

BOGIE: THE ACTOR AND THE ICON

From the early 1930's to the mid- 1950's, Humphrey Bogart occupied a key place in America's movie-going experience. Initially on contract in a studio, he appeared in mysteries, police procedurals, romantic melodramas of the *noir* sort, action, war and fight films and even a few westerns and comedies, covering most of the possibilities that Hollywood offered. Early in his career he accepted the roles he was given and often got second billing. He was able to master different kinds of roles in a wide range of films. But he is remembered not for this range, but for the signature persona he developed as he progressed in his career, an image he consistently projected on screen. This was the image he became known by: a tough, experienced, wily and often passionate man, whose knowledge of the world and of himself is unmistakable and authoritative. We will be looking at and analyzing how he built that character—a quickly recognizable one -and the effect of that character on the movie-making business and the audience of his era.

We will watch parts of his 3 most popular films in the 1940's: "Casablanca", "To Have and Have Not", "The Big Sleep" and 3 of the key performances of the last period in his career, in the 1950's, in which he moved out of the Bogie persona and demonstrated the full extent of his talents and accomplishments as an actor: "In a Lonely Place", "The African Queen" and "The Caine Mutiny". We will consider how we respond to the character he projected in many of his films as well as what we thought then about that character. We will have an opportunity to talk about other films we may remember in which he starred and their place in his work and in the popular culture of his period.

Bogie—in addition to being a star-- was also an important public figure among Hollywood actors. He was outspoken about current issues and actively engaged in politics. His views were well-known and sometimes controversial. Did that openness affect the popular view of him, did it brighten or tarnish his image?

We will be able to see only parts of these 6 films in class. Participants can view some of these films and others on streaming platforms so that they have a fuller sense of this work.

Leader: Judith Walzer was provost and professor of literature at The New School.

Wednesdays: 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., 6 weeks: February 24 through March 31

Maximum: 40