



EXCAVATING THE PAST

Your XYYY group is responsible for the premiere of a short film from the early years of cinema history. Your group has been lent a S-8 print. You will need to find a time when all of you can watch the film together. At that time you should make a DV copy using a palmcorder and a tripod. This is to facilitate analysis and review while preserving the print. This first Practicum project is an exercise in film scholarship and research. Some of these films could be very rare and indeed, we may not even be sure of the director. Your team will be preparing a presentation on your film. For part of this you will need to prepare a short study guide that you will use in the Practicum. Your guide must include the following:

1. a brief biography of the director (brief=one paragraph that contains a summary of his/her significant films, career highlights, birth-death statistics, etc.
2. a short abstract about the film. (no more than a few sentences). Please include anything you can find out about the cast, the circumstances of the production, its place in silent film history, the style of the film, etc.
3. a set of study questions that will focus our discussion of the film. (These should include points that help us consider the narrative structure, the visual codes, the ideological codes, and other concepts particularly featured in your film. The number of questions will depend to a large extent on the film and your group discussion but certainly a set of 4-6 should generally suffice.)

You will need to provide one hard copy of your study guide and one in pdf format that we will be posting on our website. These guides are due to your production seminar leader.

You and your group will be responsible for the screening of the film (in S-8), the class discussion, and a live soundtrack that should accompany the screening. The soundtrack can involve some prerecorded elements but in general should be conceived in the style and approach of the period. For instance, if your film was released in 1908, what live sound elements might have been utilized at that time. Silent films were rarely screened without accompanying sound. The technology to accurately synchronize sound or make a "married" print just had not been invented yet. Your session at the Practicum should not exceed 30 minutes including the group discussion.