

CTCS 392: History of the American Film, 1925–50

Writing 3: Wartime Annotation

Due 3/28 at the start of class; Annotation + 500 wds. ± 10%; 10%

Goals

1. To dip your toes in Classical Hollywood primary source research and begin to relate such materials to broader cultural contexts.
2. To gain a better sense of leisure and the entertainment industry during World War II.

Part 1: Annotated Document

An enormous volume of Classical Hollywood material has recently been digitized and made available via lantern.mediahist.org. This has transformed the possibilities of cultural research, moving away from studies that concentrate on *Variety*, *Life* and newspaper reviews. You can find a document by using a text search (“Stormy Weather”) or by paging through an issue of a magazine. (Click “Visit Internet Archive Page.” For example: <https://archive.org/details/exhibitorjun194330jaye/page/n7> and the subsequent page are amazing.)

We are watching three World War II–era films: *Casablanca*, *Stormy Weather*, and *The Gang’s All Here*. In addition, we will discuss wartime government filmmaking. Choosing any film made or released during the war, or any wartime topic (the homefront, foreign markets, “rosie the riveter,” government work, etc.) find a document that piques your interest. It can be an article, essay, opinion piece, news entry, letter to the editor, advertisement, etc. In a set of text boxes linked to passages in the essay, highlight important links to themes from the readings and lectures. Feel free to explain more technical terms but don’t overwhelm the page with those.

You can annotate the document relatively easily using Adobe Acrobat (available free to all USC students), Preview for Mac, or Photoshop. I’ve posted an example from an assignment about Orson Welles as an illustration. NOTE: That assignment was a more traditional 5W’s media analysis.

Part 2: Discussion

Imagine you are including your annotated document in a Hollywood history textbook. You are writing the headnote introducing the reproduced document. What sort of document is this and why does it matter? How does it illustrate crucial features of wartime culture? As with the Chan assignment, you won’t have space for a formal introduction and conclusion. Feel free to draw attention to specific annotations, but don’t simply turn your annotations into prose.

Submission

Save your annotation as a pdf. Send it as an email to me and Katrina: jconnor@cinema.usc.edu, katrinae@usc.edu.

The essays are due at the beginning of class, submitted to TurnItIn and in print. They should be written in Courier New. They should be double-spaced, with page numbers, title pages, and 1.25" margins. There should be a wordcount at the end of the text. References should be done as footnotes in AHA style. (Repeated references to the same text can be handled in parentheses: "Further references appear as Lev in the text," for example.)