

Liverpool Film Seminar

2013 – 2014 series

Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites six experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

Professor Frederick Wasser

(City University of New York, Brooklyn College and Fullbright Bicentennial Scholar in American Studies, University of Helsinki)

Film History, Spielberg and *Lincoln*

The recent release of *Lincoln*, directed by Steven Spielberg, is a breakthrough for the director and an old-time Hollywood revival for the audience. Spielberg has been making historical films since 1985 both to extend and to break free of the blockbuster genre he helped pioneer in the 1970s. Hitherto his historical films have suffered from his own timidity. I argue that finally with *Lincoln* he found a subject appropriate for the times.

His collaborator Tony Kushner writes a revisionist version of Lincoln even as Spielberg's camera worships the 16th President of the United States. The synthesis provides a consensual yet important history that the American audience has not seen since the days of Classic Hollywood.

Biography:



Frederick Wasser is a professor and the chair of the Department of Television and Radio at Brooklyn College CUNY. His scholarly interests lie primarily in media industries, contemporary Hollywood and the culture industries, and his work focuses on synthesizing cultural and economic approaches. Such interests come in part from his experiences as a working professional in the film and television industries in Los Angeles during the 1980s.

His first research publication, the influential *Veni, Vidi, Video* (University of Texas Press, 2001) discussed the effects of home video on film and television and has become part of the historical understanding of the creation of trans-national media companies.

In more recent work he has turned towards the actual changes in story-telling in the era of the blockbuster. His most recent book, *Steven Spielberg's America* (Polity Press, 2011) is one result of this research as is his contribution to *The Time of Our Lives* (Wayne State University Press, 2012). His talk on "Spielberg's *Lincoln*," is based on his article in the current online edition of *E-Jump Cut* (no. 55). Professor Wasser is currently the Fulbright Bicentennial Chair in American Studies in the University of Helsinki for the 2013-14 academic year.

