

University Libraries and Undergraduate Academies present 48 Good Films

Erin Brockovich 2000, Director: Steven Soderberg (USA)

This film is based on the true story of Erin Brockovich (Julia Roberts), an unemployed single mother who is desperate to find a job, but having no luck. This losing streak even extends to a failed lawsuit against a doctor who injured her in a car accident. With no alternative, she successfully browbeats her lawyer into giving her a job in compensation for the loss. While no one takes her seriously, with her trashy clothes and earthy manners, she begins to investigate a suspicious real estate case involving the Pacific Gas & Electric Company. What she discovers is that the company is trying, quietly, to buy residential land that it has contaminated by illegally dumping hexavalent chromium, a deadly toxic waste. As she digs deeper, Erin finds herself in a series of events that will lead to one of the biggest class action lawsuits against a multi-billion dollar corporation in American history.

The Times of Harvey Milk (Documentary) 1984, Director: Rob Epstein (USA)

Member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, Harvey Milk, and San Francisco Mayor, George Moscone, were assassinated by the city's Supervisor Dan White on November 27, 1978. Milk's life leading up to his election, his successful efforts to politically represent San Francisco's gay community, and the city's reaction to the assassinations are documented with extensive contemporary news film clips and the personal recollections of many who knew and worked with Milk.

Gandhi 1982, Director: Richard Attenborough (USA)

In 1893, Gandhi (Ben Kingsley) is thrown off a South African train for being an Indian and traveling in a first class compartment. Realizing that the laws are biased against Indians, he decides to start a non-violent protest campaign for the rights of all Indians in South Africa. After numerous arrests, his campaign wins rights for Indians, but not for the native blacks of South Africa. Invited back to India, Gandhi is surprised to find himself something of a national hero. Urged to take up the fight for India's independence from the British Empire, Gandhi agrees, and mounts a non-violent non-cooperation campaign of unprecedented scale.

In Cold Blood 1967, Director: Richard Brooks (USA)

Based on the book by Truman Capote, this almost documentary-style film dramatizes the true events surrounding a botched robbery that results in the brutal murder of a rural family. The two drifters who committed the crime, Perry Smith (Robert Blake) and "Dick" Hickock (Scott Wilson), elude the police but are eventually captured, interrogated, tried, and sentenced to hanging; in the end coming to terms with their own mortality and the repercussions of their actions. A very powerfully realistic black and white depiction of these actual 1959-60 events, with many of the scenes filmed in the original locations.

Twelve Angry Men 1957, Director: Sidney Lumet (USA)

The defense and the prosecution have rested and the jury is filing into the jury room to decide if a young Spanish-American is guilty or innocent of murdering his father. What begins as an open-and-shut case of murder; soon becomes a mini-drama, slowly revealing the jurors' prejudices and preconceptions about the trial, the accused, and each other. As in the original 1954 television play by Reginald Rose, all the action takes place in this single jury room.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington 1939, Director: Frank Capra (USA)

On a lark, the governor of an unnamed western state appoints Jefferson Smith (James Stewart), the naive and idealistic leader of the Boy Rangers, to replace the state's recently-deceased U.S. Senator. In Washington Smith is taken under the wing of the state's senior senator and his childhood hero --presidential hopeful, Senator Joseph Paine (Claude Rains), and is immediately attracted to his beautiful socialite daughter (Astrid Allwyn). However, Smith also finds himself quickly tarnished as a bumpkin by the unforgiving Washington press, and politically manipulated by the state's corrupt political boss, Jim Taylor (Edward Arnold). Only after a dramatic 24-hour Senate filibuster is Smith finally able to prove his innocence and affirm American ideals of freedom.

A Short Film About Killing (Krotki film o zabijaniu) 1988, Director: Krzysztof Kieslowski (Poland)

The plot couldn't be simpler, or its attack on capital punishment (and the act of killing in general) more direct. A drifter (Miroslaw Baka) commits a senseless, violent, almost-botched murder which is followed by a cold, calculated, flawlessly-performed execution (both killings shown in the most graphic detail imaginable). The murderer's idealistic young defense lawyer (Krzysztof Globisz) ends up as an unwilling accessory to the judicial murder of his client.

The Corporation (Documentary) 2003, Directors: Jennifer Abbott, Mark Achbar (Canada)

Since the late 18th century, U.S. court decisions have given business corporations legal rights permitting them most of the same protections and freedoms our government gives to people. Since then, the corporation has also become the dominant economic, political and social force around the globe. This film undertakes an in-depth psychological examination of this corporate "person" through various case studies. These studies illustrate that, in its behavior, the corporation typically acts like a dangerously destructive psychopath, without a conscience. Furthermore, we observe the profound threats this psychopath poses for our world and our future, but also what people with courage, intelligence and determination can do to stop this behavior.

Arranged 2007, Directors: Diane Crespo, Stefan C. Schaefer (USA)

This story centers on the friendship between two young women: one an Orthodox Jew (Zoe Lister-Jones) and the other a Muslim (Francis Benhamou). They meet as first-year teachers at a public school in Brooklyn and, over the course of a school year, they learn they share much in

common - not least of which is that they are both going through the process of arranged marriages.

Fados (Documentary) 2007, Director: Carlos Saura (Portugal/ Spain)

This wonderful film must be seen by all *fado* ("destiny, fate") music fans, and also those who know nothing about this powerful Portuguese singing and instrumental music tradition. Saura includes a mix of contemporary studio-scenes and historical scenes filmed in Lisbon clubs with fado masters, such as Mariza and Carlos do Carmo.

The Cave of the Yellow Dog (*Die Hohle des gelben Hundes*) 2005, Director: Byambasuren Davaa (Germany/ Mongolia)

Nansal (Nansal Batchuluun), a little nomad girl, finds an abandoned puppy on the Mongolian veld and the little dog quickly becomes the girl's best friend - against the wishes of her parents. But when the dog saves the life of Nansal's baby brother (Babbayar Batchuluun), father (Batchuluun Urjindorj) and mother (Buyandulam Daramdadi) also fall in love with the yellow dog. This is a very simple, documentary-style story beautifully illustrating the traditional way of life of a nomad family and the encroaching temptations of the city.

Russian Ark (*Russkiy kovcheg*) 2002, Director: Aleksandr Sokurov (Russia)

An unseen man regains consciousness, not knowing who or where he is. No one seems to be able to see him, except a mysterious man dressed in black (Sergey Dreyden). We eventually learn through their discussions that the man in black is a 19th century French aristocrat, with a comprehensive knowledge of Russian history, who the unseen man calls the "European." It quickly becomes clear that they are in the Winter Palace of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and, as they walk through the palace and its grounds, they interact with the various eras of Russian history, either through staged scenes of events that have happened at the palace from the 18th century to the present. Shot in one fluid take, the camera floats & careens through the lavish corridors of the Palace, interacting with a period-dressed cast of 867 actors.

A Crude Awakening: The Oil Crash (Documentary) 2006, Directors: Basil Gelpke, Raymond McCormack, Reto Caduff (Switzerland/ Germany)

Supported by a powerful mix of archival footage, NASA shots of burning oil fields, and historical film excerpts, *Oil Crash* guides us on an exotic, visual journey from Houston to Caracas, the Lake of Maracaibo, the Orinoco delta, Central Asia's secretive republic of Azerbaijan with its ancient capital Baku and the Caspian Sea, via London & Zürich. *Oil Crash* visits cities around the world to learn about our energy future from such leading authorities as an oil investment banker, former OPEC chairman, Caltech's head of physics, a Stanford University political scientist, and many more.

March of the Penguins (*La marche de l'empereur*; Documentary) 2005, Director: Luc Jacquet (France)

The cycle of life of the emperor penguins is disclosed in this wonderful nature documentary narrated by Morgan Freeman. Every autumn, these animals leave the safety of the ocean and march twenty days to a remote corner of Antarctica called "Oamack." Once there, they select their mates, procreate, protect and feed their offspring and, after many more months, blinded by blizzards and buffeted by gale force winds, they return to the sea. Later, their progeny also go to the ocean, where they stay for four years, and when they reach their adult life, they follow the same annual pattern as their parents.

After Life (*Wandafuru raifu*) 1998, Director: Hirokazu Koreeda (Japan)

In this fantasy speculation about the after-life, when people die, they spend a week with counselors, also dead, who help them pick one memory, the only memory they can take with them to eternity. They describe this memory to the counselors who then work with a crew to film and screen each memory at week's end; eternity follows. The film documents one week's work of three counselors and a trainee. One old man struggles to find a memory, others pick their memory quickly, and the film crew gets right to work. The trainee, 18-year-old Shiori (Erika Oda), helps a teenage girl choose a memory other than Disneyland. The youthful staff has secrets and feelings which also play out, especially Shiori's affection for her mentor, Mochizuki (Arata).

2001: A Space Odyssey 1968, Director: Stanley Kubrick (USA)

As the film opens, the world is ruled by apes. One particular ape group discovers a mysterious rectangular monolith, imparting to them the knowledge of tool use, and enabling them to evolve into people. Closer to the film's present, a similar monolith is discovered on the moon, and is determined to have come from an area near Jupiter. Astronaut Dave Bowman (Keir Dullea), along with four companions, sets off for Jupiter on a spaceship controlled by HAL 9000, a revolutionary talking computer system; every bit humankind's equal--and perhaps its superior. When HAL endangers the crew's lives for the sake of the mission, Bowman will have to first overcome the computer, and then travel to the birthplace of the monolith.

To Kill a Mockingbird 1962, Director: Robert Mulligan (USA)

Based on Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1961 novel, this story focuses on two young children ("Scout" (Mary Badham) and her little brother Jem (Phillip Alford) and their father Atticus Finch (Gregory Peck), an honest lawyer who believes in fair play and equal justice for all, but who lives in the racially-divided, fictional town of Maycomb, Alabama, during the 1930s. The innocent children happily play together and spy on their reclusive neighbor "Boo" Radley (Robert Duvall), about whom wicked rumors circulate in town. But when the children sneak into the courthouse to watch their father as he attempts, unsuccessfully, to defend a black man (Brock Peters), who is wrongfully convicted and then lynched for raping a young white woman, Scout and Jem mature painfully and quickly. In the film's dramatic conclusion, "Boo", the reclusive neighbor who has been secretly serving as a guardian angel and protector, saves the children from a vicious attack and also reveals the identity of the rapist.

All The President's Men 1976, Director: Alan Pakula (USA)

In the run-up to the 1972 elections, Washington Post reporter Bob Woodward (Robert Redford) covers what seems to be a minor break-in at the Democratic Party National Headquarters at the Watergate complex. He is surprised to find top lawyers already on the defense case, and the discovery of documents connecting the burglars to the Committee to Re-elect the President further arouses his suspicions. The editor of the Post, Ben Bradlee (Jason Robards), assigns Woodward and Carl Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman) to continue the investigative reporting. Aided by a confidential source, "Deep Throat," (Hal Holbrook) they find the trail leading higher and higher in the Republican Party, and eventually into the White House itself.

Schindler's List 1993, Director: Steven Spielberg (USA)

A testament to the potential for good in all of us, this film recounts the true story of Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), a vainglorious and greedy businessman, who becomes an unlikely humanitarian and hero in Nazi Germany. Using bribery and deception, Schindler acquires a factory in Krakow, Poland to make mess kits for the German war effort, and decides to use Polish Jewish laborers to save money. Gradually, as he gets to know and respect these workers, he finds himself using the same bribery and deception skills to turn his factory into a refuge. By the end of the war he has managed to include some 1,100 "essential" workers on his list, saving them from likely death in a concentration camp.

Silkwood 1983, Director: Mike Nichols. (USA)

This film is a fairly accurate recounting of the true story of Karen Silkwood (Meryl Streep), the Oklahoma nuclear fuel production worker and union activist who blew the whistle on falsified safety reports at her Kerr-McGee plant and then died in an auto "accident" under circumstances which are still under debate. After depicting a series of alternately frustrating and hopeful incidents in Silkwood's campaign, including her testimony before the Atomic Energy Commission, the film ends with Silkwood driving at night to a meeting with a reporter from the New York Times, with menacing, bright headlights in her rear-view mirror.

The Grapes of Wrath 1940, Director: John Ford (USA)

Based on John Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, this film tells the story of Tom Joad (Henry Fonda) and his Oklahoma family who, after losing their farm in the Great Depression, are forced to become migrant workers. As they travel west along Highway 66 towards California, the family faces many forms of discrimination and exploitation as well as life-threatening challenges in the migrant labor camps. Tom is eventually moved, by what he has witnessed and experienced in the camps, to devote his life to fighting for social reform.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest 1975, Director: Milos Forman (USA)

Based on the 1962 novel by Ken Kesey, this film tells the story of “Mac” McMurphy (Jack Nicholson), a recidivist, anti-authoritarian criminal, who gets himself transferred to a mental hospital to avoid hard prison-farm labor. There, McMurphy becomes the leader of his ward’s motley group of patients who suffer from the subtly-evil psychological and physical humiliation and control tactics of steely, unyielding Nurse Ratched (Louise Fletcher). The escalating, comically-sharp battle of wits that ensues is ultimately a tragic indictment of social power structures and the urge to conform.

Food, Inc. (Documentary) 2008, Director: Robert Kenner (USA)

Our current methods of food production were developed in response to the growth of the fast food industry starting in the 1950s. These methods have changed more over this half-century than during all the previous millennia of human agriculture. Controlled by a handful of multinational corporations, this global food production industry uses frequently subsidized inputs (land, seed, labor) to earn enormous profits, which in turn results in its increasing control of our global food supply. Health and safety (of the food products, the animals, the workers, and the consumers) are often overlooked by these companies and by governments in an effort to provide cheap, plentiful food.

The Social Network 2010, Director: David Fincher (USA)

On a fall night in 2003, Harvard undergrad and computer programming genius Mark Zuckerberg (Jesse Eisenberg) sits down at his dorm room computer and, in a fury of blogging and programming, builds the framework for what will become Facebook, a global social network and revolution in personal communications. Six years and 500 million friends later, Zuckerberg has become the youngest billionaire in history. But for this young entrepreneur, as this film laced with scathing wit and aching sadness vividly illustrates, success can also lead to dramatic personal and legal complications.

A Beautiful Mind 2002, Director: Ron Howard (USA)

This biopic of the famed mathematician John Nash (Russell Crowe) depicts his lifelong struggles with mental health. As a graduate student at Princeton in 1948, Nash stands out as an odd duck who is obsessed with finding a mathematical theorem that will be completely original. After graduation, as a professor at MIT, he falls in love with and marries a graduate student, Alicia (Jennifer Connelly). Despite this promising new academic career and marriage, John slowly loses his grip on reality, and is eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia and institutionalized. The film powerfully dramatizes the hallucinations of Nash’s imaginary world and his gradual and painful forays, with Alicia’s support and help, back into the world of academic research and teaching. The film ends in 1994 at the ceremony where Nash, still haunted by his hallucinations, is awarded the Nobel Prize in economics for his revolutionary work on game theory.

WALL•E 2008, Director: Andrew Stanton (USA)

In a distant, but not so unrealistic, animated future where mankind has abandoned an Earth covered with trash from products sold by the powerful multi-national Buy N Large Corporation, WALL•E (voice of Benn Burtt), a garbage collecting robot, has been left to clean up the mess. Mesmerized with trinkets of Earth's history and show tunes, WALL•E is alone, except for a sprightly pet cockroach. One day, EVE (Elissa Knight), a sleek (and dangerous) reconnaissance robot, arrives on Earth to investigate whether human life is once again sustainable. WALL•E falls in love with EVE and many comic and surprisingly moving adventures ensue, eventually changing the destiny of robots and mankind.

In the Heat of the Night 1967, Director: Norman Jewison (USA)

Black Philadelphia detective Virgil Tibbs (Sidney Poitier) is caught up in the racial tensions of a 1960s small Mississippi town when he is arrested after the murder of a prominent local businessman. Tibbs had simply been waiting at the station for his next train, and the confusion is soon resolved. However, when local police chief Gillespie (Rod Steiger) learns that Tibbs is a big-city homicide expert, he reluctantly asks for Tibbs' assistance. Despite this rocky start to their relationship, the two policemen gradually learn to respect each other as they work together to investigate the crime. The highly charged and racially explosive environment surrounding this murder puts Tibbs in frequent mortal danger but with, and sometimes despite, Gillespie's help, he perseveres until the killer is found.

Wall Street 1987, Director: Oliver Stone (USA)

This cult classic is a cautionary tale about the dangerous seductions of Wall Street. The story focuses on enterprising 1980s stockbroker Bud Fox (Charlie Sheen) who falls under the spell of the unscrupulous Gordon "Greed is Good" Gekko (Michael Douglas), and soon finds himself swept into a world of "yuppies", shady business deals, the "good life", fast money, fast women, and a life style very much at odds with his blue-collar, union family roots and his estranged father (Martin Sheen). After viewing this story, you may find yourself asking: Has anything really changed in the 25+ years since this film first opened?

American Beauty 1999, Director: Sam Mendes (USA)

Lester (Kevin Spacey) and Carolyn (Annette Bening) Burnham are, on the outside, a perfect husband and wife, in a perfect house, in a perfect neighborhood. But inside, Lester is slipping deeper and deeper into a hopeless depression. He finally snaps after becoming infatuated with one of his daughter's friends (Mena Suvari). Meanwhile, his daughter Jane (Thora Birch) is developing a friendship with Ricky (Wes Bentley), the shy boy-next-door, who lives with a homophobic father (Chris Cooper).

Chinatown 1974, Director: Roman Polanski (USA)

L.A. private detective JJ 'Jake' Gittes (Jack Nicholson) specializes in matrimonial cases. Hired by Evelyn Mulwray (Faye Dunaway) who suspects that her husband, builder of the city's water supply system, is having an affair, Gittes does what he does best and photographs the builder

with a young girl. In the ensuing scandal, however, it seems Jake was hired by an impersonator and not the real Mrs. Mulwray. When Mr. Mulwray is found dead, Jake is plunged into a complex web of deceit involving murder, incest and municipal corruption all related to the city's water supply. In this part mystery--part psychological drama, inspired by the California Water Wars of the Great Depression, Polanski makes very effective use of elements of the film noir genre to tell his dark story.

The Thin Blue Line 1988, Director: Errol Morris (USA)

Errol Morris's unique documentary-drama, filmed with all the actual characters playing themselves, re-enacts the 1976 crime scene and investigation of a police officer's murder in Dallas, Texas. Randall Adams, a drifter, runs out of gas and is picked up by a 16-year-old runaway, David Harris. Later that night, they drink some beer, smoke some marijuana, and go to the movies. Then, their stories diverge. Adams claims that he left for his motel, where he was staying with his brother, and went to sleep. Harris, however, says that they were stopped by the police late that night, and that Adams suddenly shot the officer approaching their car. The film shows how the police, who were under tremendous pressure to clear the case, used very flimsy circumstantial evidence to charge, and win the conviction of, Adams for murder. The publicity around this film led directly to overturning Adams' conviction and his release from prison in 1989.

The Motorcycle Diaries (Diarios de motocicleta) 2004, Director: Walter Salles (Argentina/ USA)

In 1952, 23-year-old medical student Ernesto de la Serna (Gael García Bernal), later better known as Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, decides to postpone his last semester to accompany friend Alberto (Rodrigo de la Serna) on an 8,000-km motorcycle trip through South America, starting from their home in Buenos Aires. Their quest is to see things they've only read about in books, finishing in Venezuela on the other side of the continent. But the travelers wrestle with an unreliable motorbike, a continual lack of money, their raging libidos, and Alberto's asthma. A chance encounter with a pair of Communists in the Chilean desert and an extended stay at the San Pablo Leper Colony in Peru profoundly affects what each will want to do with his life and the bond each has with the other.

Three Colors: Blue (Trois couleurs: Bleu) 1993, **White** (Blanc) 1994, **Red** (Rouge) 1994, Director: Krzysztof Kieslowski (Poland/ France)

Kieslowski uses the three colors of the French flag symbolically in this film trilogy reflecting on the French national motto: Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.

Blue is the story of Julie (Juliette Binoche) who loses her husband, an acclaimed European composer, and her young daughter in a car accident. The film's theme of liberty is manifested in Julie's attempt to start a new life, free of personal commitments, belongings, grief and love. She intends to spiritually commit suicide by withdrawing from the world to live independently, anonymously and in complete solitude. Despite her intentions, people from her former and present life intrude with their own needs and irresistibly draw Julie back to the land of the living.

White (symbolizing equality for the French) is the much more light-hearted story of Polish hairdresser Karol (Zbigniew Zamachowski) and his beautiful French wife Dominique (Julie Delpy) who are going through a messy divorce because of Karol's inability to perform sexually. Crushed emotionally and financially, Karol returns to Poland where he can only find work as a beggar in the Warsaw Metro. His circumstances gradually improve, and with a little help, Karol decides to seek revenge on the woman who stole his self-respect. However, this plan has unexpected and amusing consequences.

Red focuses on Valentine (Irène Jacob), a young model living in Geneva. After an incident of distracted driving, where she accidentally runs over a dog, she tracks down the owner, a retired judge (Jean-Louis Trintignant) who secretly eavesdrops on his neighbors' phone calls. The film's theme of fraternity (through redemption, forgiveness and compassion) plays out as these two people--with little in common--gradually form unexpected bonds with each other and also with others, including key characters from the previous two films in the Trilogy.

All the King's Men 2006, Director: Steven Zaillian (USA)

Based on the 1946 Pulitzer-Prize winning novel by Robert Penn Warren, this latest film adaptation powerfully dramatizes the tangled web of corrupting influences that ensnare Willie Stark (Sean Penn), an idealistic small-town Louisiana lawyer who is urged to run for governor by a local political leader, and Jack Burden (Jude Law), an equally idealistic newspaper reporter who takes a personal interest in Willie, because of his own personal connections to a former honorable governor. After unwittingly helping Stark (who has discarded his idealism in favor of corrupt political strategies) get elected Governor, Burden is unable to avoid also being morally corrupted by Willie's charm and power, with tragic results for both. The story is also loosely based on the real-life circumstances of former Louisiana governor, Huey Long.

Citizen Kane 1941, Director: Orson Welles (USA)

Newsreel reporter Jerry Thompson (William Alland) investigates the life and legacy of Charles Foster Kane (Orson Welles), an enormously wealthy media magnate who has just died, isolated and alone, at his palatial estate, Xanadu (this character is based on the actual contemporary newspaper magnate, William Randolph Hearst). Thompson's investigation, revealed in a series of flashbacks, shows that Kane's career evolved gradually from youthful, idealistic social service to the ruthless pursuit of wealth and power. This film is often at, or near, the top of "best films" lists for its innovative cinematography, music and narrative structure.

Nineteen Eighty-Four 1984, Director: Michael Radford (UK)

Based on the 1949 George Orwell novel with the same title, this film is set in a dystopian 1984 London, now part of the totalitarian super-state of Oceania. Here, Winston Smith (John Hurt) works as an office drone in the Ministry of Truth under the constant surveillance of the Thought Police. Since Smith keeps a secret diary of his memories and desires, he is under constant threat of arrest for his "thoughtcrimes." But his life takes a fatal turn when he is tempted into an illicit affair with the free-spirited Julia (Suzanna Hamilton). This brief, rebellious romantic idyll ends abruptly, however, when the lovers are turned in by a covert agent they thought was a friend, then tortured, brainwashed, and finally taught the principles of "doublethink" by Inner

Party member O'Brien (Richard Burton). In a final scene the two, now "rehabilitated" "unpersons," exchange a few emotionless greetings, while a huge image of Big Brother peers down at them.

Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro) 1959, Director: Marcel Camus (Brazil)

Based on the Greek legend of Orpheus and Eurydice and set in a favela (shanty town) district of Rio de Janeiro during Carnival week, this film follows Orfeo (Breno Mello), a trolley conductor and musician who is engaged to Mira (Lourdes de Oliveira). During the revels he sees Eurydice (Marpessa Dawn), who's fled her village in fear of a stalker (representing Death), and it's love at first sight. Eurydice's cousin Sarafina (Léa Garcia), with whom she stays in Rio, is a friend of Orfeo and Mira, so the star-crossed lovers meet again. Later, wearing Sarafina's costume, Eurydice dances a provocative samba with Orfeo. Unfortunately Death (Ademar Da Silva) continues to pursue these lovers through the night towards their tragic end, but singing and dancing children will bring a new day of revelry. The film is particularly renowned for its soundtrack featuring the music of Antonio Carlos Jobim and Luiz Bonfá.

The Rules of the Game (La Règle du jeu) 1939, Director: Jean Renoir (France)

Aviator André Jurieux (Robert Toutain) has just completed a record-setting flight, but when he is greeted by an admiring crowd, all he can say to them is how miserable he is that the woman he loves did not come to meet him. He is in love with Christine (Nora Gregor), the wife of aristocrat Robert de la Cheyniest (Marcel Dalio). Robert himself is involved in an affair with Geneviève de Marras (Mila Parély), but he is trying to break it off. Meanwhile, André seeks help from his old friend Octave (Jean Renoir), who gets André an invitation to the country home where Robert and Christine are hosting a large hunting party. As the guests arrive for the party, their cordial greetings hide their real feelings, along with their secrets - and even some of the servants are involved in these tangled relationships, which lead ultimately to murder.

Pleasantville 1998, Director: Gary Ross (USA)

This fantasy comedy-drama is a morality tale holding contemporary suburban America up against both the Utopian and the dystopian visions of suburbia that emerged in the 1950s. A brother and sister (Tobey Maguire & Reese Witherspoon) from the 1990s are sucked into their television set and suddenly find themselves trapped in the black & white world of a 1958 situation comedy. Here they have loving parents, old fashioned values, and an overwhelming amount of innocence and naiveté. Not sure how to get home to the 1990s, the siblings integrate themselves into this "backwards" society and slowly bring some color to this world. But as innocence fades, the two teens begin to wonder if their 90s outlook is really to be preferred.

Paris is Burning (Documentary) 1990, Director: Jennie Livingston (USA)

Filmed in the last half of the 1980s, this documentary chronicles the "drag" ball culture of New York City and the African American, Latino, gay and transgender communities involved in it. It is also a thoughtful exploration of race, class, and gender in America. Individuals are

interviewed and observed preparing for and competing in many different 'balls'. The film also documents the origins of "voguing," a dance style where the competing ball-walkers freeze and "pose" in glamorous positions. Twenty-three years later this film remains an organizing tool for LGBT youth and an original source for scholars and students of this life style.

Walkabout 1971, Director: Nicolas Roeg (Australia)

This beautiful, haunting film about the mysteries of communication has an almost hallucinogenic intensity. A teenage schoolgirl (Jenny Agutter) and her much younger brother (Luc Roeg) become stranded in the Australian desert Outback after their father shoots himself. After nearly starving, they meet an Aboriginal teenage boy (David Gulpilil) who is on "walkabout", a ritualistic separation from his tribe. Communicating through mimes, the Aborigine shows them how to find water and food, leading them eventually to a deserted farm where he falls in love and attempts, unsuccessfully, to court the girl with a ritual dance. Left alone again, the girl and her brother eventually find their way back to "civilization," but are haunted with memories of their days on walkabout.

V for Vendetta 2006, Director: James McTeigue (USA)

Based on a 1982 graphic novel with the same title, this political thriller unfolds in a near-future London controlled by a fascist regime. A freedom fighter (Hugo Weaving) known as "V" (besides 'Vendetta' this name may also represent words like 'victim' or 'villain', signs like 'victory', or the Roman numeral for 5) uses terrorist tactics to fight this oppressive society. He rescues a working-class girl, Evey (Natalie Portman), from the secret police, and together they struggle to carry out their plot to destroy the Houses of Parliament and to outwit their Scotland Yard pursuer, Inspector Finch (Stephen Rea). One obvious historical source for the film is the 1605 Gunpowder Plot against King James (which is celebrated annually in England on Guy Fawkes Day). The rebels use Guy Fawkes masks to hide their identities and key characters share the names of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators.

Shakespeare in Love 1998, Director: John Madden (USA)

In this delightful, comic re-imagining of Will Shakespeare's (Joseph Fiennes) early career, he is a young poet, playwright and actor struggling for inspiration to complete his new play *Romeo & Juliet*. In frustration, he turns to auditioning performers for the two lovers. A young man, Thomas Kent, seems perfect for Romeo. However, Shakespeare soon discovers that Thomas is actually Viola (Gwyneth Paltrow), the daughter of a wealthy merchant, who must disguise herself to be an actor, since women are banned from the Elizabethan stage. Naturally, they begin a passionate, but doomed, love affair, since he is already married and she has been promised to the dour Lord Wessex (Colin Firth). Before they part, resigned to their fates, and after a series of typically Shakespearean comedy plot twists, they perform together before the Queen, to great acclaim, as Romeo and Juliet. In addition, Shakespeare has his inspiration for Viola, the strong young woman castaway who disguises herself as a young man in his next play, *Twelfth Night*.

When the Wind Blows 1986, Director: Jimmy Murakami (UK)

Based on the 1982 graphic novel with the same title by Raymond Briggs, this animated film depicts an elderly British couple (voices of John Mills & Peggy Ashcroft) who builds a shelter to prepare for an impending nuclear attack, and then lives with the aftereffects of the bombs, unaware that the times, and the nature of war, have changed from their romantic memories of World War II. Although laced with gentle comedy, their situation becomes steadily more hopeless as they suffer the effects of radiation sickness. At the end of the film, be sure to listen carefully at the very end of the credits, where a Morse Code message is heard tapping the letters "MAD" (for mutually assured destruction).

The Pursuit of Happyness 2006, Director: Gabriele Muccino (USA)

This true-story, biographical drama is based on Christopher Gardner's (Will Smith) nearly one-year struggle with homelessness in San Francisco. After losing his family's life savings on a white elephant investment, his wife leaves him and he loses his house, bank account and credit cards. Forced to live on the streets with his 7-year-old son (Jaden Smith), Gardner is now desperate to find a steady job. A chance cab-ride encounter with Jay Twistle (Brian Howe), a Dean Witter investment manager, earns Gardner the chance to become an unpaid stockbroker trainee. Against incredible odds, using his brains, creativity and his fierce determination to provide for his son, Gardner wins a permanent position and goes on to form his own multi-million dollar brokerage firm. The misspelling in the film's title is based on a sign Gardner saw, with this spelling, outside his son's daycare facility.

Begone Dull Care 1949, Directors: Norman McLaren, Evelyn Lambart (Canada)

This is a short (8-minute), experimental, "visual music" animated film. McLaren and Lambart used a drawn-on-film technique, painting colored shapes and scratching directly on the film stock to make a visual representation of the rhythms and variations of its jazz soundtrack, played by the great Canadian jazz pianist, Oscar Peterson. The film is preserved as a "masterwork" by the Audio-Visual Preservation Trust of Canada.

Startup.com (Documentary) 2001, Director: Chris Hegedus, Jehane Noujaim (USA)

This documentary chronicles the dot.com start-up phenomenon of the late 1990s through the experiences of a pair of young entrepreneurs. Friends since high school, 20-somethings Kaleil Isaza Tuzman and Tom Herman have an idea: a Web site for people to conduct business with municipal governments. The film tracks the rise and fall of govWorks.com from May, 1999 to December, 2000 as well as the trials this business brings to Tuzman and Herman's friendship. Kaleil raises the money; Tom provides the technical knowhow, while a third partner works to engineer a buy-out. Girlfriends come and go; Tom's daughter needs attention, and always the need for more cash to improve the site. Although venture capital comes in by the millions, and although Kaleil gets interviewed on C-SPAN, CNN, and is pictured on magazine covers, the bursting of this Internet bubble looms.

Slumdog Millionaire 2008, Directors: Danny Boyle, Loveleen Tandan (UK)

This film tells the dramatic story of Jamal Malik (Dev Patel), an eighteen year-old orphan from the slums of Mumbai who is competing on the Indian version of *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?* After coming within one question of winning, he is arrested on suspicion of cheating, since a simple, uneducated “slumdog” could not possibly know all the answers. Under interrogation, Jamal tells the inspector (Irrfan Khan), through extended film flashbacks, survival tales of his childhood street-life with his brother Salim (Madhur Mittal), and with the girl, Latika (Freida Pinto), he loved and lost. These interconnected incidents lead ultimately to Jamal’s improbable correct answers on the quiz show and to his equally improbable freedom, reunited with Latika in a high-energy dance scene to the music of “Jai Ho,” which subsequently became an international pop hit.