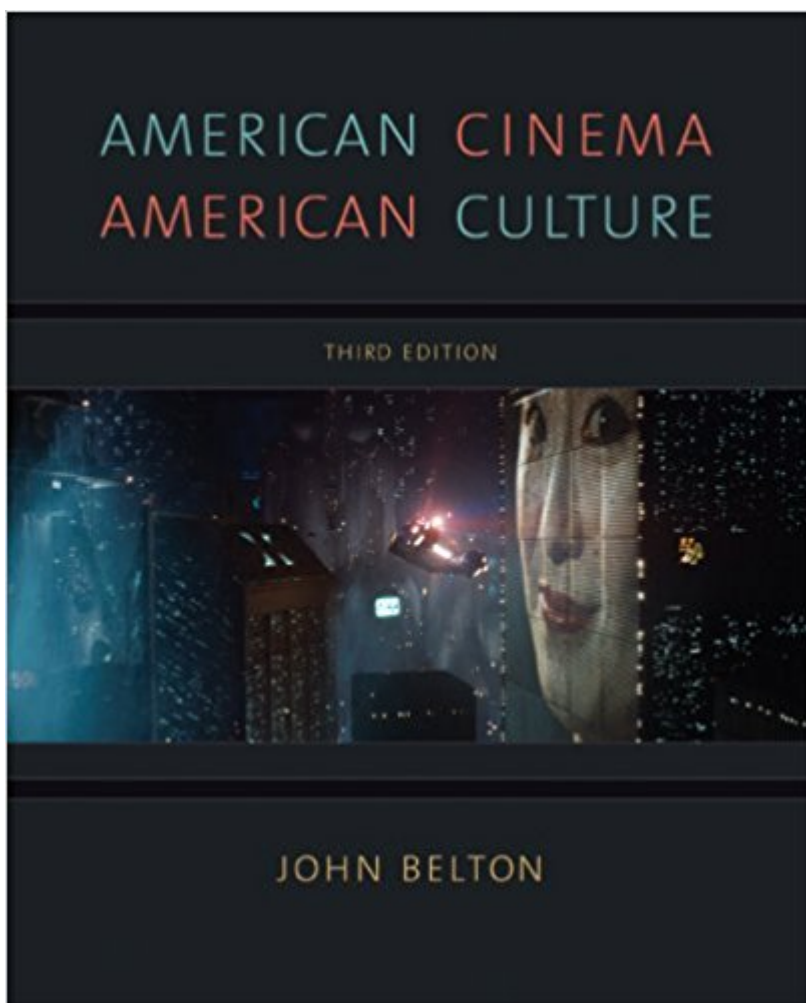


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# American Cinema/American Culture



## Synopsis

Ideal for Introduction to American Cinema courses, American Film History courses, and Introductory Film Appreciation courses focused on American Film, this text offers a cultural examination of the American movie-making industry, with particular attention paid to the economic and aesthetic institution of Hollywood.

## Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages; 3 edition (November 10, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0073386154

ISBN-13: 978-0073386157

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 0.8 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 86 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #22,401 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in Books > Humor &

Entertainment > Movies > Industry #25 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Movies > Video >

Direction & Production #31 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Movies > Direction & Production

## Customer Reviews

This book helped me understand more about American film than I ever expected. It brought me from the 1890's all the way up through 2011. Which is a huge difference in movie making and in history. This book has a strong sense of history throughout its pages, guiding the structure of a lot of the chapters as a whole. I enjoyed how it was structured and how the message was given to the reader. The book not only is a history lesson of film but it introduces you to the aesthetics and film form basics. It introduces and explains basic vocabulary of the narrative and the stylistic practices. It gives you the insight to see how things were done and even more importantly why they were done that way. There is a lot that a person can learn from this book as long as they take the time to actually read and absorb its content. It is a very informative book and it keeps your attention throughout. It is not the typical textbook, that tends to be bland and un-interesting, it will definitely give you the necessary perspective to learn more about American Cinema.

I purchased this book for a college course and my professor wasn't strict about which version we used, so naturally I purchased the less expensive, third edition. About half way through this book I

realized I had made a mistake in not buying the more expensive fourth edition. I believe author John Belton did a great job in keeping up with American Culture and the different genre of film that have evolved over the years and I look forward to seeing what the fourth edition has to offer. I highly recommend this book to film enthusiasts and beginning film students. Belton's style offers the reader a natural progression and introduces film from the start of the American cinema, through the classic Hollywood studio and star-making era, into all of the different genre of film from Comedy to Western and leading to science fiction and horror. He then explores post-war history leading into what we can look forward to in the future of film. Throughout each section, the author explores specific movies and highlights how they were influenced or how they pertain to what was happening in the United States at that time. For example, I've watched so many post-Vietnam era movies about the hero that goes back to Vietnam to save the American soldier or prisoner of war that was left behind. These were always deeply moving films, but in the end the rescue takes place and you feel good about the outcome. Belton points out that with the war in Vietnam there was no sense of victory for the country and these films were made with that in mind. Getting into the psychology of the masses and how they influenced films can sometimes seem to take this book too far into the realm of a psychology textbook, but for the most part I believe Belton's perspective opened my eyes to a new way of looking at each film. His use of case studies also helps understand how stars were born and how some of them, such as Tom Hanks, continue to have very successful careers. I appreciated that the author placed emphasis on minorities in film and how that has changed over the years. We are shown the progress that African Americans and women have made in films and also how much further they have to go. Belton also highlights Native American actors, such as Graham Greene who rose to fame in *Dances With Wolves* and most recently starred in the *Twilight* series. One of my favorite features of this book is the "Select Filmography". This is a list of films provided after each chapter to highlight what was discussed. I had viewed hundreds of movies in my lifetime, but with the help of the filmography I was introduced to so many more and I am enlightened as a result. I highly recommend that the reader watch some of the films listed, some of which you may not have given a second glance in the past. You will be glad you did.

When I first picked up *American Cinema, American Culture* by John Belton, I assumed I was going to be getting another history book which just used films instead of wars to give me a lesson in US history. As usual with assumptions, mine were incorrect. Belton definitely outlines history in his book; however like the film *Pulp Fiction*, he does it in order of cultural influence and not in chronological order. He eloquently outlines not just the cultural context of the movie but delves

deeply into the way the films and their themes not only reflected the times but informed them, changed them as well. My favorite piece of the book is chapter 8, American Comedy. Belton spends the entire chapter categorically breaking down the entire genre from the Buster Keaton's Seven Chances to Something About Mary. Belton uses quick, fresh prose to explain where he's coming and always stays below the lofty heights of most authors explaining such vast, diverse, complex and potentially boring content. Admittedly, Belton can get a bit lost in the details of things such as the digitization of the camera, the formal definitions of such and such camera angle, however he doesn't use the definitions to show his brilliance, he uses them to frame the issue at hand and explains how such important details affected the actual film itself. Overall I would recommend this book for anyone taking a film class but even more particularly to anyone interested in the cultural history of film.

I don't own a tablet. I can't afford one when I had to spend nearly \$130 on a text book. I rely on my phone to read for the convenience. The kindle version of this book is atrocious. You can't change the font size, only zoom in, which is a terrible way to read any book. It's formatted like a direct carbon copy of the physical book, but if you're reading on a phone, the text is too small and gives you eye strain. Avoid at all costs.

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