

A Short History of Film: Second Edition. Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780813560557

Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster's *A Short History of Film* provides an excellent starting point into the study of film history. The work succinctly covers the exceptionally expansive history of film spanning the birth of cinema into the "New Hollywood" movies including *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *Prometheus* (2012). It is organized chronologically beginning with the inventions which allowed for film's creation like the kinoscope, the Cinematographe, and the magic lantern in the silent era, leading into the inventions of the era of sound, and finally ending with the computer-generated films of the contemporary world. Important events such as World War II and the Cold War, which greatly influenced the production and consumption of films, are given their own chapters or sections. Furthermore, the significant eras of film history, according to film and cinema scholars, comprising French New Wave, Italian neo-realism, the Hollywood studio-system of the 1930s and 1940s, and worldwide independent film endeavors are incorporated. This book offers the major technological, cultural, political, social, and economic contexts of a broad spectrum of films and the people whom made them.

While other works on the history of film tend to ignore of the work of women and those based outside of Europe or North America, Dixon and Foster's work remedies this problem by covering the conventional and the less-well known topics and figures such as Ida Lupino, Alice Guy, Ousmane Sembène and the role of film in Africa. This thorough, yet concise work supplies its readers with nearly all the important people, inventions, and techniques which molded the production, analysis, and popularity of film. *A Short History of Film* is a readily accessible read for anyone interested in cinema or film's history, and is especially valuable for the beginning

film historian or the film studies undergraduate. It is also useful for cultural historians using films as a lens for cultural analysis.

Due to the referential nature of this work, Dixon and Foster's volume would work well in conjunction with other, more analytical materials when being employed in an introductory course on film history. With easy to read, concise, historically relevant, and conclusive sections, this book can be assigned in full for certain courses. The large scope of the book forces the authors to dial back more critical analysis of certain directors, cinematographers, contexts, and films. Thus while introducing students to a plethora of topics, it requires supplemental material in order for readers to attain a better understanding of a specific topic's importance and history—other than simply when a film was made and by whom. One of the understandable drawbacks of *A Short History of Film* is that it does not always push historical analysis far enough. For example, it sometimes only lists a director or actors' films, then states that a certain film is their most important film. It does not explain why this is so; nor does it always explain why a specific director or film is classified by a category except adhering temporally. Moreover, some of the films, directors, and actors are not always contextualized enough as to explore or detail what historical trajectory allowed for the creation, general popularity, and prominent status of films. For example, *No Country for Old Men*, the *Godfather* trilogy, and *Apocalypse Now* are simply listed as great and important films, but there is no explanation as to why the latter is considered Coppola's masterpiece. This work greatly enhances a student's overall referential base of film history topics, but may require additional scholarly materials in order to buttress an understanding or analysis of specific themes if used in the classroom. It serves as an excellent base camp for further inquiries into specific film related topics, but critically analyzes very few of the events, films, and people it lists.

Used as a reference book, this work is truly invaluable to the students interested in gaining a broad history of film. Little known African, Indian, and Eastern European films are brought into the general historical register thanks in part to this book. Issues like race and gender within film history are examined quite extensively, providing readers with the opening to explore histories of film associated with previously neglected people and areas. Through this film history, students can become familiar with topics and themes uncommonly breached in the high school classroom. The global scope of this book separates it from other film history books, and demands that film be taken as a serious artifact in the study of specific and global cultures. It provides students the opportunity to explore foreign and global cultures through a popular medium by providing an expansive referential film base. *A Short History of Film* is a well-written work that provides the perfect starting point for anyone interested in film, film history, and cultural history.

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