



THE STUDIO SYSTEM AND THE PRODUCTION CODE

TAKE OUT YOUR
BINDER!

UNIT 2: STUDIO ERA OF HOLLYWOOD

- Why was the Hollywood industry so important?
- What did it do to shape movie history?



STUDIOS

Major 5

Minor 3



STUDIOS

Major 5

MGM

Warner Bros.

Fox

RKO

Paramount

Minor 3

United Artists

Columbia

Universal



STUDIOS

**Major 5
(owned
exhibition)**

MGM
Warner Bros.
Fox
RKO
Paramount

**Minor 3
(no exhibition)**

United Artists
Columbia
Universal





THE 8 STUDIOS

MGM

Famous Movie:

Gone With the Wind (MGM, 1939)



MGM

Biggest, most prosperous.

Expensive productions

Famous Movie:

Gone With the Wind (MGM, 1939)





PARAMOUNT

Famous Movie:
Duck Soup (1933)



PARAMOUNT

European influenced, witty, sophisticated

Less stable

Famous Movie:

Duck Soup (1933)





STUDIO NAME: WARNER BROS.

Famous Movie:

Public Enemy (1931)



STUDIO NAME: WARNER BROS.

Working class, melodramas and musicals

Gangster films

Famous Movie:

Public Enemy (1931)





STUDIO NAME: FOX (20TH CENTURY-FOX)

Emphasized spectacle (musicals), safe films

Glossy Surfaces

Famous Movie:

The Little Colonel (1935)





STUDIO NAME: RKO

Famous Movie:
King Kong (1933)



STUDIO NAME: RKO

Unstable, risk-taking; stylish; musicals

Famous Movie:

King Kong (1933)





MINORS

- Columbia: Low budget; optimistic; hired contractless actors
 - It Happened One Night (1934)
- Universal: Low budget horror/fantasy
 - Dracula (1931)
- United Artists: more of a film distributor for individual talents like Chaplin
 - City Lights (1931)









BACKGROUND

- Scandals of 1920s outraged moralists
 - Drug overdoses, wild parties, murders
- Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) established 1922
 - Oversee the member studios
- Will Hays oversaw
- “Don’ts and Be Carefuls”
- Not taken seriously



BACKGROUND

- Research revealed that movies influenced children's thinking (1929-1932)
- Increased realism of sound upset some important groups
- LEGION OF DECENCY (Catholic group) would call for boycotts of movies deemed unacceptable.



THE PUBLIC ENEMY (1931)



THE SIGN OF THE CROSS (1932)

ANN VICKERS (1933)



HAYS CODE

- 1934: STUDIOS encouraged the founding of the Production Code Administration
- The Hays Code were strict guidelines for content
 - Visual, aural, and ideological
- Everything needed approval
- The movie couldn't be shown without the PCA seal
- \$25,000 fine if no approval





MPPDA Seal (1946)



MPAA Seal (1947)



MPPDA "Seal of Approval"

THE HAYS CODE

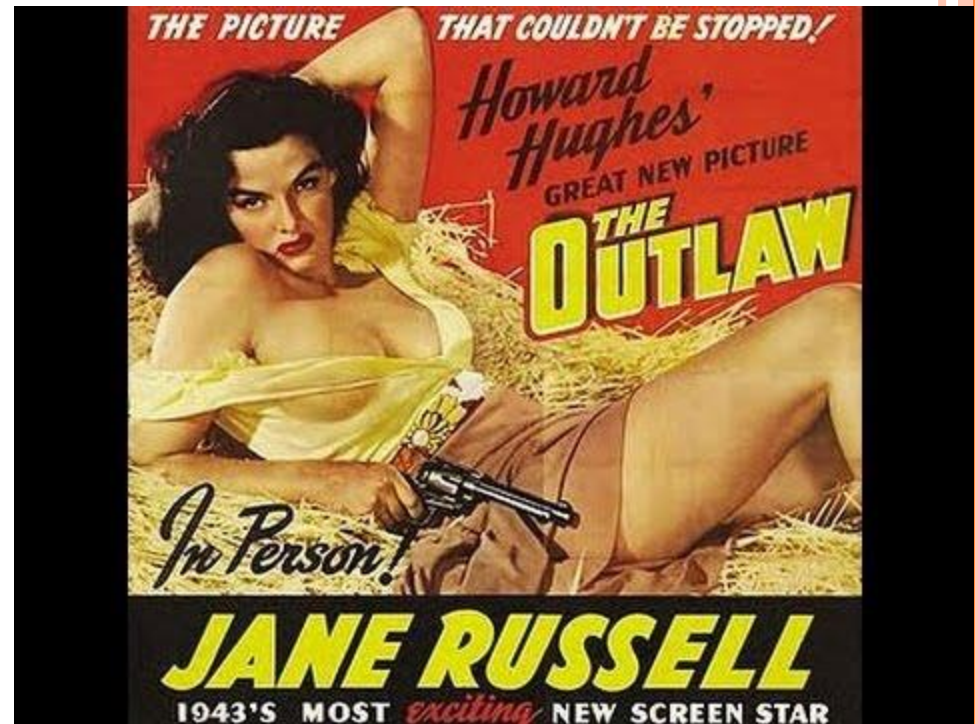
- No “scenes of passion” or “excessive kissing”
- Marriage upheld
- No adultery, illicit sex, etc.
- No profanity or vulgarity
- No machine guns (with a few exceptions)
- Crimes never justified
- Crimes punished
- Miscegenation



BETTY BOOP



THE OUTLAW (1943)



WORK AROUND THE CODE

- How does this scene avoid trouble with The Code?
- The Big Sleep (1946, Warner Bros)



WORK AROUND THE CODE

- How does this scene avoid trouble with The Code?
- Notorious (1946, RKO)



WORK AROUND THE CODE

- How does this scene avoid trouble with The Code?
- The Big Heat (1953, Columbia)



CENSORSHIP

- Why would the studios want the Hays Code?



CENSORSHIP

- Are there any benefits to having a content code outside of not alienating audiences?



HOMEWORK

- Come to class quickly on Thursday
 - Movie: we will need to stay a FIVE minutes into lunch.
- Quiz Friday on the Studios and Studio System
 - You will be allowed ONE notepage (single sided)
 - Could be about ANYTHING from the readings I left or class

