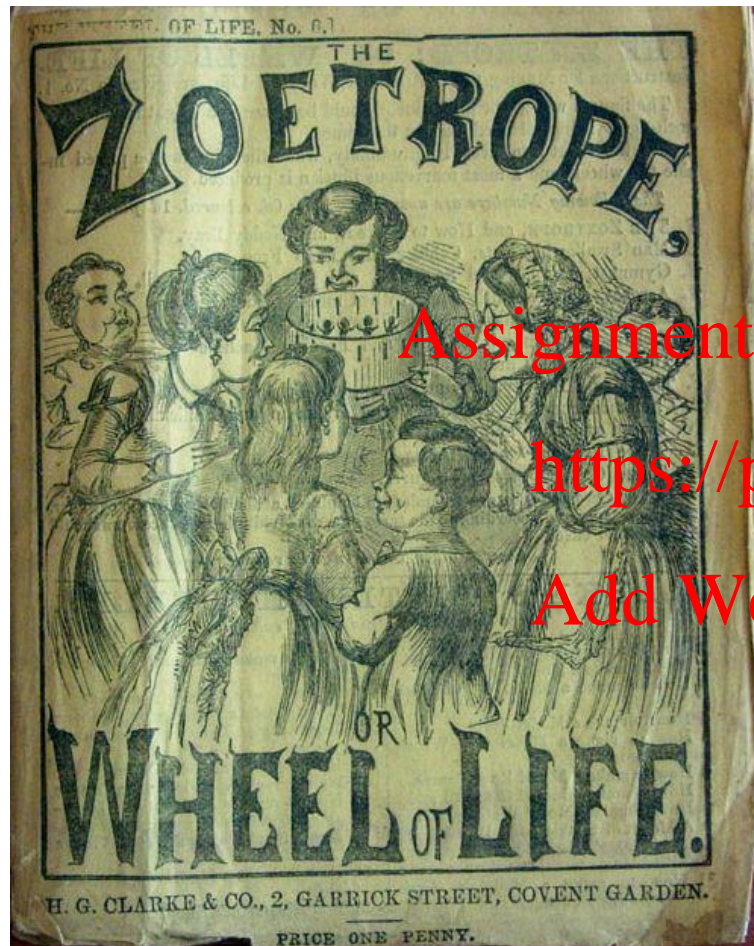
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Promotional poster for Louis Lumiere's film
"L'arroseur arrose" (1895)

Early film in existing popular cultures



新喜來生動畫戲

啓者本公司雲遊天下各國專賣生動畫戲其法演弄皆新男女
可觀途人見者無不喝采此景新出眼目真事與舊時別班不同
其中有兩軍對壘馬兵步將
炮火連天水浪飛騰樹如
生并有各國名山大川亭臺
樓閣名人真相古玩俱全皆
日李思常生畫耳雖聞不確
今時之存影變幻日衆爲真
洵足怡情大壯觀瞻之美景
也現加許多新影有英皇加
冕又有最大留聲機器唱中
西歌調另有故事太多筆難
盡錄本公司向在各埠開演
今因推廣貴地暫演數日再
往別處諸君欲開見識者
祈早光臨慎勿延遲過之不
及本園現在中環街市對海
光緒廿八年 十一月廿七日
海傍開演 每晚由七點至九點鐘止
○頭等椅位六毫 二等椅位四毫 板位式毫
本園主人謹啓

Figure 1. A film ad on magic lantern show at the Hong Kong theatre circa 1900: "Lively Picture Drama Show at the New Hei Lai Theatre" (Jan. 9, 1903, *The Chinese Mail*)

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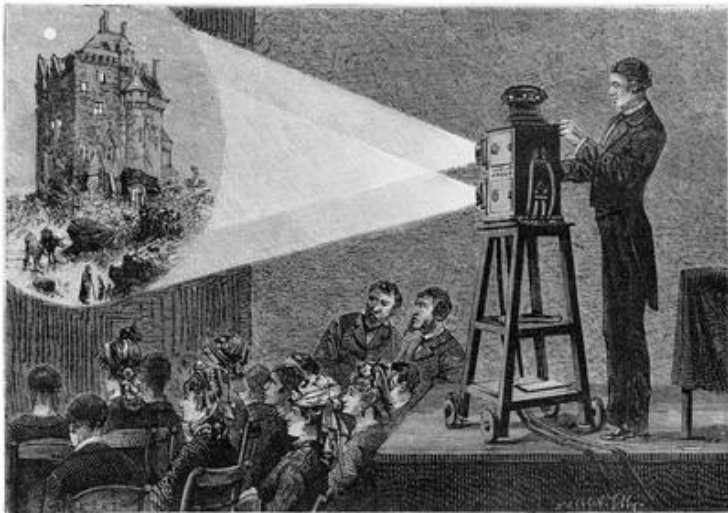


Figure 1. Truchet's poster for the Cinématographe Lumière



“The cinema’s first audiences are interpreted as being unable to distinguish between the film image and reality. [...]

While the fear and panic of the audience facing Lumière’s locomotive is retold in the form of an anecdote, its status reaches much higher: reiterated over and over again, its figures as *the* founding myth of the medium, testifying to the power of film over its spectators”

(Loiperdinger 2004, 92).



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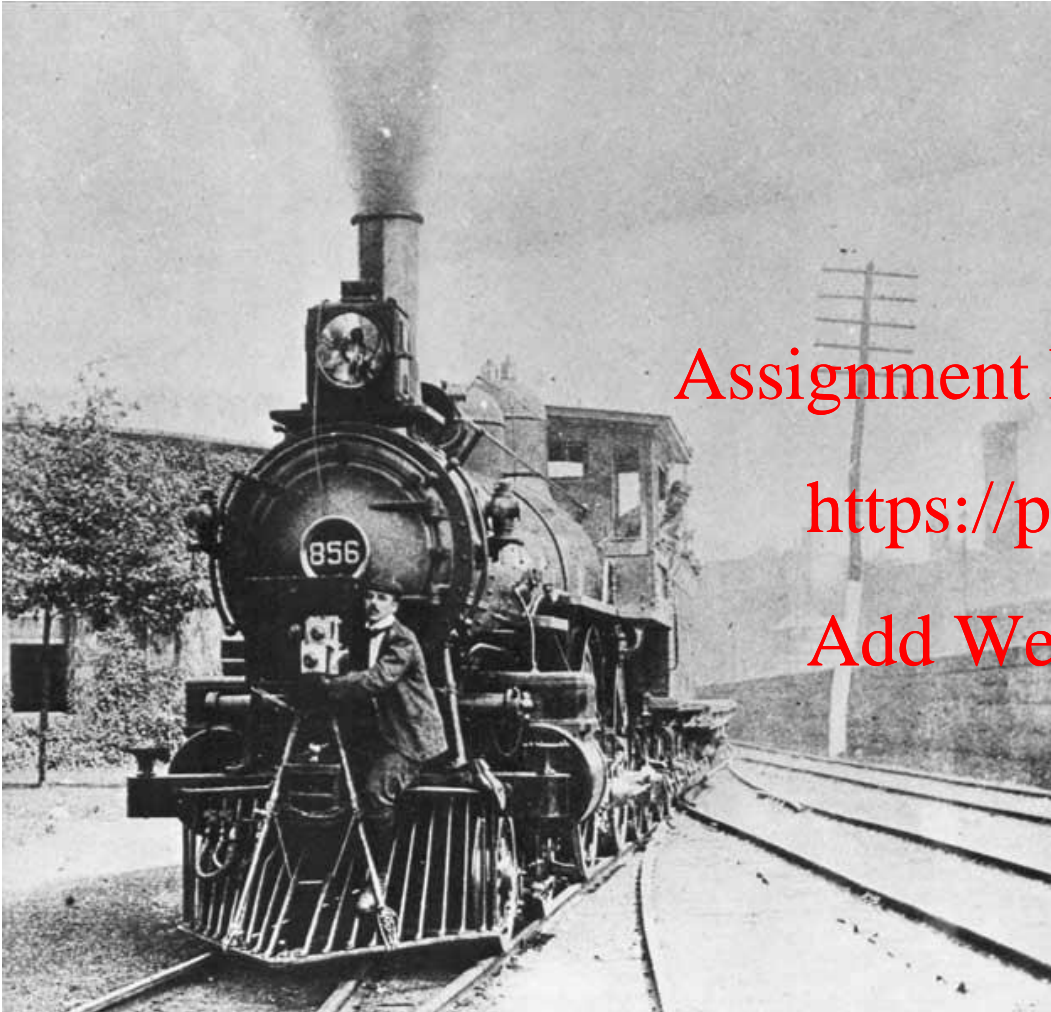
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Hugo (2012)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWS5KlqgpR8>

1:10

The origin story of cinema



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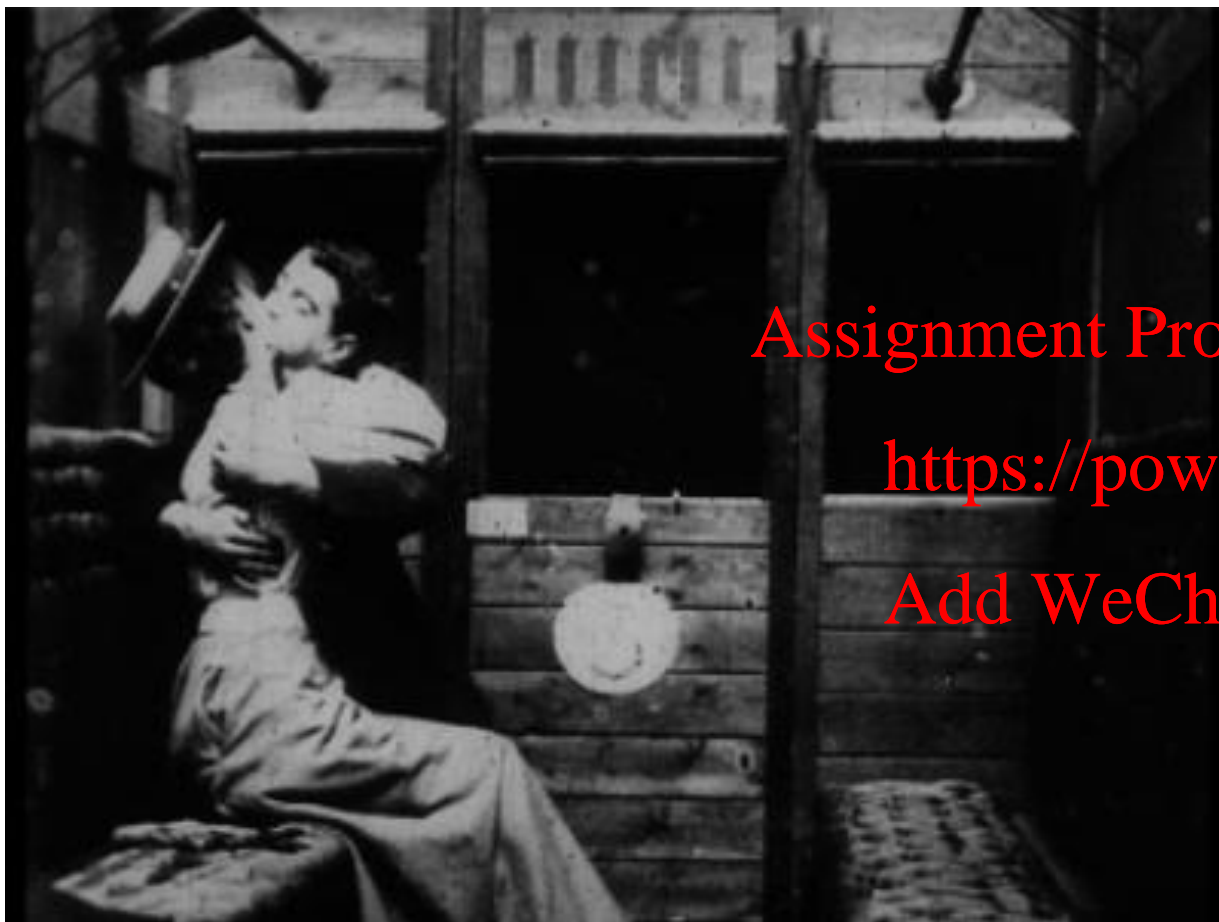
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“The wonder of early cinema wasn’t in stories or acting or montage [editing to make a narrative] it was just this; the mystery of suspended time, of captured motion. Just like train travel. . . . They were kindred spirits, both symbols of progress, both promising journeys to other places, both foreshortening distance and time in ways society had never imagined before.”



- In fact, there were many “arrival of a train” films, even in the Lumiere brother’s own catalogue, so they could be considered something like a genre
- The train films were also **not** just a “capture of reality,” that involved no acting or staging. Why?
- Proto-documentary film



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“The influential *A Kiss In The Tunnel* (1899). It consists of only three shots; train enters tunnel, man kisses woman in the dark compartment, train exits tunnel. It might not sound like much now but this was a major advance in editing and continuity leading the medium towards more sophisticated story-telling.”

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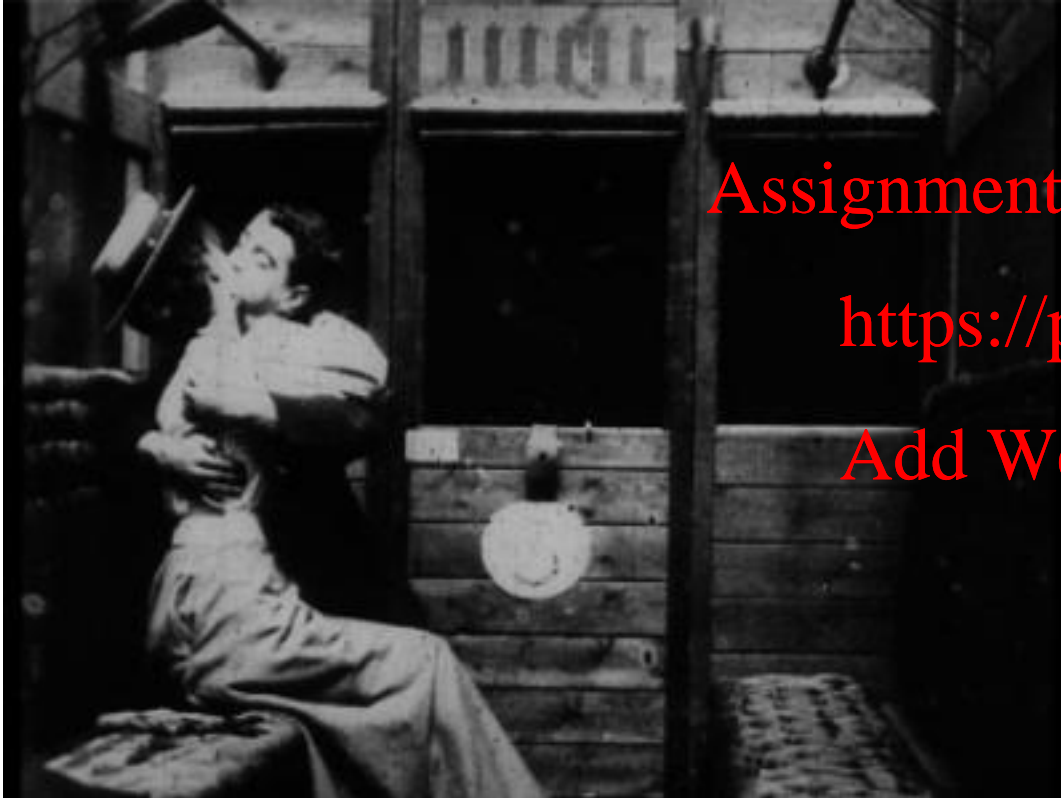
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The Sick Kitten (1901)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T33INsnVFbl>

Kisses in tunnels



From the British Film Institute:

“The *Warwick Trading Company* catalogue offered exhibitors just this middle shot - they were advised to splice it into train footage that they almost certainly would own from previous programmes (the version on Screenonline gives an example of how it would have been shown).”

The Smith film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vdb79xXMWg>

The 1899 Bamforth Company remake, *The Kiss in the Tunnel*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwcnF9slyyc>

Youtube comments on the BFI version of Smith's film:

- “This was the 1899 equivalent of 50 shades of grey”
- “Only a 1890s kid would understand.”

By 1912, *A Kiss in the Tunnel* was retrospectively included in debate over “sensationalism”

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1912: British Board of Film Censors formed to advise local authorities on specific films (announced in the House of Commons November 1912; guidelines in operation from 1/1/1913), on “safety” and “morality”

Cast:

George Albert Smith

[Laura Bayley billed as] Mrs. George Albert Smith



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Inglourious Basterds (2009)

Anxiety about the mass cinema audience

Otto Preminger, *The Moon is Blue* (1953)



Obscenity

The audience, the crowd, and the “mass” audience
The idea of the “impressionable” audience (cf Week 5)

Early 20th-century **psychologists, sociologists, “educationalists”**:

- *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, No. 128 (1926)
- Henri Storck, *The Entertainment Film for Juvenile Audiences* (UNESCO, 1950)

What does “box office success” really tell us?



D.W. Griffith, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915)

- Dick Lehr, “100 years ago, the first White House film screening sparked nationwide protests”. *The Conversation*, 18/2/2015. Available at <http://theconversation.com/100-years-ago-the-first-white-house-film-screening-sparked-nationwide-protests-37103>
- Dorian Lynskey, “‘A Public Menace’: How the fight to ban *The Birth of a Nation* shaped the nascent civil rights movement”. *Slate*, 31/3/2015. Available at http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/history/2015/03/the_birth_of_a_nation_how_the_fight_to_censor_d_w_griffith_s_film_shaped.html
- Thomas Doherty, “‘The Birth of a Nation’ at 100: ‘Important, Innovative and Despicable.’ *Hollywood Reporter*, 7/2/2015. Available at <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/race/birth-a-nation-at-100-770620>

“Tickets at New York’s Liberty Theater, where it played for 44 weeks, topped off at an unheard-of \$2.20 (\$51.50 in today’s dollars). Throughout the silent era, the film was never far from a marquee.”

Do popular films reflect society? Or, do popular films influence society?

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***Broken Blossoms,* an exploitation film?**

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D.W. Griffith , *Broken Blossoms or the Yellow Man and the Girl* (1919)

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Where does *this* film come from?

A different set of public debates to *Birth of a Nation* (1915)

Cultural context:

- World War I setting
- “The Yellow Peril”
- Temperance (1920--)
- Suffrage (1920--)

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1917 NY Suffrage parade

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“Eating machine” from Charlie Chaplin’s *Modern Times* (1936)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_1apYo6-Ow

Assembly line

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfGs2Y5WJ14>

Opening

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksoq50iYzc8>

Eating machine

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_1apYo6-Ow

***Modern Times* comments on / participates in public debates on:**

Fordism and Taylorisation

- Henry Ford's assembly line
- Frederick Winslow Taylor's time management

Communism

- Chaplin and the "House Committee on Un-American Activities"

Article on Chaplin's political problems:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/19/newsid_3102000/3102179.stm

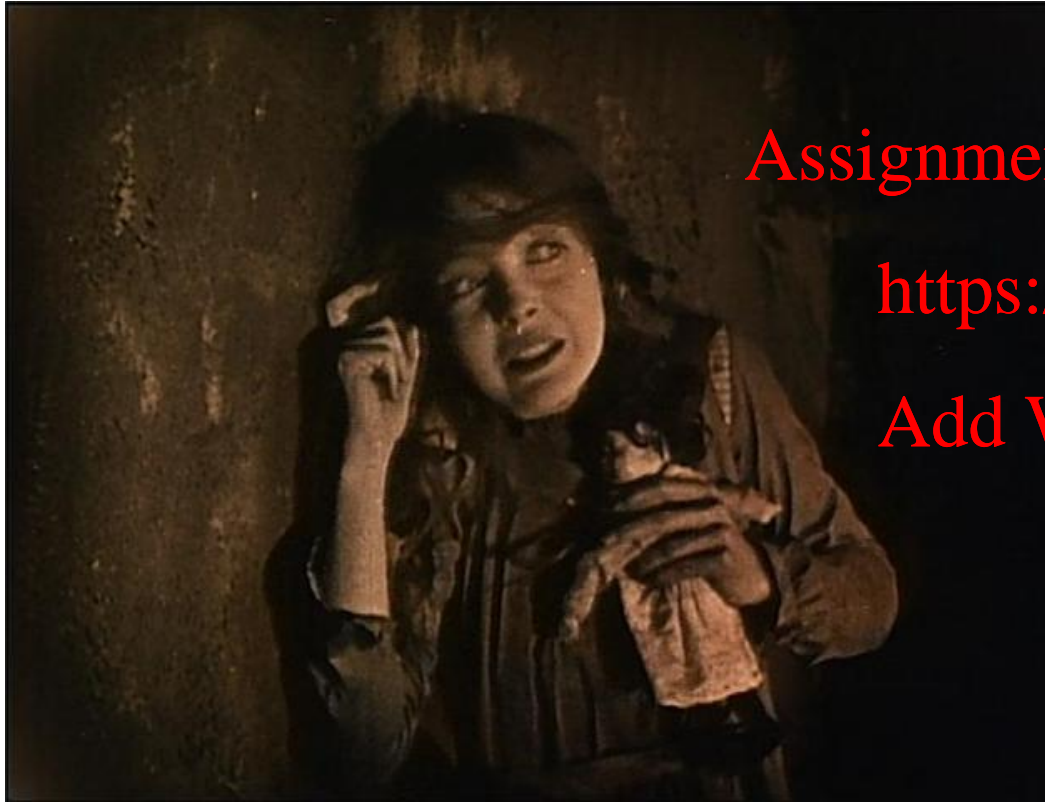
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What is “the public sphere” and what does it have to do with cinema?



The “public” – when we say something is “public” what do we mean?

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The public “sphere”:

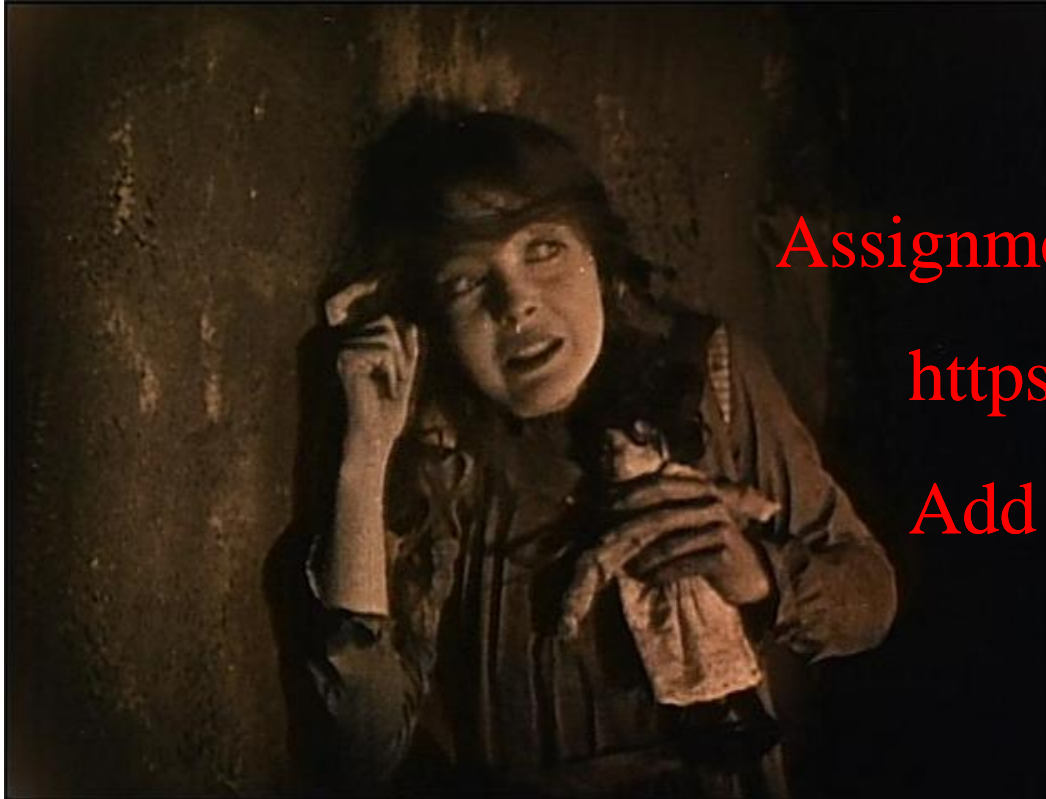
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- Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962/1989).
- “Through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society” (Habermas 1989, 31).
- The public sphere is neither “political authority” nor strictly economic – e.g. literary salons, newspapers, coffee-houses.

In contrast to, The Frankfurt School and the critique of mass culture

Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry" (1944) critiques the culture industries for mass-producing not just films and generic conventions, but also what people desire.

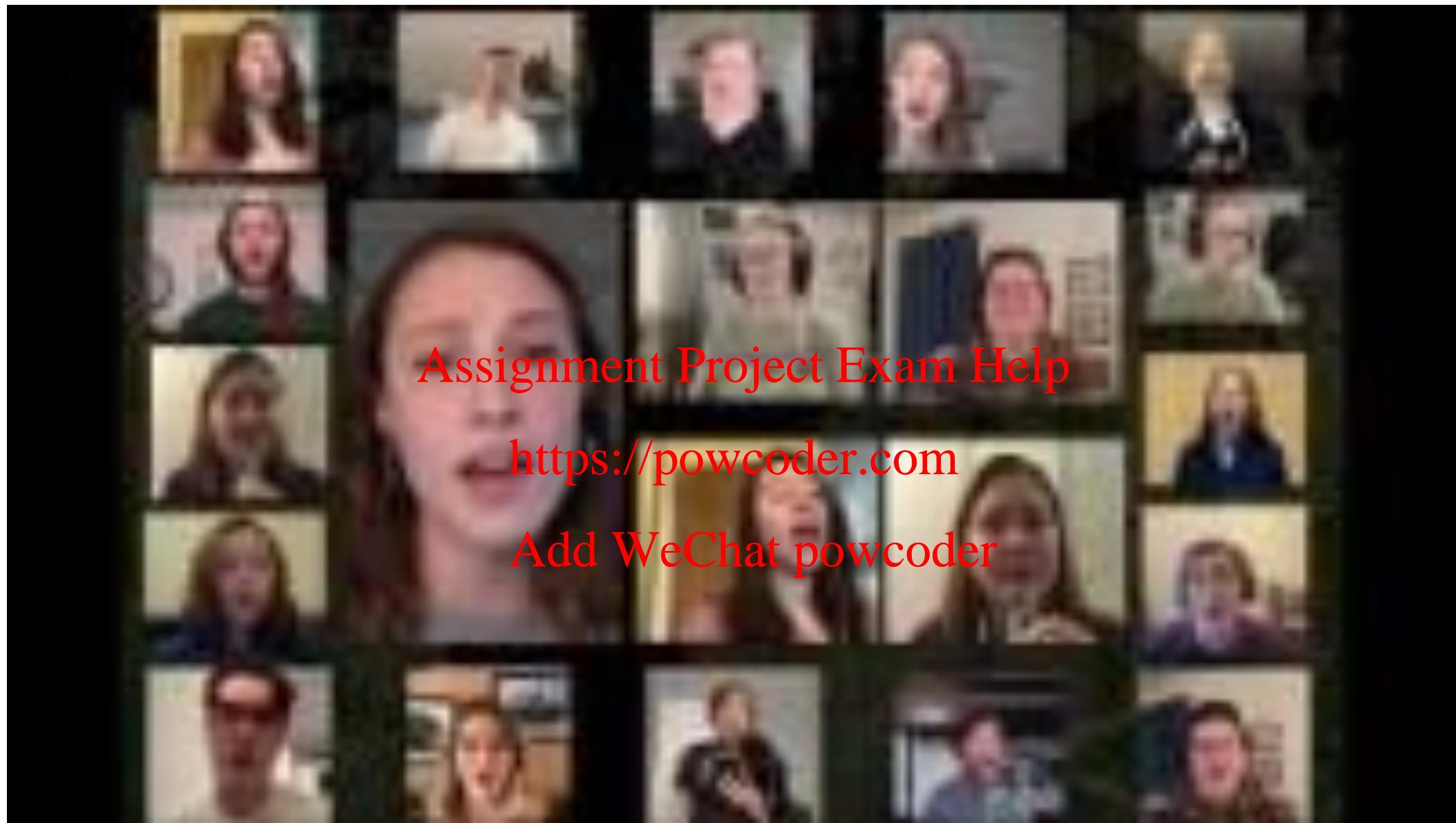


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"The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises. The promissory note which, with its plots and staging, it draws on pleasure is endlessly prolonged; the promise, which is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory: all it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reached, that the diner must be satisfied with the menu. In front of the appetite stimulated by all those brilliant names and images there is finally set no more than a commendation of the depressing everyday world it sought to escape."



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmyjtutIAhk>



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The Hunger Games as:

- Action film
- Teen film
- Science fiction film



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Three key criticisms of *The Hunger Games* as “neoliberal postfeminism”:



Rock universe in the multiverse of *Everything, Everywhere All At Once* (2022)

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1. Makeover culture – commercial beauty culture plus what Gill calls “the confidence cult(ure)”

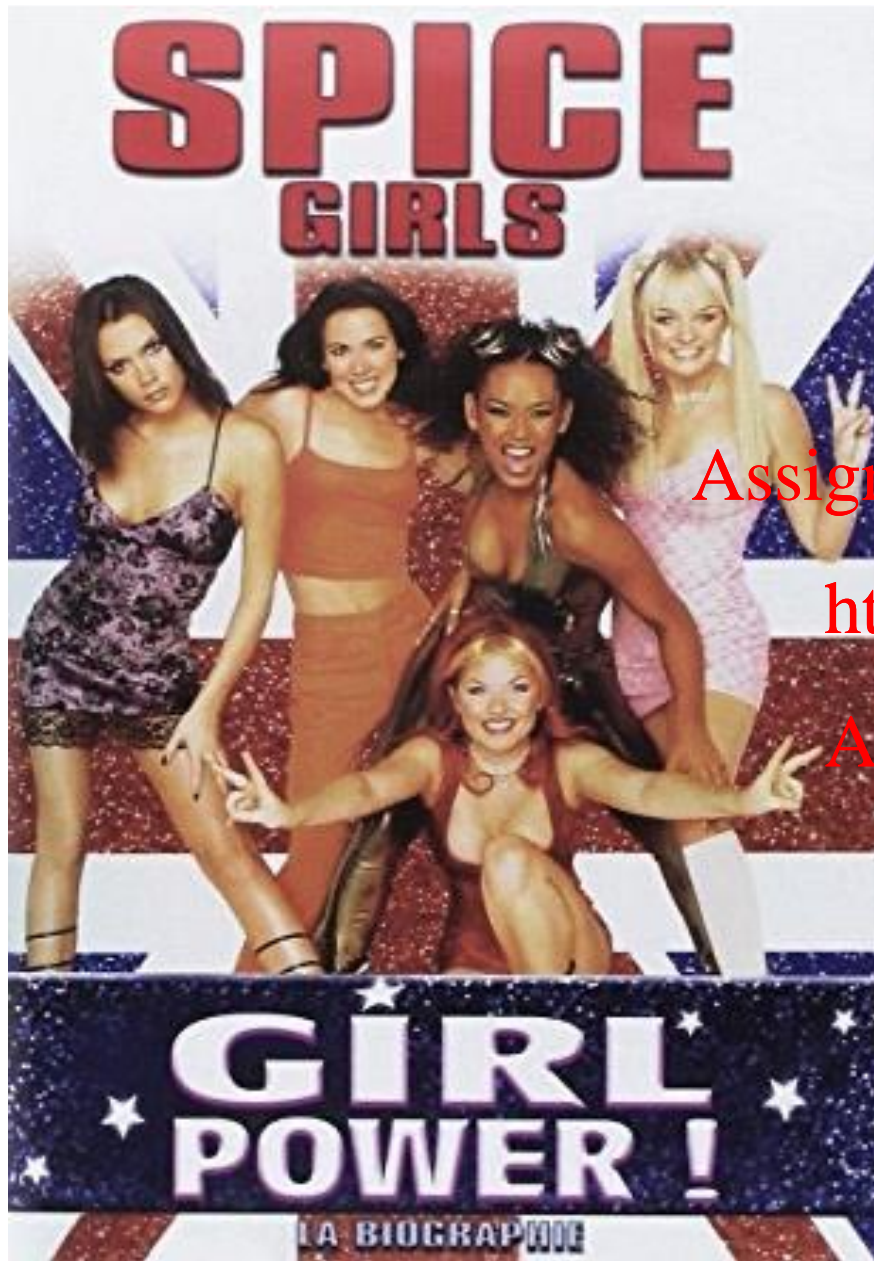
sometimes referred to now as “neoliberal”

2. Fulfilment in romance – traditional girl-oriented rewards

3. The mythic success of individual agency – virtue and effort triumph despite the odds

sometimes referred to now as “neoliberalism”

Rosalind Gill, “Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a sensibility”. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10.2, 2007: 147-166.



Anita Harris, "The 'Can-Do' Girl Versus the 'At-Risk' Girl", *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-first Century*. Routledge, 2004.

- "Young women are... taught that while girlpower is about being confident and assertive, it should not be taken too far" (29).

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So Young (2013), Fleet of Time (2014), My Old Classmate (2014)



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My Old Classmate (2014)

Cultural context:

- One Child Policy (1980-2015)
- *Zaolian* (early or premature love) discourses
- Married school and university regulations banning dating and/or premarital sex

On the productivity of clichés:

- **Fiske, John.** 2010. "Popular Texts." In *Understanding Popular Culture*, 146-164. London: Routledge.
- **Morris, Meaghan.** 2013. "Transnational Glamour, National Allure: Community, Change and Cliche in Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*." In *Storytelling: Critical and Creative Approaches*, edited by Jan Shaw, Philippa Kelly and L. E. Semler, 83-113. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Choose one of the Week 3 lecture examples (as listed in the Syllabus/Outline) and unpack what seem to you to be the public debates, or matters of public concern, raised by that film for its contemporary audience and for an audience today.

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How exactly are these debates/concerns raised by the film, and what position does it take in relation to them? What are the limitations of thinking about film as an arena for public debate?

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