

# Chaplin: Film, Art and Society Syllabus

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**Instructor**                      **Quarter:** Summer 2024  
*Steven Venturino*                **Start – end date:** June 11 – July 16  
   **Session day/time:** Tuesdays 1:30 – 4:00 pm CT  
   **Course Code and Section:** HUAS77507 24U1

**Email**                              **Course Overview**

[sjventurino@icloud.com](mailto:sjventurino@icloud.com)      The course examines selected films from Charlie Chaplin’s career, from the earliest short films (including one made at the Essanay Studio here in Chicago) through the powerful 1940 sound film, *The Great Dictator*. The course is designed to allow for discussion of each film and some exploration of highlights of Chaplin’s biography. Each class session will combine discussion of one feature film (which students will have watched in advance) and a relevant topic involving Chaplin’s life and art. *Shoulder Arms* is a relatively short feature that helps introduce us to both silent film watching and Chaplin’s social focus. *The Kid* (1921) invites us to consider Chaplin’s own troubled childhood on and off the stage, as well as the emotional impact of cinema on filmmakers and spectators. *The Gold Rush* (1925) prompts a critical look at the Hollywood studio system and the economic impact of early cinema. *City Lights* (1931), made after the arrival of talkies, shows us Chaplin expanding the artistic boundaries of “silent film,” while *Modern Times* (1936) helps illustrate Chaplin’s abiding concerns with technology and social inequality. Finally, Chaplin’s first true “sound film,” *The Great Dictator* (1940), grounds our discussion of cultural resistance to the rise of fascism.

**Modality**

Remote Learning

All of the films for this course are available for streaming on popular platforms, which I will highlight each week. I will provide other material—short films and clips—during the sessions themselves and at my password-accessible webspace on Screencast, which allows us to preview and rewatch any clip that will be shown at any session. I will also provide weekly handouts that include viewing notes, excerpts of film criticism, and my suggestions for specific points of discussion.

Recommendations for accessing the feature films will be made available each week, along with additional film clips, brief reading materials, and web links. In advance of the first session, please watch *Shoulder Arms* (1918, 36 mins.), streaming at the Criterion Channel, Amazon Prime, and Max, and available on DVD.

## Course schedule

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| Week   | Films                            |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| Week 1 | <i>Shoulder Arms</i> (1918)      |
| Week 2 | <i>The Kid</i> (1921)            |
| Week 3 | <i>The Gold Rush</i> (1925)      |
| Week 4 | <i>City Lights</i> (1931)        |
| Week 5 | <i>Modern Times</i> (1936)       |
| Week 6 | <i>The Great Dictator</i> (1940) |

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## Accessing remote courses

Remote courses are taught through our Canvas platform. Approximately two weeks before your class begins, we will add you to your canvas site using the email address you provided at the time of registration. An invitation will then be sent to that email. Click the “Get Started” button in the email to begin the Canvas login process. For step-by-step instructions, please visit <https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts>. Once you’ve created your Canvas account, you can access any Graham School canvas course for which you are registered at: <https://canvas.uchicago.edu>.

## Accessibility information

Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class session at 773.702.6000 or [disabilities@uchicago.edu](mailto:disabilities@uchicago.edu).

## UChicago CARES Statement:

The University and its faculty are committed to creating a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all students. At the University, all faculty, staff, graduate student instructors, and teaching assistants are considered “Individuals with Reporting Responsibilities” and are required to let the University’s Title IX Coordinator know about any disclosures they receive from students about experiences of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment). This includes disclosures of experiences that happened before their time at the University. This is to ensure that all students who have experienced sexual misconduct receive support, options, and information about their rights and resources. Students are not obligated to respond to this outreach, and this will not generate a report to law enforcement.

For more information, please see [this handout for students](#) as well as the [University’s Policy on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct](#) and [Policy on Title IX Sexual Harassment](#). You can also reach out directly for services and support from the [Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Support](#) by emailing [titleix@uchicago.edu](mailto:titleix@uchicago.edu).

If you, or another student you know, wishes to speak to a confidential resource who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact the Sexual Assault Dean on Call through the UChicago Safe App or at 773.834-HELP.

Questions? Contact Zoë Eisenman at [zme1@uchicago.edu](mailto:zme1@uchicago.edu).