

Hollywood Cinema in the Studio-Era (TERM YR)  
**Information Sheet for Forum Post #5**

**Post #5: Local Cinema Cultures** (~500-750 words\*\*\*)

**Due:** [Wk.14 DATE] by midnight; comments by [DATE] and replies by [DATE]

**Assignment Description:**

For your fifth post you will choose one of these four topics, each of which pertains to how your film (or cinema at the time) was received in the broader culture. As a result, each option will ask you to attend to a *local* context in which cinema circulated—these local contexts include cities like Philadelphia and Camden, small towns, African American communities, and (farthest afield) Latin America. While the below prompts indicate some issues you should attend to in your post, bear in mind your work will be assessed according to the generalized rubric that has been used for Posts #3 and #4. In particular, be mindful of the requirement that your discussion incorporate

Option A: *Variety* “Picture Grosses” & local exhibition

*Research:* Using the MHDL’s holdings of *Variety*, search your film’s title during the year of its release. This will return (among other things) “Picture Grosses” entries on your film’s performance at large downtown theaters in major cities. In which sections of the country was your film a hit? Where did it flop? How was the film presented in different cities? Next, use either the *Motion Picture Herald*’s “What the Picture Did For Me” column (not available for all years/films) **or** local Philadelphia & South Jersey newspapers (see relevant page from Module XX) to research how your film performed beyond the metros (if WTPDFM) or was presented nearby (if Philadelphia/region).

*Post:* Write a post summarizing your findings and addressing the broader contextual and evidentiary issues that you’ve attended to other posts (be sure to check your work against the Rubric before posting!).

Option B: Hollywood Abroad - *Cine-Mundial* & American Cinema in Latin America

<http://mediahistoryproject.org/2013/11/07/cine-mundial-1916-1946-goes-digital/>

*Research:* The *Media History Digital Library* hosts extensive holdings of *Cine-Mundial*, the Spanish-language version of *Moving Picture World*, was published between 1916 and 1948. From Laura Isabel Serna’s description: “Functioning as both trade publication and fan magazine, its regular columns that featured reports from national correspondents and letters from readers from every corner of the Spanish-speaking world provides invaluable insight into Latin American audiences and their reception of both imported and nationally or regionally produced films.” Use this source to see how your film or one of its stars and, by extension, American film generally was discussed in this important source for tracing global film culture.

*Post:* Write a post summarizing your findings and addressing the broader contextual and evidentiary issues that you’ve attended to other posts (be sure to check your work against the Rubric before posting!).

Option C: Race & Studio-Era Cinema

[link to library & nearby resources]

*Research:* Use one of two Rowan Library holdings. First, the *Philadelphia Tribune*, a locally focused, black-oriented newspaper that began in 1884 is available through ProQuest Historical Newspapers (1912 to 2001). Use keyword searches to find an article on film that links to useful subject headings like “Movies” and “Theater and Theaters.” and find several articles from the year of, 2 before, and 2 after your film’s

release (e.g. if *Gone with the Wind*, consult 1937-41). Alternatively, you can ignore geographical boundaries and make use of the broader holdings of ProQuest's Historical Black Newspapers (there are several additional titles) and/or ProQuest History Vault, through which you can access documents from the "Civil Rights and Black Freedom Struggle" collection, some holdings of which will engage film history.

*Post:* Drawing on the three artifacts you find most notable, write a post discussing what cinema, as both individual films of note and a social experience, meant to the mid-Atlantic's or (if using the farther afield material) the nation's African American community during your 5 years. What were the primary concerns with Hollywood film or commercial cinema? What was admirable or worthwhile in film culture? How, according to what you can infer from the articles, should the shortcomings implied be addressed? And, in your opinion, to what extent have these been addressed in the years since? If you notice any interesting or surprising recurrent themes (unrelated to film) in the paper as you skim to your chosen articles, feel free to incorporate this into your post. Finally, be sure to attach image or links to images of 3 articles you are discussing.

#### Option D: Local Theater History (general)

*Research:* Using the local newspapers (see relevant page from Module XX), find the theaters in which your film was released, in any of its first-release runs. Choose one of these theaters and research it, starting with easy sources like *Cinema Treasures*. You should continue from here to look at sources like trade papers available through the MHDL, local newspapers available online (noted above in Option A), and archival collections available in the area, which include the Theater Photograph collections (drawn on in the Module XX lecture), oral histories, and perhaps more.

*Post:* Write a post detailing when a theater that played your film opened, where it was located and what segments of the city's population it served, what its initial use was (film, theater, vaudeville, etc.), what chain (if any) it was affiliated with, how its prices compared to other theaters (if advertised), what sorts of films it showed (first-run major releases, second-run releases, serials, B-cowboy films, etc.), what its typical presentation model was (live acts?), how did these change over time (I'd suggest you look at a sample spring/fall week or two for each decade), when the theater closed or was renovated or became something else, what it is used for today (either the building, if it still exists, or the location, if the theater's been demolished). Be sure cite your sources and post links to images or documents that support your account and (since you won't post all) are interesting.

\*\*\* **Note:** This post will certainly run longer than 750 words and, more importantly, involve more research than other post options. As a result, it will be worth **20 points**, rather than the usual 10, of your final grade. It can, therefore, be used to eliminate 10 points you missed on another assignment.

*Distribute wk.12*