Arts & Humanities

Columbia in the Movies

Twenty-two films in which the Columbia campus makes a cameo.

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West Side Story

***West Side Story* (1961)**

Right before its famous first dance number set in an Upper West Side playground, this musical romance opens with aerial shots of Manhattan landmarks, including the Morningside campus.



Frank Sinatra in "The Detective."

***The Detective* (1968)**

Frank Sinatra stars as Joe Leland, a New York City detective who investigates the brutal murder of a gay man, in this neo-noir thriller. Lee Remick plays Leland’s estranged wife, a Columbia professor.



Dustin Hoffman in "Marathon Man."

***Marathon Man* (1976)**

This crime thriller was adapted from the 1974 novel by William Goldman ’56GSAS, who also wrote the screenplay. Dustin Hoffman plays a Columbia history PhD student and avid runner who becomes entangled in a criminal plot devised by a former Nazi, played by Laurence Olivier.



Blair Brown and William Hurt in "Altered States."

***Altered States* (1980)**

William Hurt broke into Hollywood with this trippy sci-fi horror flick about a psychopathologist who experiments with psychedelic drugs. The film also marked the film debut of Drew Barrymore, then five years old.



Dan Akyroyd and Bill Murray in "Ghostbusters."

***Ghostbusters* (1984)**

At the beginning of this hit 1984 comedy, the soon-to-be Ghostbusters, played by Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, and Harold Ramis, get fired from Columbia’s (sadly fictional) parapsychology department.



Woody Allen in "Hannah and Her Sisters."

***Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986)**

New York City plays a dominant role in nearly all of Woody Allen’s films, and the Oscar-winning *Hannah and Her Sisters* is no exception. In one scene, Allen takes a pensive walk past Columbia’s Kent Hall and the replica of *The Thinker.*



Sigourney Weaver in "Ghostbusters 2."

***Ghostbusters II* (1989)**

The *Ghostbusters* franchise returned to Morningside Heights for this 1989 sequel, which shows Sigourney Weaver strolling into the fictional “Institute for Advanced Theoretical Research.” (The building is actually Avery Hall.)



Denzel Washington in "Malcolm X."

***Malcolm X* (1992)**

Spike Lee’s biopic of Malcolm X, which stars Denzel Washington as the civil-rights icon, is one of several films and television shows to use Columbia’s 309 Havemeyer Hall as a filming location.



Jeff Bridges and Barbra Streisand in "The Mirror Has Two Faces."

***The Mirror Has Two Faces* (1996)**

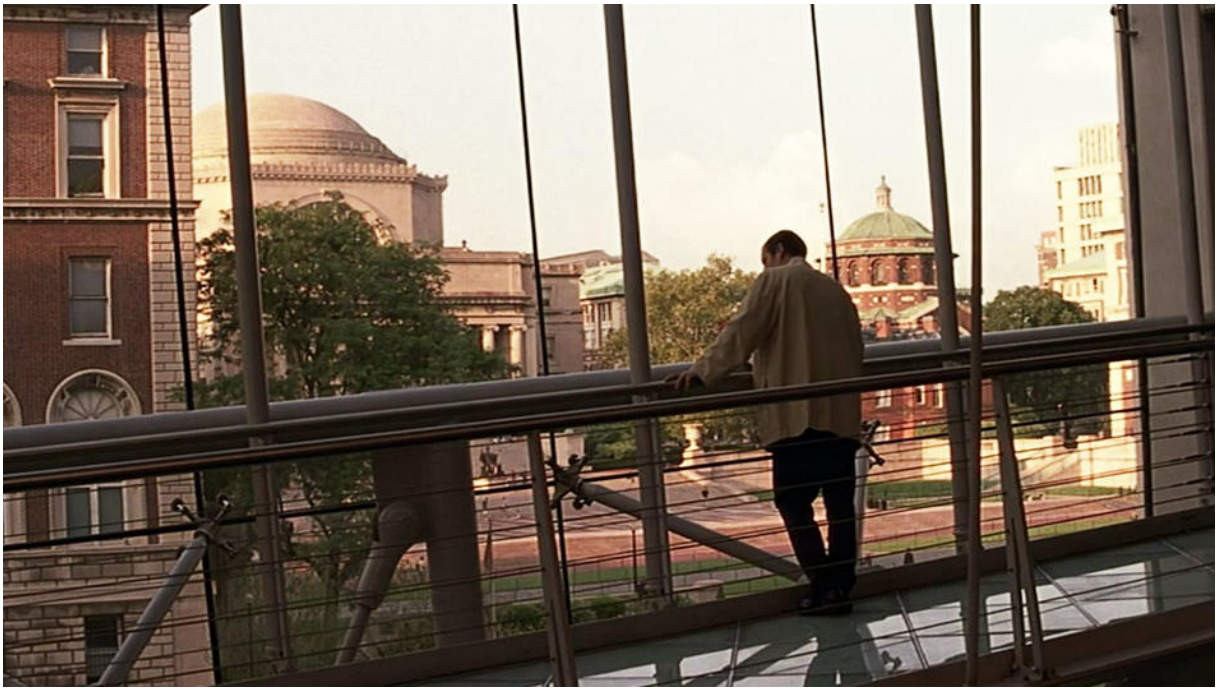
Barbra Streisand produced, directed, and starred in this Columbia romance about two middle-aged professors — played by Streisand and Jeff Bridges — who meet through a personals ad and fall in love.



Tobey Maguire in "Spider-Man."

***Spider-Man* (2002)**

Peter Parker’s superhero transformation begins during a high-school field trip to a Columbia science lab, where he gets bitten by a genetically engineered spider. James Franco ’11SOA, who later got an MFA in writing at Columbia, costars as Parker’s friend Harry Osborn.



Adam Sandler in "Anger Management."

***Anger Management* (2003)**

Columbia’s Lerner Hall serves as a stand-in for a Boston hospital in this raucous comedy, which stars Adam Sandler as an anger-management patient and Jack Nicholson as his eccentric therapist.



Julia Roberts (bottom right) and cast members of "Mona Lisa Smile."

***Mona Lisa Smile* (2003)**

309 Havemeyer made for the perfect vintage backdrop for this 1950s period drama. The classroom isn’t the film’s only Columbia connection — alumnae Maggie Gyllenhaal ’99CC and Julia Stiles ’05CC are costars.



Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind." (IMDb)

***Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)**

In this supernatural romance, Kate Winslet’s character, Clementine, works at Barnes & Noble. In reality, the location is the Columbia University Bookstore at 2922 Broadway.



Liam Neeson in "Kinsey." (IMDb)

***Kinsey* (2004)**

309 Havemeyer appears yet again in this biopic of Alfred Kinsey, the influential sexologist who broke taboos and founded the Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University in 1947. College alum Bill Condon ’76CC wrote and directed the film.



Ashley and Mary-Kate Olsen in "New York Minute."

***New York Minute* (2004)**

It might have a rating of only 11 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, but this teen comedy starring Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen — the last in which the twins appear together! — is worthy for its brief Columbia cameo.



Laura Linney in "P.S."

***P.S.* (2004)**

In this indie romance based on a novel by Helen Schulman ’86SOA, Laura Linney plays a Columbia admissions officer who has an affair with an applicant who she believes is a reincarnation of her deceased high-school boyfriend.



Robinne Lee '00LAW and Will Smith in "Hitch."

***Hitch* (2005)**

Will Smith stars as Alex “Hitch” Hitchens, a professional dating consultant, in this mid-2000s rom-com. A flashback scene of Hitch’s college days, shot on the steps of Low Library with actress Robinne Lee ’00LAW, reveals that his own love life wasn’t always so smooth.



Amy Adams in "Enchanted." (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures)

***Enchanted* (2007)**

Amy Adams plays a fairy-tale princess who gets transplanted into modern Manhattan in this family-friendly comedy, which features a brief shot of Columbia’s entrance on 116th St. and Broadway.



Scarlett Johansson in "The Nanny Diaries."

***The Nanny Diaries* (2007)**

In this comedy, Scarlett Johansson plays a recent college graduate who takes a job as a nanny for a rich, snobby Upper East Side family. (Spoiler: In the end, she ditches the nanny life and applies to Columbia for a master’s in anthropology.)



Daniel Radcliffe in "Kill Your Darlings." (IMDb)

***Kill Your Darlings* (2013)**

This film, which stars Daniel Radcliffe as poet Allen Ginsberg ’48CC, brought an infamous Columbia true-crime story to the screen: the 1944 Riverside Park murder of David Kammerer by Lucien Carr, a Columbia College student and member of the Beat Generation.



Julianne Moore in "Still Alice."

***Still Alice* (2014)**

Julianne Moore won an Oscar for best actress for playing a Columbia linguistics professor who receives a devastating diagnosis of Alzheimer’s at age fifty. Several of the film’s scenes show her walking and jogging around campus, as well as stopping for fro-yo at the Pinkberry on 112th and Broadway.



A scene from "The Post."

***The Post* (2017)**

Thanks to special effects and a crowd of extras in ’70s clothing, this Steven Spielberg movie, which tells the story of the *Washington Post*’s publication of the Pentagon Papers, transformed Low Library’s steps into a protest outside the US Supreme Court building. (Look beneath the ornate entablature and column capitals and you’ll see the distinctive doorway and twelve windows of Low’s façade.)

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