

The Best of MGM's Movie Musicals

Contact Information & Schedule

Instructor: Alan Teasley, alanteasley@yahoo.com, (919) 812-0185

Dates & Times: Ten Thursdays: January 29 - April 2, 2026, 9:00-10:15 am, via ZOOM.

Note: Class sessions are recorded. The recordings are available within 48 hours after the class ends and remain available for several weeks after the course ends.

Course Website www.musicals-101.com

For each class meeting, a separate page of the site will provide materials students can use to preview the class content as well as links to the online videos shown in class.

Course Description

According to theatre historian Miles Kreuger, “No studio even begins to approach MGM for its flagrant mangling . . . of Broadway musicals.” He goes on to say that “MGM’s best musicals are those created expressly for the screen.” We begin the course with a brief history of Hollywood musicals from the 1920s to the 1940s, focusing on the films of choreographer Busby Berkeley and those of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. We will then dive into several classic MGM movie musicals that did not begin their life on stage: *The Wizard of Oz*, *Meet Me in Saint Louis*, *An American in Paris*, *Singin’ in the Rain*, *The Band Wagon*, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, and *Gigi*. In the final class, we’ll look at several musicals since 1960 and discuss how these films compare to those of MGM’s Golden Age. The course is primarily lecture with video and audio clips. Students will be able to ask questions and make comments during each class.

Instructor Bio

Alan Teasley began his career as a high school teacher of English, drama, and mass communications. After retiring from the Durham Public Schools in 2006, he taught in Duke’s Master of Arts in Teaching Program through 2016. Since 2018 he has taught 25 courses for OLLI on musical theater and film. Previous courses on musicals have focused on Jerome Kern, George & Ira Gershwin, Rodgers & Hart, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Rodgers & Hammerstein, Lerner & Loewe, Kander & Ebb, Frank Loesser, Stephen Sondheim, Jerry Herman, Leonard Bernstein, and Stephen Schwartz, among others. From 2018 to 2020, he taught three OLLI courses aligned with the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, where he served on the selection committee for twenty years. For OLLI he has also curated two documentary film series—one in conjunction with OLLI’s fortieth anniversary celebration and another focused on local filmmakers.

Session Topics

- Class 1: 1/29/26** **Overview of Movie Musicals of the 1920s & '30s**
- Introduction to the Course
 - A framework for discussing films
 - The films of director/choreographer Busby Berkeley

Class 2: 2/5/26 The RKO Films of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers
• Framing dance on film

NOTE: Classes 3-9 will each focus on one MGM musical, with scenes from other films as appropriate.

Class 3: 2/12/26 *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)

Class 4: 2/19/26 *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944)

Class 5: 2/26/26 *An American in Paris* (1951)

Class 6: 3/5/26 *Singin' in the Rain* (1952)

Class 7: 3/12/26 *The Band Wagon* (1953)

Class 8: 3/19/26 *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954)

Class 9: 3/26/26 *Gigi* (1958)

Class 10: 4/2/26 **Movie Musicals since 1960**

Class Participation

The instructor's lectures will provide background about specific films and filmmakers, but the bulk of class time will be watching excerpts from the films or documentaries about them. Students can ask questions and make comments during class via the Zoom chat feature. Students are also welcome to contact the instructor via email between classes.

All participants are expected to abide by the OLLI Code of Conduct.