

# David Bordwell, B.A. '69

“Our Best Writer on the Cinema”

By Amy Halloran, B.A.'90

**D**avid Bordwell loved his time at UAlbany. The renowned film historian, hailed by Roger Ebert as “our best writer on the cinema,” majored in English, minored in theater, and revived a dwindling International Film Group. “Weekends, we would book a mix of recent Hollywood movies that we thought were important, and foreign films,” Bordwell recalled. One weeknight, the group showed classics, using records to make soundtracks for silent films.

Bordwell was the projectionist for Professor Fred Silva, who showed films in his English classes, and for Professor Arthur Lenig, who showed films in his art history courses. Lenig also gave him a chance to write sections of class texts he was publishing. “There wasn’t much on film written in those days,” said Bordwell, Jacques Ledoux Professor of Film Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 1973-2004.



With his wife, Kristin Thompson, Bordwell composed what has become a seminal undergraduate text, *Film Art* (McGraw-Hill), now in its ninth edition. The couple’s textbook *Film History: An Introduction* (McGraw-Hill) is in its third edition.

Bordwell and Thompson continue to write for students and for academic audiences of scholars and historians. These audiences perhaps overlap in their blog efforts, selections from which will be published next spring as *Minding Movies* (University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Bordwell wrote the introduction to Roger Ebert’s new book, *The Great Movies III* (University of Chicago Press, 2010). An updated e-book version of the out-of-print *Planet Hong Kong* will be available on his website, [www.davidbordwell.net](http://www.davidbordwell.net), in December.