

Screening of *The Sheik*,
starring Rudolph Valentino



Giorgio Bertellini, University of Michigan

Conveniently Authoritarian: Valentino, Mussolini, and the Celebrity Culture in 1920s America

In the early 1920s, Hollywood's superstar Rudolph Valentino and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini gained outstanding popularity in America. Their fame resonated with a widespread fascination for narratives casting a white, charismatic leading man capable of presiding over new phenomena often gendered as female: crowds of film fans, political unrest, and an expanded social and political suffrage. Through a close reading of press and archival evidence and in dialogue with both star studies and American political history, Professor Bertellini's talk seeks to discuss the emergence of an expansive cultural strain that pragmatically questioned the foundations of democracy against its seemingly mainstream approval.

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November 15, 2013
Wells Hall B-342
4:00 pm - 6:00 pm
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November 14, 2013
Wells Hall B-122
8:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Giorgio Bertellini is a film and visual historian who works on Italy's transnational representations in Italy, the U.S and Argentina. He is Associate Professor in the Departments of Screen Arts and Cultures and Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan. Editor of *The Cinema of Italy* (2004; 20072), *Italian Silent Cinema: A Reader* (2013) and co-editor of *The Nation/National in Early Cinema* (2008), he is the author of *Italy in Early American Cinema: Race, Landscape, and the Picturesque* (Indiana University Press, 2010), winner of the American Association of Italian Studies, and *Emir Kusturica* (1996; 2011), forthcoming in English in the Contemporary Film Directors series of the University of Illinois Press. His next project, *The Divo and The Duce: Film Stardom and Political Leadership in 1920s America*, is a study of film and political celebrity culture that addresses the simultaneous rise to fame of Rudolph Valentino and Benito Mussolini in 1920s America. His work has been supported by the Michigan Society of Fellows, the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, the Fondazione Bellonci, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies (Harvard).

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by contacting the Department of Romance and Classical Studies at (517) 353-8350 by 5:00 PM, November 11th. Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.