

Introduction to Film Studies

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Lecture No. # 21

The Academy Awards

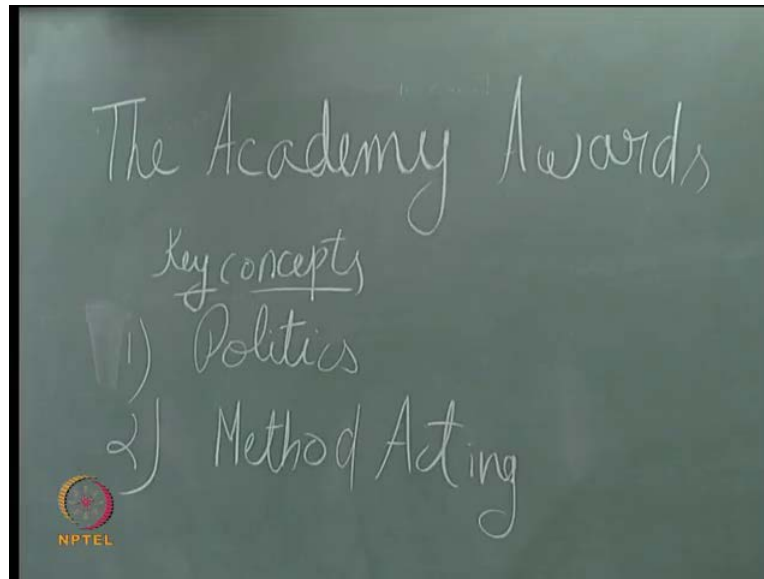
Case study: My Left Foot (1989) and Daniel Day-Lewis

Method Acting

Good morning. We are going to look at how the academy makes up it is mine brief historical overview and then we are going to focus on 1989 movie called my left foot which was an Irish movie directed by Jim Sheridan and Starring Daniel, Day Lewis. Who won his Oscar for the best actor in the movie? So, the Oscars went call the Oscars in the beginning they were called the academy awards even today they are known as the academy award, but more popularly they are called the Oscars. How did they get the name Oscars, now there are several legends and several versions about nomenclature or the Oscars? One is that leading film journalist. He felt that the world academy award is too heavy, too serious and it intermediates people.

So, he just turn around and looked at the statuette the Oscar at statuette and has a ... So, how are you mister Oscar he said give it some more human touch and less make it less intimidating. So, that was the story that is one version, second version is the great movie star Dekie Darvis, who was one of the finest female actress of a time and she named it the Oscars. Because she had some one very close to her who was called Oscars and Oscar and therefore she thought that it is better it is a more fitting more appropriate new. So, the several versions of the name how the Oscars got the names, but popularly they are called the Oscars, but academically there are still known as the academy awards. Is there are politics?

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So, this is what we are going to discuss today. The key concept would be politics of awards see this is always a very interesting area to discuss awards to help politics, of course awards are based on merits basis no doubt about it, but then there is a strong under currents of politics and that has always being the case for any major award particularly so, for the Oscars. So, Oscars are not always entirely about artistic merits this is important to remember. The studio that we have already seen who was the major players in this after all the Oscars where developed by which studio any guesses. Good. m g m.

The studio executive Louie Mayor he wanted to position the film industry in a more in a hard hitting way in a more aggressive way and therefore the idea of introducing an award, which will bring lot of attention to the film industry also to the m g m not so it was not purely eye trustily reasons that they instituted the awards. It also is interesting to note that people who was the beneficial region, especially during the inception years of the Oscars they all belong to the m g m studio. Something interested so, if you want an Oscar go work with the m g m that was the idea, but soon things change of course. So, by studio is a play and major part an important part in positioning is product and what part of is this so, called positioning.

Full throttle publicity making the product visibility you have seen it in recent years with lagan. How was lagan positioned it is task to make each and every academy voter, watch the movie you can always send them the d v d earlier times it used to be the video cassette. Even a before that they would have especially screening of the movie for the voters, but then things became more and more complex more and more complicate. So, it was fail that is no longer feasible to organize screening for so, many people. So, then people started question their products more aggressively and particularly lagan the producers approached each and every academy member the voting members and ask them to you know watch the movie gifted them with the d v d the video cassette of the film.

And I am sure that at least the movie got the right kind of visibility and it paid off, because it did get a nomination and which movie won the best picture award that year?

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Exactly the best modern picture award against lagan...

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No men's land and it is a war movie and you all understand the importance of wow movie yes of course movie from India. Which is full of colorful songs and dances and it is about cricket. So, there is a politics no men's land dealt with a very topical theme which is important to the western world. India's colonialism peppered that idea of India's colonialism peppered with songs and dances at beautiful items it may not have been such a big drop with the, because the academy voters the members also they have some kind of a conditioning about for the you know. We are all it is ordinary subjective we like someone we do not we know it is a canon again less talk about the canon.

So, we sometimes we like some people sometimes we do not like some people. Sometimes we like a theme sometimes we do not like a theme. So, there are certain popular themes which always work well and that are what we are going to look at what makes the cut with the academy m s. So, visibility high can pain and p r that is public relations play major role in making the product visible and above all why do all this

Oscars always the spell big money. Even a small movie if it gets even a minor award by minor award I meant we know the top five awards: best actor, female actor, male actor, best picture director, best movie. So, those are the major award, but even if it gets a technical award you know editing, sound etc.

It pushes the movie into the limelight and it makes an if it is, because in aboard the release pattern is very different here we release a movie and if it runs it is keeps on running. We do not interfere there they book theatres for a particular period and then it runs it does well even then it has to leave a theatre and it comes back. So, Oscars mean they can rerelease the product now this time with better visibility so, that Oscars eventually translate into big money I mean a there is famous story are you aware of an actress called Ellen Burstyn require for the dream. She won an academy award for which movie Alice does not live here anymore directed by Martin Scorsese his second major movie.

Now she could not for some reasons attend the ceremony and one of the presenters personally went to give her the statuette and she said how does it really matter and he say the presenters the person a big leading man he had gone to her house gift her the award and he said, see when you die your obituary you will read as the academy when ring actor Ellen Burstyn died. And so they so that is the difference it makes otherwise your just an actor, but when you win the academy award you become the academy award winning actress. So, it is it means something it is very prestigious people anchor after it influences stars commercial prospect.

Yesterday while talking about Coppola we did note that one reason why paramount could not kick him out and ceremoniously was, because he won the Oscar for the best screen play for pattern. That was one reason why could just hang on by the skin of his teeth, reasons other than a studio politics age and image of the recipients. We are basically talking about directors male and female actors. So, age and image of the recipients remember Christopher Plummer when did he win the Oscar?

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2012. In which he plays the beginners and he is a dying patriot for this particular family and how old is Christopher Plummer today. Some 84, 85 that means that he won his first ever Oscar the star of sound of music. And he must give several blockbusters along the way, but age matters and they must the academy must have finally realize that this is if it does not happen now it may not happen also age and image matter. Image of an actor is extremely important and we will see previous track recalled yes things do matter and what do we understand by previous track record.

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Al pacino yes sent of a woman was an eighth nomination and after what Serpico godfather part 1 and part 2 dog day afternoon. So, you cannot better that kind of body of work, but he got his Oscar when he was nominated the eighth time. Sympathy factors give me some example what could what is sympathy factor?

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Well, that was the great performance, but of course sympathy must have a role to play there. One of the greatest examples that we are often given is how Elizabeth Taylor won her first academy award the second was whose afraid of Virginia wolf. The first was for her role as a call girl in better field eats, now many people feel that she had done a better job in several of a previous film, but by the time of better feel eat there were rumors that she is going to die of cancer. In that she is being treated for something very fated and the academy must have thought a beautiful moment dying much before her time. So, why not and then she came and she received her Oscar and collapsed in the arms of then husband her husband number four Eddie fisher.

And soon after that she dumped in and married Richard Bergeron and then married him again. So, that is ... So, sympathy factors do matter that we were talking about age and image and previous track actor look at martin Scorsese why go for. When did he win?

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2006 for the (()). A man who had made main streets taxi driver ranging bill goodfellas many people felt that he should have got the award for goodfellas, but then he did not get it in 89 he got it in 2006. For a work which was a remake of infernal of his popularity with the industry and goodwill with the industry people is another important factor. There are some people nice regular all American guys like Tom Hanks. They are popular they nice guys always gets an honorable mention. So, they are the guys who matter they are popular and they have lead more or less nice respectable at least on the surface kind of life so, that matters goodwill matters. Box office bankability now this is extremely important and actor has to be bankable, directors have to be the movies have to earn money otherwise it does not mean anything to the academy.

It just means lot of effort, lot of money, lot of investment gone waste, because for one of thing and we give it to someone who have never made it before whose has never make it big just the performance brilliant performance given the Oscar, but you know it does not work like that. There has to be box office bankability for that time of the release this is very interesting Christmas is suppose to be the best season, because the film remains and when is the Oscar season? February, March and if you release your movie during the Christmas season more and more people you get more food falls in the theatres. Holidays season everyone wants to go out people watch movies and it remains fresh in everyone's mind for the Oscar season there are innumerable honorable examples where the movies got lost, because there timing of the release was all wrong the release the movies in April or May by next year February it is all forgotten.

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(()) that happens for example Roman holiday Audrey Hepburn so, the moments she made her debut she was seen as this actor who is going to make it big, but then remember Roman holiday was directed by who? William Wyler one of the most bankable directors ever. He has a track record that might me I am going to ask I gave you homework Robert

Towne if you did some reason and who did she star with Gregory Peck Sao you see there was questioning? There has to be so, that means major bankable studios actors and directors are landing the support to this young lady and if we give her an Oscar today fine. You know we do look good and it is also very safe bet, because she is being banker buddies people.

She not making some a small debut in some art house cinema, which no one is going to ever watch and she is never going to make it big. Now notable users round, but you can go and adding to this list there are too many notable users how green was my valley one instead of citizen kane the best picture. We have already talked about the unfortunate mister Orsen Welles, now only good thing I think personally that came out of his Hollywood stint would have been his marriage to Rita Hayworth he was married to the glamour queen was those times.

In the heat of the night beat bonnie and Clyde and now no one remembers in the heat of the night today bonnie and Clyde his iconic movie. It is Scorsese's taxi driver was completely ignored even the actor was not recognized, but the actor has been more fortunate than others, because he got his first Oscar pretty early in his carrier. Out of Africa one over steel burg the color purple and steel burg has extremely happy he has been working with chars and all kinds of evil monsters readers of the an Indiana Jones etc. And then he felt that color purple which all about gendering in equality racism in America based on a novel Miyiles Walker yes it respectable material he deserved an Oscar he was a bankable director he had proven track record, but it did not.

So, goodfellas of course Hitchcock never won an award and he was just toss the bone call lifetime achievement award and he gave the shortest ever speech you know on the stage what was it thank you. That is all he said Charley Chaplin lifetime achievement award again the same year when the god father was given all it is awards. Richard Bettin the great Richard Bettin nominated 7 times never won and let me tell you, if you look at Richard Bettin he is one of the greatest ever anywhere in the world, he can easily rank alongside Marlon Brando and Laurence Olivier Richard Bettin, but never Peter outsole never. So, life that brings us to the idea of lifetime achievement awards which is pretty

much evident in even our system. We know that they are bankable we know they are hugely popular with the masses, but we do not want we have this infra dig attitude towards these people.

So, let us not give them a very popular award as Govinda ever won.

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May be debut, but look it up do you think how many of you feel that Govinda is the good actor. Nobody feel that is Govinda is a good actor no seriously, I think Govinda is the very good actor. You give him a role and he delivers, but he (()), but you see we have an attitude towards certain people they come from this kind of a background they do works certain kind of films. We do not a speak the way we want them to speak perhaps all these things do matter. So, perhaps those who cannot get the main stream awards they are given generally a lifetime achievement award Hitchcock's, Chaplains many more in our own situation also you can see. When we cannot give an award to someone we give that lifetime achievement award

So, history of all the Oscar awards it was Louie design mire that established and introduced the idea of having popular awards. It was like bunch of people coming together and packing each other and packing themselves of the bag very well people and therefore. It is not enough to earn enough money, but we also needs some token of appreciation for our arts. So, let us give these awards to each other so, that was the attitude and finally enough the first ever academy awards were announced before hand that x, y, z is going to win please come and attend the party. So, we will people knew before it was not like all high then suspense was not build up the way it is done today.

The first our academy awards so, again this is our date his you should know it is as the students of film history May 16, 1929 why it was call Oscars several versions about float about. The first acting award was given to a German actor (()) for a movie called the way of all flesh based on whose novel Samuel Butler. Janice Kenner was first female actor and she was awarded for her body of work during the same year one of her one of her famous movie for seventh heaven. Those were the pre-television day's publicity and

visibility was not that massive, winners were announced before and however William Hender we never get over this guy, we have already discussed him in citizen kane.

He is the man own several newspapers and magazines and he felt that look this is an tremendous opportunity for garnering publicity for his papers glamorizing news and sensationalizing news and hiping at the whole thing there is money here. He was also on very friendly terms with several female actress and he felt this is the very good way of promoting them. One of his prodigies so, he did his level best to make the Oscar the most sort after prizes and therefore the high. So, any questions any comments you want to make before we go on. I am going to do a case study my left foot Daniel day Lewis who won I am betting on my Daniel Day Lewis this year as well and he has already won in 2007, 2008.

He won the academy for second performs for yet another performance there will be blood Paul Thomas Anderson. Now Paul Thomas Anderson the master is also one of the nominated films Argo is the strong contender. All those people who have acted I am still betting on Daniel Day Lewis, Lincoln. So, that makes me hag back to my left foot 1989 and it is often called the year the academic got it almost right. Many we conceive emotions many of the attitudes prejudices misgivings the dispelled box office bankability. Yes we are going to look at it who are his content, who are his arrivals and that will give you enough idea and how why we often say this was the year when the academy got right.

So, nominees for the best picture that year let us look at the best picture, driving miss daisy Warner brothers born on the fourth of July starring you know who universal pictures. Then poet society robin Williams touch stone field of dreams universal and my left foot Granada a lesson known studio, but distributed worldwide by neuromax. Best actor who won in that year Jessica Tandy driving, Miss Daisy Isabelle Adjani the then companion of Daniel Day Lewis. She too was the beautiful Isabelle Adjani was also nominated for Camille Jessica Lenz for music box Mishal Fipher another unfortunate actor who has never won it. Johnny deep the fabulous baker boys and Charley Volaltin Paulenkin best actor male Canic Bernag Henry the fifth Shakespeare and British.

So, two things for which at the academy members always had the soft British and Shakespeare. You know that gives you the snap value, Robin Williams that pulp society another is he is an academician to serve with love kind of movie right. So, it is always it touches a card with the member's very sentimental machine movie. Morgan freeman tremendous actor, tremendous performance for driving Miss Daisy also the fact that he was black and age, he has been acting for quite a while Tom cruise born on the fourth July box of his bankability. Popularity thinks of what he had done before that top gun cocktail and days of thunder on money spinners.

Daniel Day Lewis my left foot, now what this is the back drop. Golden globes and bafta an indication of what is going to happen this year Argo as I will go down several films. And therefore chances of Argo getting golden globes are pretty high, but not always it does not always work that, but it gives you a rough picture so born on Fourth of July tom cruise had already won the golden globe award for playing a paralyzed Vietnam Veteran Ron Kovic based on a true story. So, you look at it is a war movie it is Oliver stone movie and tom cruise playing it and what is he playing a paralyzed Vietnam hero. All pluses Daniel Day Lewis won the Newyork critics circle the alley critic's award and the national society of film critics, we are talking about the canon these are the canon forming bodies.

My left foot is also a biopic of paralyzed Irish poet and painter Christy brown again a real life story again a paralyzed. So, it was build as the battle of the wheel chair Day Lewis versus tom cruise so battle of the wheel chairs born in the fourth of July. Now look at the pluses again it is an antiwar film almost like the dear hunter and Oliver stone trilogy platoon etc. It is an Oliver stone movie which was extremely hot during those days he could do nothing wrong part of his Vietnam trilogy platoon and heaven in earth. Vietnam is a popular theme with the academy and it is member it was a huge commercial and critical success.

Oliver stone won the Oscar for the best director that year and of course the tom cruise factor and of course Morgon Freeman could not be ignored widely respected and senior. Those are the things age matters, experience matters and driving Miss Daisy it won the best Oscar for the best picture and also for the best actor Jessica Tandy the 80 year old

leading lady. p r machine the public relation machine for the academy the bigger the studio, we are talking about that universal studio versus Granada. So, better are the chances when bagged the movie is bagged by bigger studio big pictures gain more visibility and the academy voter can to watch more of high profile movies than (()) little movies my left foot.

So, the movie in spite of it is brilliance tend to stand much of a chance it was the small budget modest movie, Irish movie made independently it is belong to the category of so, called Hindi cinema. Independent cinema not bagged by studios, finest by studio yes distributed, but not fully bagged by studios. The actors, producers, directors they have they all have to pitch in for their own with their own funds etc. Most people who were not even aware of the existence of this movie, the producers of my left foot male several thousand video cassettes those are the days of video cassette to the academy voting members and of course it was marketed by neuromax. So, it is improved it chances.

Word about Daniel Day Lewis today he is a legend then he was a still not very well known actor. British actor of Irish ancestry he is the son of the famous poet Susil Day Lewis who was also poet floriated one point. He looked in Ireland he has done plenty of theatres so, he was the trained actor or method actor that is very important to remember how method Tom Cruise (()) he is not trained actor. Daniel Day Lewis he is very serious and trained method actor. His previous works and they are now this is very important to note my beautiful launderette directed by...

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Based on played by Hanif Kureishi and directed by Stephen Fieres who later directed the queen if you remember Halen Mirren dangerous liaison. That greatest haven Frutas and Daniel Day Lewis also acted in Milan Kundera the unbearable lightness of being a very difficult role, said doctor and E M Forester's along with the view directed by merchant Ivory Ismail ,merchant James ivory. So, look at his body of work and a range only 3 movies not block blusters, but which is sufficiently displayed the actor's tremendous versatility. What was his method? It is about a painter and the writer Christy Browne,

who is completely paralyzed he suffers from an element called cerebral palsy. The only part of his body that functions is his left foot.

So, Day Lewis went through tremendous preparation for that role he remained in a wheel chair throughout the shooting of the movie, and would act as irascible as the real Christy Browne would be, because see you look at the circumstances and you understand the moods the temper the mercurial temperament of the man and he maintain. He also maintains browns paralytic speech at all the times, because his affliction was so, severe it had affected every part of his body. He was barely able to speak and only people who are extremely close to him could understand could complement what he actually said. Day Lewis also practices painting and writing with his left foot and that has become hallmark of all Day Lewis films. When he did the gangs of Newyork he trained as a butcher somewhere for several months.

Mam I am sorry, but (())

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He did not want that method going too fast.

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So, Day Lewis known forgetting inside the mind of the character and he says one of the things I most intrigued by and he is talking about his role Christy Brown is characters in articulacy. Christy brown his struggle was to express himself and that is the thing that I am always attracted to in a part and I have recently written a paper on Day Lewis is method and if you watch all his film and there very few films he is very choosy, very picky, very fussy about his films. So, the body of work is extremely limited, but versatility is upstanding. So, you watch movie and you find basically he is interested in those characters which are essentially in articulate unable to express themselves. So, why the academy award?

Now academy voters like British actors that is a given academy voters also like biopics that is also given there is method here. See gradually Newyork pattern raging bull Gandhi (()) Halen Mirren in the queen and Meryl Streep in iron lady all these are biopics.

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King's speech yes Calin Ferd's king's speech. Oscar has weak academy has the weakness for actors who play or who portray physical or any kind of disability, afflictions, addictions thing the list is endless you can always go on adding to the list, but my list of memorable performance is include Jack Nicholson in one flew over the cuckoo's nest Marlee Matlin in children of a lesser god. So, Dustin Hoffman in Rain man pacino in scent of a woman Colin firth in the king's speech and Christian bale in the fighter he is an addict. And goes totally against the type I mean one year you have watched him in the dark night and the other next year you are watching him. As you know someone who has transformed himself beyond belief beyond recognition Christian bale is another worthy method actor.

The versatility factor of Day Lewis people respected him as actor although they were only 3 movies, but people knew that he is a man who can perform delivered the difficulty of the role. The role was extremely difficult to perform and voting member said I saw him doing something I could not do myself. He did and who said that?

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One of the greatest and most beloved leading men of all time Gregory Peck he confect that what he is doing I can never what he has done I can never do. So, Jim Sheridan the director and Day Lewis frequent collaborators great friends and they have often work together following sounding success of my left foot became together, again in the name of the father, again a biopic of Gerry Conlon someone who was wrongly in prison for Irish bombings in a British pub i r a factor. And then the boxer is again about a hire and these are things that Fascinate Sheridan and Day Lewis and being you know having strong Irish roots they do frequently this kind of work.

So, other works the notable works of Day Lewis of course you can keep on adding to the list, but then you have the last of the movikens a block buster directed by the great Michael Mann Scorsese is age of innocent based on Harriet Watkins book novel of the same title costarring Wynona Ryder and Michelle Pfeiffer it won several awards especially for costumes and art direction. Then he did an adaptation of Arthur Miller the crucible ended up marring a producer that was Rebecca Miller, Arthur Miller daughter. Then Scorsese gangs of Newyork which is again a historical and based on a film, sorry a novel and won a second Oscar for there will be blood which was followed by aclasta nine which was a musical adaptation of Fellini's eight and half.

I want you to look at his movie the last of the movikens age of innocence the crucible and gangs of Newyork also there will be blood. Now all these are essentially American characters played by an Irish man great American hero's great American character played by a British Irish person. That itself tells you a lot about his range and versatility that when it comes to and then Lincoln of course. It does not get more American men Lincoln and he gets to play Lincoln the ultimate American hero. So, starting from Fennimore Coopers Hawkeye in the last of the movikens it is all about physicality and then Lincoln which is mostly about in word struggle.

The typical struggle of a man who is trying to change something around him and he is struggle with the society and struggle with him. So, that and he would be perhaps interest to know that is in one of the American university there is the core module for film studies course entirely devoted and support course to Daniel Day Lewis an American history, because his contribution towards understanding of American history is unparallel. As a method actor now I will quickly summarize what I have been trying to say about methods for the past several classes we have been talking about De Niro Brando Pacino. So, Orsen Welles famous (()) I have always made fun of method, but I use lot of things that I have taken from it.

So, method has something to offer originally it is a contribution by Russian theatre director Stanislavski it was called Stanislavski method system. In the US it was basically popularized by the exponents of the group theatre in Newyork city and later on by people

like Lee Strasberg and Lee Strasberg is almost the godfather of method acting he has scores the lights of Nicholson Pacino and Robert De Niro. He has also acted in the godfather second part he is one of the dawns and in and justice for all again with Pacino always regarded him as a father figure (()) is another petitioner of method acting. The method is the simplicity put it means that the actor's main responsibility was to be believed to create a believable character on screen, on stage.

Stanislavski first employable method such as emotional memory draw on from your own past experiences however painful they are and try to relate them to the to whatever is happening. Whatever the demands of the role prepare for a role that involves fear for example, the actor must remember something really frightening from the personal lives and attempt part emotional space of that fear the once felt so, drawing on the memories. Now this was a clear break from the previous modes of acting that held at the actor job was to become the character and leave their own emotions behind. Here they have to draw from their own personal experience then that is what more demanding, more challenging some of the leading practitioner's all-time greats Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, Monty Clift and James Dean.

If you look at the body of work of these people you will understand what these actors were all about. They were not just some good looking men trying to act the role they were really actors, but trained in New York unlike the alley based studio system and later on of course we have De Niro, Pacino Nicholson, Dustin Hoffman, Shellen, Rinpoche Liverman a regular of Emma Bergman a Swedish actor. Aina Thompson, British Meryl Streep of course American and then more recent more contemporary we have Daniel Day Lewis Nicholas Cage who was once upon a time a great actor. When he won the living Las Vegas there were sparks (()) of course Christian Bale the late grade Heat Leisure, Forest Whitaker and Frank Langella. Frank Langella highly respected theatre actor who got his during cinema much later, but still one of the greatest.

Can you mention some of his films, who is Frank Langella?

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Good. Frost Nixon he played Nixon too and who is frost?

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Who was frost? I will give a clue the same actor who played Tony Blair in the queen a short from my left foot.


(No audio from 45:13 to 46:00)

So, as a title itself would suggest not too many well-known names not a big budget picture that a tremendous performance by one of the greatest actor of all time. So, watch my left foot and understand what method acting and tells.

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Lecture 21

- It was rumoured that vote-swapping of enormous proportion had taken place when announcements were made for the Best Picture nominations for the Academy Awards in 1962;
- Two major studio blockbusters: *The Longest Day* (20th Century Fox) and *Mutiny on the Bountry* (MGM) were nominated, without winning any nomination in the categories of acting, direction and/or writing.



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- It was seen as a clear case of politics of aggressive campaigning by the big studios;
- Both films, particularly *Mutiny on the Bounty*, saw an enormous improvement at the box-office after the Oscar nomination;
- The same sort of horse-trading got the Best Picture nomination for Fox's *Cleopatra* in 1963.




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- The dubious distinction of collecting most nominations but no awards is shared by *The Turning Point* (1977) and *The Color Purple* (1985), which each garnered 11 nominations, but won none.



NPTEL

(No audio from 46:20 to 47:05)

So, see you tomorrow and you can make an announcement about tomorrow's class.