

Introducing Lois Weber

English 345: Women Filmmakers

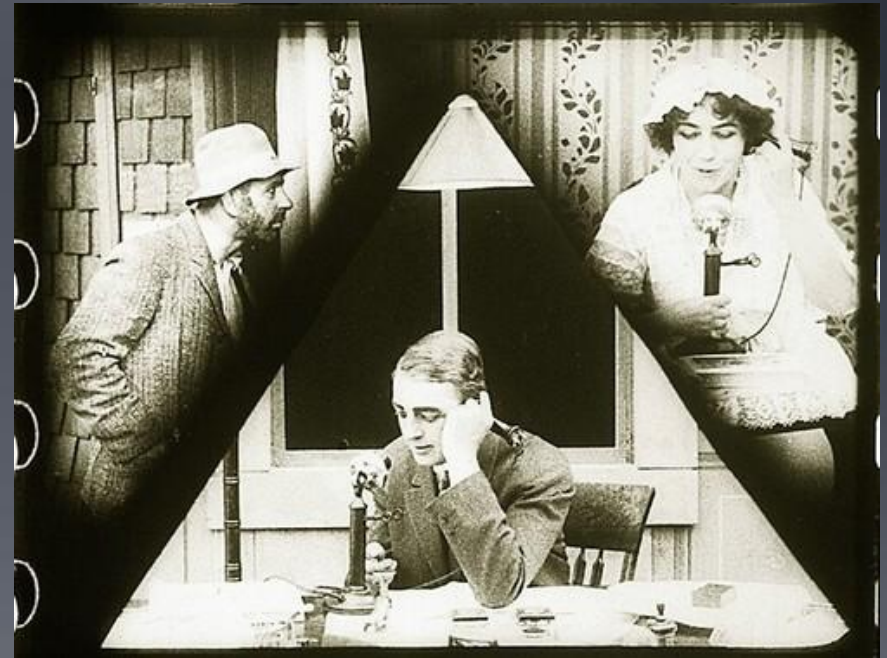
Lois Weber: Early Career

- Born 1882 in Alleghany City, PA
- Ran away from home when parents discouraged plans to study voice
- Streetcorner evangelist in Pittsburgh (Christian Home Missionary, 1890s)
- Began career as actress, working with Phillips Smalley, who had hired her for his traveling road show in 1905
- Married Smalley in 1905
- Began directing for Gaumont Talking Pictures in 1908



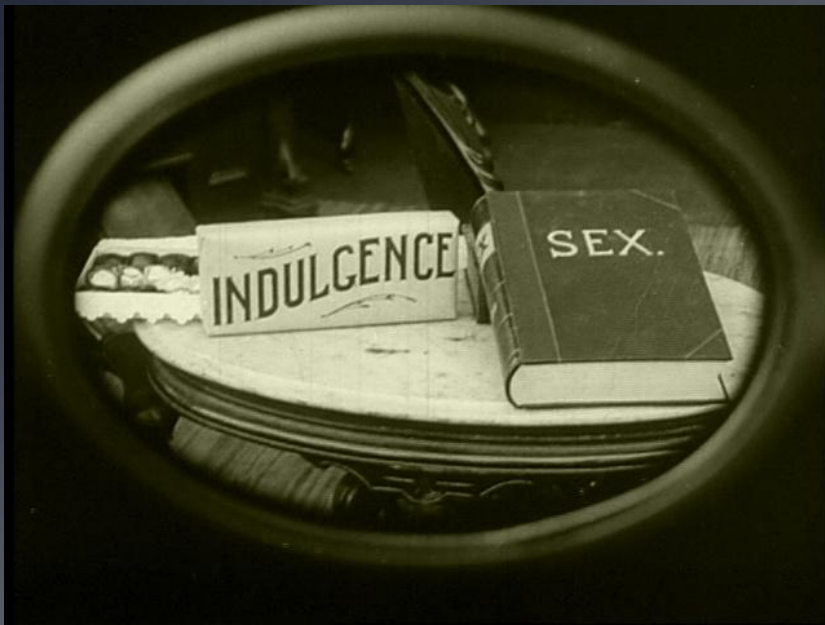
Lois Weber: Mid Career

- Began working for Rex, division of Universal, in 1912, teaming with Smalley
- Universal funds studio for Weber in 1915
- Weber funds own studio, Lois Weber Productions, in 1917
 - Directed social problem films on drug addiction, capital punishment, religious intolerance, and contraception.



Suspense, 1913

Lois Weber: Mid Career, cont'd



From *Hypocrites* (1915)

- Work aimed at middle-class audiences, with goal of involving them in social uplift projects. Film as catalyst for social awareness and action.
- Contracts with Famous-Players/Laskey for \$50,000 per/picture distribution deal in 1920
 - Deal dropped 1921 after 3 unprofitable pictures

Lois Weber: End Career

- Content/style of films (“heavy dinners”) became less popular in the 1920s
- Weber lost company in 1921 (divorced alcoholic Smalley and had “nervous breakdown”)
- Last film, *White Heat*, 1934
- Died 1939, in poverty



With Billie Dove on the set of *The Sensation Seekers* (1927)