

Charlie Chaplin: the contradictory genius

Start date 18 November 2016 **End date** 20 November 2016

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge

Tutor Dr. Colin Shindler **Course code** 1617NRX049

Director of Programmes Emma Jennings

For further information on this course, please contact Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr
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To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography:

Colin Shindler has maintained an active interest in twentieth century American and British social and cultural history whilst pursuing a wide-ranging career as a writer and producer in television, radio and motion pictures, and as an author of books and journalism for over thirty years.

He graduated with a degree in History from Cambridge and remained to complete his PhD thesis later published as *Hollywood in Crisis* (1996). His other monograph on Hollywood and American society was *Hollywood Goes to War* (1979). He has been lecturing and teaching undergraduates and postgraduates at Cambridge since 1998 but he is best known as the screenwriter of *Buster* starring Phil Collins and Julie Walters, the producer of the BBC drama series *Lovejoy* and as the author of the childhood memoir *Manchester United Ruined My Life*.

He wrote and presented Sport and the Movies for BBC Radio Four's Archive on Four in November 2010 as well as a monthly newsletter for *The Film Programme*. Little Brown published his new bestseller, an oral history of National Service in May 2012 and on the same day Headline brought out the second part of his autobiography *Manchester City Ruined My Life*. He has been frequently heard on The Today programme and PM on Radio 4 which recently broadcast *Rumours*, his feature length play on *Private Eye* and the Profumo Affair. His next book will be an analysis of post-war England football captains as a mirror of social history.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Session 1: Screening: <i>A Woman of Paris</i> (1923)
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 2: The Early Days: Sennett & Mutual
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 3: The Roaring 20s: The Kid & The Gold Rush
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Session 4: The Peak: City Lights, Modern Times & The Great Dictator
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 5 Screening: <i>A King in New York</i> (1956)
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6 Post War Anxiety: M Verdoux
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7: Looking Back: Limelight & After
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

The aim of this course is to understand better the films of Charlie Chaplin by putting them in the context of his early life in London and subsequently in America. We shall examine most of those films of which copies remain from *The Kid* (1921) to *A Countess from Hong Kong* (1967) and look at the themes that constantly recur. We shall also explore the origin of his political stance, his somewhat tortured relationships with inappropriately young women (until his final and very happy marriage which lasted till his death) and with Americans who didn't understand the latter and were suspicious of the former.

Content:

The two evening sessions are devoted to screenings of two full length feature films. The first is an early and rarely shown picture made in 1923 in which the subject was melodrama rather than comedy and in which Chaplin doesn't appear apart from a fleeting glimpse of him as a railway porter. Expecting *The Little Tramp*, contemporary audiences were disappointed but nearly a hundred years later it appears as a fascinating piece of work. The second is just as rarely seen – probably for very good reasons - but although *A King in New York* is far from his finest work it allows us to see him working out his feelings at being persecuted by the caprices of the mob. Each of the other five sessions deals with a decade or so in Hitchcock's life – from the early days with Sennett until *Limelight* (1952) his elegiac farewell to the vanished world of the music hall of his youth and to his creative life.

Presentation of the course:

This is an illustrated series of presentations. In addition to the screening of the two full length features each session will feature more than a dozen clips from Chaplin's films. Because of the familiarity of some of the films student participation is particularly encouraged. Chaplin always used to say that all he needed to make a two reeler was a pram, a pretty girl and a park. Students will be encouraged to invent their own gags starting from this premise!

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1. Re-examine Chaplin's films in the newly acquired knowledge of the manner in which his poverty-stricken early life impacted on the themes which constantly reappeared in his films.
2. Better understand what separated Chaplin from other silent comedians like Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd.
3. See how Chaplin adapted to the problem of sound.
4. Appreciate the origin and nature of Chaplin's political beliefs and his audience's response.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Charles Chaplin	My Autobiography	Penguin 1973
David Robinson	Chaplin: His Life & Art	Collins 1985
Simon Louvish	Chaplin: The Tramp's Odyssey	Faber 2009
Barry Anthony	Chaplin's Music Hall	I.B Tauris 2012

Website addresses:

<http://www.charliechaplin.com/>

<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/charlie-chaplins-scandalous-life-and-boundless-artistry>

<https://www.facebook.com/CharlieChaplinOfficial/>

<http://www.biography.com/people/charlie-chaplin-9244327#off-screen-drama>

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 15 September 2016