AMS 344/808: Class and Labor in American Film

How have feature films addressed class, the collective social position defined by people's relations to the political economy? What effect does narrative have in framing these relations as either natural or constructed? What can this tell us about how class is lived in “America,” and what workers can do collectively to change their situation? This course takes a cultural studies approach to cinematic depictions of labor history, from a variety of genres and periods, in order to develop students’ skills in the critical analysis of cultural texts. Our weekly screenings will highlight films that diverge from Hollywood’s conventional narratives of individual self-actualization in the marketplace, focusing instead on class in everyday life and work as a site of struggle for change. Discussion will emphasize the relationship between narrative and the social world, with attention to the intersections of class with other axes of power, such as race, gender, and citizenship. Available for undergraduate (344) or graduate (808) enrollment.

Fall, 2017 • Tuesdays 2:30-6:00 • Wescoe 4040 • Prof. Ben Chappell