

## **The Dark Side of Genius: The Early Films of Alfred Hitchcock**

**Course Description:** Beyond a shadow of a doubt, Sir Alfred Hitchcock [1899-1980] is the only director whose very name is an adjective: “hitchcockian,” meaning “eerie,” “macabre,” “funereal,” “sepulchral.” Just the mention of his name cues the sound of Gounod’s “Funeral March of the Marionettes.” Long before he made such Hollywood classics as “Spellbound,” “Notorious,” “Vertigo,” or “Psycho,” he was making **cutting-edge** classics in Britain. Indeed, Hitchcock’s career goes back to the time of the silent movie. In this course, we will screen eight of Sir Alfred’s early, British-produced films, and see the development of his style, technique and trademark idiosyncrasies. Each session will consist of Professor Stone’s insightful introductory comments, the screening of a full-length Hitchcock film, and a wide-ranging post-film discussion.

### **Eight Lectures/Screenings:**

1. **The Lodger (1927):** Hitchcock’s first hit, this silent film has a typical Hitchcockian plot: an innocent man is suspected of being a serial killer.
2. **Blackmail (1929):** Hitchcock’s first “talkie” is the masterful tale of a young woman who commits murder, is blackmailed, then finds out that the detective assigned to hear case is her lover.
3. **The Man Who Knew Too Much (1934):** A man and his wife receive a clue to an imminent assassination attempt, only to learn that their daughter has been kidnapped to keep them quiet.
4. **The Thirty-Nine Steps (1935):** A Hitchcock British spy-chase suspense **film** from a vintage period, **this**, his 18<sup>th</sup> film **is** considered his first real masterpiece. A contrived title, it was his first film with a classic theme that he modeled repeatedly for the rest of his career.
5. **Sabotage (1936):** Oskar Homolka plays a London movie-theatre owner who maintains a secret life as a paid terrorist. With the 25-year old Sylvia Sidney.
6. **Secret Agent (1936):** Set during the “Great War,” John Gielgud plays a British novelist who discovers that a government agency has faked his own death.
7. **Young and Innocent (1937):** A film actress is murdered by her estranged husband who is jealous of all her young boyfriends.
8. **The Lady Vanishes (1938):** Margaret Lockwood, heading home on a train from holiday in the Balkans, becomes friends with kindly old Dame May Whitty, who mysteriously disappears.