Vertigo (1958)

Alfred Hitchcock
Alfred Hitchcock - Biography

- Born in 1899 in London
- Began working on Silent Films in the early 1920’s.
- Transitioned to sound films in the late 1920s.
- Moved to the United States in 1939 and became a US citizen in 1955
- Peak years were 1954-1964
  - *Vertigo* (1958)
  - *North by Northwest* (1959)
  - *Psycho* (1960)
  - *The Birds* (1963)
Film Noir - What is it?

- Translated as “Black Film”
- Moods: pessimism, fatalism, menace
- Themes: Fear, mistrust, bleakness, loss of innocence, despair, and paranoia
- Not technically a genre, it’s more of a mood or a style
- Visually marked by expressionistic lighting, deep-focus or depth of field, disorienting visual schemes, jarring editing, ominous shadows, skewed camera angles (usually vertical or diagonal rather than horizontal), unbalanced or moody compositions
- Setting:
  - Interior: low-key (or single-source) lighting, venetian-blindined windows and rooms, dark, claustrophobic gloomy appearances
  - Exterior: urban night scenes, deep shadows, wet asphalt, dark alleyways, rain-slicked or mean street, low-key lighting
- Two types of women:
  - Dutiful, reliable, trustworthy, and loving
  - Femmes Fatale: mysterious, duplicitous, double-crossing, gorgeous, unloving, predatory
Film Noir - Images
Background on *Vertigo* (1958)

- Considered a film noir
- Shot in San Francisco (where film takes place) and Paramount Studios in Hollywood
- First film to use the dolly-zoom
  - Lens zooms while the camera moves in and out.
  - Depending on which way the camera moves, the foreground OR the background changes (one of them stays the same throughout the movement)
  - Purpose is to create a distorting effect
Watch *Vertigo*

An ex-police officer who suffers from an intense fear of heights is hired to prevent an old friend's wife from committing suicide, but all is not as it seems.
Analyze *Vertigo*

1. What elements of film noir are present in *Vertigo*? What do they add to the story?
2. What elements of cinematography (framing, angles, movement, lighting) did you notice? What was the element’s significance?
Some Important Moments in *Vertigo*
Extreme Close Ups

What effect does this extreme close up give during the opening credits?

Why is this effect important?
Panning during the chase scene does two things:

1. Establishes San Francisco as the setting
2. Lets us know Scottie’s background as a cop and sets up his problem of acrophobia.
Eye-line match
Some important moments in *Vertigo*

What type of shot is this?

What effect does the combination of the shot type and the lighting create?
More Panning
Match-Cut (editing technique)

Zoom in on Judy’s necklace  →  Zoom out of Carlotta’s necklace