OLLI Course Outline for Spring, 2022

Classic Film Treatments of Famous French and Russian Novels

In the 1930s, an explosion of interest in Hollywood in filming classic fiction extended to the best known French and Russian novels. Hollywood by the mid-30s had learned to join sound with the imaginative visual effects of the silent era. These older adaptations of classic fiction are consistently preferred to newer adaptations, largely because of the superb character acting of the older versions. In versions of novels by Leo Tolstoi, Alexander Dumas, Victor Hugo, and Fyodor Dostoyevski, we will see vivid performances by such stars as Greta Garbo, Charles Laughton, Lon Cheney, Fredric March, Jennifer Jones, and Peter Lorre.

These films of the 1930s were famous for their luxuriant and inventive production values.

These classes will meet on Fridays from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. from February 4 to March 25 in the OLLI Osher Classroom

Schedule of Classes: Title, Year, Author of Novel, Director, Major Stars, Time, Studios

 Feb. 4, Week one: Count of Monte Cristo; 1934, Alexander Dumas, father, author, Roland V. Lee, director, Robert Donat, Elissa Landi, 119 min. Reliance

Feb. 11, Week Two: The Phantom of the Opera; 1929 (Restored Version), Gaston Leroux, author, Rupert Julian, director, and others, Lon Chaney, Mary Philbin, 94 min., Universal

Feb. 18, Week Three: Anna Karenina; 1935, Leo Tolstoi, author Clarence Brown, director, Greta Garbo, Fredric March, 95 min., MGM

Feb. 25, Week Four: Les Misérables; 1935, Victor Hugo, author, Richard Boleslawski, director, Fredric March, Charles Laughton, 108 min., Twentieth Century

Mar. 4, Week Five: Madame Bovary; 1949, Gustave Flaubert, author, Vincenti Minnelli, director, Jennifer Jones, Van Heflin. 115 min., MGM

Mar. 11, Week Six: Crime and Punishment: 1935, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, author, Josef von Sternberg, director, Peter Lorre, Edward Arnold, 88 min., Columbia

Mar., 18, Week Seven: Camille: 1937, Alexander Dumas, son, author, George Cukor, director, Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor, 108 min. MGM

Mar., 25, Week Eight: Hunchback of Notre Dame:; 1939, Victor Hugo, author, Willian Dieterle, director, Charles Laughton, Maureen O’Hara, 115 min. RKO

Informational sheets with cast lists, biographical information of performers and authors, and historical background, will be given at class time.

Efforts will be made to ensure that prints with subtitles will be shown, if possible. There may be some changes in the line-up of films.

 John Frayne was from 1965 to 1997 Professor of English, Comparative Literature, and Film Studies at UIUC, and is now an Emeritus Professor. He specialized in Modern British Literature and Film Studies. From 1985 to present, he has been radio host on Saturdays (formerly also on Sundays) at radio station WILL-FM, where he hosts “Classics of the Phonograph,” and Opera Broadcasts. Since 2000, he has been classical music critic for the Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette. In recent years, he has volunteered at the Champaign Public Library FriendShop, serving on the Board and the FriendShop committee.

Resume: Education; B.A., Fordham College, 1953, English Major, Announcer on WFUV-FM,

U.S. Army: 1953-55, First Lieutenant, Overseas Service in Korea

The Record Hunter, New York, 1955-57, Store Manager

Columbia University: 1957-65, M.A and PhD degrees. Taught part time at Hunter College, Wagner College, Columbia College

UIUC: 1965-1997: Professor of English, retired as Full Professor; since 1997, has taught many courses part time.

WILL-FM; 1985 to present, announcer and program producer, “Classics of the Phonograph,” host, “Afternoon of the Opera”

Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette: 2000 to present, music critic, writes column, “In the Concert Hall”