This is not my complete list of favorite or great movies. There are many others that get high marks for technical and artistic quality, for creativity, or for entertainment value. But these are movies that I’ve found intellectually stimulating and/or emotionally compelling. They really have something to say, and say it well.

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| Title | Date | Director |
| Hunchback of Notre Dame, The | 1923 | Worsley, Wallace |
| Greed | 1924 | Von Stroheim, Erich |
| Last Laugh, The | 1924 | Murnau, F. W. |
| Faust | 1926 | Murnau, F. W. |
| Sunrise | 1927 | Murnau, F. W. |
| Crowd, The | 1928 | Vidor, King |
| Passion of Joan of Arc, The | 1928 | Dreyer, Carl Th. |
| All Quiet on the Western Front | 1930 | Milestone, Lewis |
| City Lights | 1931 | Chaplin, Charles |
| Frankenstein | 1931 | Whale, James |
| M | 1931 | Lang, Fritz |
| I Was Born, But… | 1932 | Ozu, Yasujiro |
| Scarface | 1932 | Hawks, Howard |
| L’Atalante | 1934 | Vigo, Jean |
| Les Miserable | 1934 | Bernard, Raymond |
| David Copperfield | 1935 | Cukor, George |
| Mutiny on the Bounty | 1935 | Lloyd, Frank |
| Good Earth, The | 1937 | Franklin, Sidney |
| Make Way for Tomorrow | 1937 | McCarey, Leo |
| Grand Illusion, The | 1938 | Renoir, Jean |
| Rules of the Game, The | 1939 | Renoir, Jean |
| Stagecoach | 1939 | Ford, John |
| Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, The | 1939 | Mitzoguchi, Kenji |
| Wuthering Heights | 1939 | Wyler, William |
| Grapes of Wrath, The | 1940 | Ford, John |
| Citizen Kane | 1941 | Welles, Orson |
| Sargeant York | 1941 | Hawks, Howard |
| Casablanca | 1942 | Curtiz, Michael |
| King’s Row | 1942 | Wood, Sam |
| Magnificent Ambersons, The | 1942 | Welles, Orson |
| Mrs. Miniver | 1942 | Wyler, William |
| Now, Voyager | 1942 | Rapper, Irving |
| Day of Wrath | 1943 | Dreyer, Carl Th. |
| Life and Death of Colonel Blimp, The | 1943 | Powell, Michael |
| Canterbury Tale, A | 1944 | Powell, Michael |
| Brief Encounter | 1945 | Lean, David |
| Best Years of our Lives, The | 1946 | Wyler, William |
| Great Expectations | 1946 | Lean, David |
| Black Narcissus | 1947 | Powell, Michael |
| It’s a Wonderful Life | 1947 | Capra, Frank |
| Bicycle Thief, The | 1948 | De Sica, Vittorio |
| Hamlet | 1948 | Olivier, Lawrence |
| Letter from an Unknown Woman | 1948 | Ophuls, Max |
| Red River | 1948 | Hawks, Howard |
| Red Shoes, The | 1948 | Powell, Michael |
| Treasure of the Sierra Madre, The | 1948 | Huston, John |
| Late Spring | 1949 | Ozu, Yasujiro |
| Third Man, The | 1949 | Reed, Carol |
| All About Eve | 1950 | Mankeiwicz, Joseph |
| Rashomon | 1950 | Kurosawa, Akira |
| Early Summer | 1951 | Ozu, Yasujiro |
| Place in the Sun, A | 1951 | Stevens, George |
| High Noon | 1952 | Zinnemann, Fred |
| Ikiru | 1952 | Kurosawa, Akira |
| Shane | 1952 | Stevens, George |
| Umberto D. | 1952 | De Sica, Vittorio |
| Earrings of Madame de… | 1953 | Ophuls, Max |
| Tokyo Story | 1953 | Ozu, Yasujiro |
| Wages of Fear, The | 1953 | Clouzot, Henri-Georges |
| Ugetsu | 1953 | Mizoguchi, Kenji |
| On the Waterfront | 1954 | Kazan, Elia |
| Rear Window | 1954 | Hitchcock, Alfred |
| Sansho the Bailiff | 1954 | Mizoguchi, Kenji |
| Seven Samurai | 1954 | Kurosawa, Akira |
| Apu Trilogy | 1955 | Ray, Satyajit |
| Night of the Hunter, The | 1955 | Laughton, Charles |
| Ordet | 1955 | Dreyer, Carl Theodor |
| Rebel Without a Cause | 1955 | Ray, Nicholas |
| Burmese Harp, The | 1956 | Ichikawa, Kon |
| Giant | 1956 | Stevens, George |
| Searchers, The | 1956 | Ford, John |
| 12 Angry Men | 1957 | Lumet, Sydney |
| Bridge on the River Kwai, The | 1957 | Lean, David |
| Cranes are Flying, The | 1957 | Kalatozov, Mikhail |
| Nights of Cabiria | 1957 | Fellini, Federico |
| Paths of Glory | 1957 | Kubrick, Stanley |
| Seventh Seal, The | 1957 | Bergman, Ingmar |
| Wild Strawberries | 1957 | Bergman, Ingmar |
| Music Room, The | 1958 | Ray, Satyajit |
| Touch of Evil | 1958 | Welles, Orson |
| Vertigo | 1958 | Hitchcock, Alfred |
| 400 Blows, The | 1959 | Truffaut, Francois |
| Ben Hur | 1959 | Wyler, William |
| Pickpocket | 1959 | Bresson, Robert |
| Rio Bravo | 1959 | Hawks, Howard |
| Inherit the Wind | 1960 | Kramer, Stanley |
| Two Women | 1960 | De Sica, Vittorio |
| Judgment at Nuremberg | 1961 | Kramer, Stanley |
| Through a Glass Darkly | 1961 | Bergman, Ingmar |
| West Side Story | 1961 | Wise, Robert |
| Viridiana | 1961 | Bunuel, Luis |
| Yojimbo | 1961 | Kurosawa, Akira |
| Lolita | 1962 | Kubrick, Stanley |
| Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, The | 1962 | Ford, John |
| Manchurian Candidate, The | 1962 | Frankenheimer, John |
| To Kill a Mockingbird | 1962 | Mulligan, Robert |
| Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? | 1962 | Aldrich, Robert |
| Winter Light | 1962 | Bergman, Ingmar |
| America, America | 1963 | Kazan, Elia |
| Leopard, The | 1963 | Visconti, Luchino |
| Silence, The | 1963 | Bergman, Ingmar |
| Trial, The | 1963 | Welles, Orson |
| Gertrud | 1964 | Dreyer, Carl Th. |
| Gospel According to St. Matthew | 1965 | Pasolini, Pier Paolo |
| Andrei Rublev | 1966 | Tarkovsky, Andrei |
| Au Hasard Balthazar | 1966 | Bresson, Robert |
| Man for all Seasons, A | 1966 | Zinnemann, Fred |
| Persona | 1966 | Bergman, Ingmar |
| Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? | 1966 | Nichols, Mike |
| In the Heat of the Night | 1967 | Jewison, Norman |
| Le Samourai | 1967 | Melville, Jean-Pierre |
| Mouchette | 1967 | Bresson, Robert |
| 2001 A Space Odyssey | 1968 | Kubrick, Stanley |
| Once Upon a Time in the West | 1968 | Leone, Sergio |
| Midnight Cowboy | 1969 | Schlesinger, John |
| Wild Bunch, The | 1969 | Peckinpah, Sam |
| Clockwork Orange, A | 1971 | Kubrick, Stanley |
| Last Picture Show, The | 1971 | Bogdanovich, Peter |
| Aguirre, the Wrath of God | 1972 | Herzog, Werner |
| Cries and Whispers | 1972 | Bergman, Ingmar |
| Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, The | 1972 | Bunuel, Luis |
| Godfather, The | 1972 | Coppola, Francis F. |
| Solaris | 1972 | Tarkovsky, Andrei |
| Amarcord | 1973 | Fellini, Federico |
| Spirit of the Beehive, The | 1973 | Erice, Victor |
| Chinatown | 1974 | Polanski, Roman |
| Godfather II | 1974 | Coppola, Francis F. |
| Mirror, The | 1974 | Tarkovsky, Andrei |
| Woman Under the Influence, A | 1974 | Cassavetes, John |
| Barry Lyndon | 1975 | Kubrick, Stanley |
| Taxi Driver | 1976 | Scorsese, Martin |
| Close Encounters of the Third Kind | 1977 | Spielberg, Steven |
| Stroszek | 1977 | Herzog, Werner |
| Days of Heaven | 1978 | Malick, Terrence |
| Deer Hunter, The | 1978 | Cimino, Michael |
| Apocalypse Now | 1979 | Coppola, Francis F. |
| Stalker, The | 1979 | Tarkovsky, Andrei |
| Chariots of Fire | 1981 | Hudson, Hugh |
| Chosen, The | 1981 | Kagan, Jeremy |
| Das Boot | 1981 | Peterson, Wolfgang |
| Fanny and Alexander | 1982 | Bergman, Ingmar |
| Gandhi | 1982 | Attenborough, Richard |
| Nostalghia | 1983 | Tarkovsky, Andrei |
| Tender Mercies | 1983 | Beresford, Bruce |
| Amadeus | 1984 | Forman, Milos |
| Paris, Texas | 1984 | Wenders, Wim |
| Once Upon a Time in America | 1984 | Leone, Sergio |
| Color Purple, The | 1985 | Spielberg, Steven |
| Ran | 1985 | Kurosawa, Akira |
| Sacrifice, The | 1986 | Tarkovsky, Andrei |
| Babette’s Feast | 1987 | Axel, Gabriel |
| Full Metal Jacket | 1987 | Kubrick, Stanley |
| Wings of Desire | 1987 | Wenders, Wim |
| Decalogue, The | 1988 | Kieslowski, Krzysztof |
| Rain Man | 1988 | Levinson, Barry |
| Do the Right Thing | 1989 | Lee, Spike |
| Awakenings | 1990 | Marshall, Penny |
| Dances with Wolves | 1990 | Costner, Kevin |
| Double Life of Veronique, The | 1991 | Kieslowski, Krzysztof |
| Raise the Red Lantern | 1991 | Yimou, Zhang |
| Brighter Summer Day, A | 1991 | Yang, Edward |
| Howards End | 1992 | Ivory, James |
| Of Mice and Men | 1992 | Sinise, Gary |
| River Runs Through It, A | 1992 | Redford, Robert |
| Unforgiven | 1992 | Eastwood, Clint |
| Age of Innocence | 1993 | Scorsese, Martin |
| Remains of the Day | 1993 | Ivory, James |
| Schindler’s List | 1993 | Spielberg, Steven |
| Seabiscuit | 1993 | Ross, Gary |
| Three Colors | 1993 | Kieslowski, Krzysztof |
| Forrest Gump | 1994 | Zemeckis, Robert |
| Chungking Express | 1994 | Kar-Wai, Wong |
| Before Sunrise | 1995 | Linklater, Richard |
| Mr. Holland’s Opus | 1995 | Herek, Stephen |
| Seven | 1995 | Fincher, David |
| Breaking the Waves | 1996 | Von Trier, Lars |
| Marvin’s Room | 1996 | Zaks, Jerry |
| Shine | 1996 | Hicks, Scott |
| La Promesse | 1997 | Dardenne, Jean-Pierre & Luc |
| Life is Beautiful | 1997 | Benigni, Roberto |
| Apostle, The | 1998 | Duvall, Robert |
| Les Miserables | 1998 | August, Bille |
| Thin Red Line, The | 1998 | Malick, Terrence |
| Eyes Wide Shut | 1999 | Kubrick, Stanley |
| Magnolia | 1999 | Anderson, Paul Thomas |
| Matrix, The | 1999 | Wachowski, Lana & Lily |
| Wind Will Carry Us, The | 1999 | Kiarostami, Abbas |
| Dancer in the Dark | 2000 | Von Trier, Lars |
| In the Mood for Love | 2000 | Kar-Wai, Wong |
| Yi Yi | 2000 | Yang, Edward |
| Amelie | 2001 | Jennet, Jean-Pierre |
| Lord of the Rings | 2001 | Jackson, Peter |
| Royal Tenenbaums, The | 2001 | Anderson, Wes |
| Pianist, The | 2002 | Polanski, Roman |
| Rabbit-Proof Fence | 2002 | Noyce, Phillip |
| Son, The | 2002 | Dardenne, Jean-Pierre & Luc |
| 21 Grams | 2003 | Inarritu, Alejandro G. |
| Best of Youth, The | 2003 | Giordana, Marco Tullio |
| City of God | 2003 | Meirelles, Fernando |
| Return, The | 2003 | Zvyagintsev, Andrei |
| Crash | 2004 | Haggis, Paul |
| Passion of the Christ, The | 2004 | Gibson, Mel |
| New World, The | 2005 | Malick, Terrence |
| Babel | 2006 | Inarritu, Alejandro |
| Letters from Iwo Jima | 2006 | Eastwood, Clint |
| Still Life | 2006 | Zhang-ke, Jia |
| Pan’s Labyrinth | 2006 | Toro Guillermo del |
| Atonement | 2007 | Wright, Joe |
| No Country for Old Men | 2007 | Coen, Ethan & Joel |
| Kite Runner, The | 2007 | Forster, Marc |
| Dark Knight, The | 2008 | Nolan, Christopher |
| Avatar | 2009 | Cameron, James |
| Messenger, The | 2009 | Moverman, Oren |
| Precious | 2009 | Daniels, Lee |
| Get Low | 2010 | Schneider, Aaron |
| Inception | 2010 | Nolan, Christopher |
| Kid with a Bike, The | 2011 | Dardenne, Jean-Pierre & Luc |
| Melancholia | 2011 | Von Trier, Lars |
| Mill and the Cross, The | 2011 | Majewski, Lech |
| Tree of Life, The | 2011 | Malick, Terrence |
| Life of Pi, The | 2012 | Lee, Ang |
| Elena | 2012 | Zvyagintsev, Andrei |
| Wadja | 2012 | Al-Mansour, Haifaa |
| 12 Years a Slave | 2013 | McQueen, Steve |
| Nebraska | 2013 | Payne, Alexander |
| Boyhood | 2014 | Linklater, Richard |
| Ida | 2014 | Pawlikowski, Pawel |
| Interstellar | 2014 | Nolan, Christopher |
| Leviathan | 2014 | Zvyagintsev, Andrei |
| Whiplash | 2014 | Chazelle, Damien |
| Bridge of Spies | 2015 | Spielberg, Steven |
| Brooklyn | 2015 | Crowley, John |
| Lion | 2016 | Davis, Garth |
| Manchester by the Sea | 2016 | Lonergan, Kenneth |
| Paterson | 2016 | Jarmusch, Jim |
| Silence | 2016 | Scorsese, Martin |