Frank Russell Capra (May 18, 1897 – September 3, 1991) was a Sicilian-born American film director and a creative force behind a number of films of the 1930s and 1940s, including *It Happened One Night* (1934), *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), *Lost Horizon* (1937), *You Can't Take It With You* (1938), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), *Meet John Doe* (1941), *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944) and *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946).

Born as Frank Rosario Capra (some sources indicate Francesco Rosario Capra) in
Bisacquino, Sicily, he immigrated to the United States in 1903 with his parents, Salvatore Capra (nicknamed as "Turiddu") and Rosaria (later known as "Sarah"; née Nicolosi) and his siblings Giuseppa, Giuseppe, and Antonia.

In California the family met with Benedetto Capra (the oldest sibling, known as "Benjamin") and settled in Los Angeles. Frank Capra attended Manual Arts High School there. In 1918, he graduated from Throop Institute (now the California Institute of Technology) with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering.

During World War I, Capra enlisted in the United States Army on October 18, 1918. He taught ballistics and mathematics to artillerymen at Fort Winfield Scott in the Presidio of San Francisco. While there, he caught Spanish flu and was medically discharged with the rank of second lieutenant on December 13, 1918. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1920 as Frank Russell Capra.

Frank Capra was commissioned as a major in the United States Army Signal Corps during World War II. He produced *State of the Union* and directed or co-directed ten documentary propaganda films between 1942 and 1948, including the seven-episode U.S. government-commissioned series—consisting of *Prelude to War* (1942), *The Nazis Strike* (1942), *The Battle of Britain* (1943), *Divide and Conquer* (1943), *The Battle of Britain* (1943), *The Battle of Russia* (1943), *The Battle of China* (1944)—plus *Know Your Enemy: Japan*.
Frank Capra

(1945), *Tunisian Victory* (1945), and *Two Down and One to Go* (1945) that do not bear the *Why We Fight* banner; as well as produced the African-American targeted *The Negro Soldier* (1944). The *Why We Fight* series is widely considered a masterpiece of influential propaganda and won an Academy Award. *Prelude to War* won the 1942 Academy Award for Documentary Feature. Capra regarded these films as his most important works. As a colonel, he received the Distinguished Service Medal in 1945.

*It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946) was considered a box office disappointment but it was nominated for the Academy Awards for Best Director, Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Sound Recording and Best Editing. The American Film Institute named it one of the best films ever made, putting it at the top of the list of AFI's 100 Years... 100 Cheers, a list of what AFI considers to be the most inspirational American movies of all time. The film also appeared in another AFI Top 100 list: it placed at 11th on AFI's 100 Years... 100 Movies list of the top American films.

Capra directed two films at Paramount Pictures starring Bing Crosby, *Riding High* (1950) and *Here Comes the Groom* (1951). From 1952-1956, Capra produced four science-related television specials in color for the American Telephone and Telegraph Company: *Our Mr. Sun* (1956), *Hemo the Magnificent* (1957), *The Strange Case of the Cosmic Rays* (1957), and *Meteora: The Unchained Goddess* (1958). These educational science documentaries were popular favorites for showing in school science classrooms.

It was eight years before he directed another theatrical film, *A Hole in the Head* (1959) with Frank Sinatra, which was his first feature film in color.
Frank Capra's final theatrical film was with Glenn Ford and Bette Davis, named *Pocketful of Miracles* (1961), a remake of his 1933 film *Lady for a Day*. In the mid-1960s he worked on pre-production for an adaptation of Martin Caidan's novel *Marooned* but budgetary constraints made him eventually shelve it.

Capra's final film, *Rendezvous in Space* (1964), was an industrial film made for the Martin Marietta Company and shown at the 1964 New York World's Fair. It was exhibited at the New York Hall of Science after the Fair ended. In 1982, the American Film Institute honored Frank Capra with the television film *The American Film Institute Salute to Frank Capra*, hosted by James Stewart. In 1986, Capra received the National Medal of Arts.

Capra won a total of six Academy Awards. He was nominated six times for Best Director and six times for Outstanding Production/Best Picture. Out of six nominations for Best Director, Capra received the award three times. He briefly held the record for winning the most Best Director Oscars when he won for the third time in 1938, until this record was matched by John Ford in 1941, and then later surpassed by Ford in 1952. William Wyler also matched this record upon winning his third Oscar in 1959.

Frank Capra died in La Quinta, California, of a heart attack in his sleep in 1991 at the age of 94. He was interred in the Coachella Valley Public Cemetery in Coachella, California. He left part of his 1,100-acre (4 km²) ranch in Fallbrook, California, to Caltech. Capra's personal papers and some of his film related materials are contained in the Wesleyan University Cinema Archives; which allows scholars and media experts from around the world to have full access.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Winner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td><em>Lady for a Day</em></td>
<td>Outstanding Production</td>
<td>Winfield Sheehan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Cavalcade</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td><em>It Happened One Night</em></td>
<td>Outstanding Production</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Harry Cohn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td><em>Mr. Deeds Goes to Town</em></td>
<td>Outstanding Production</td>
<td>Hunt Stromberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Great Ziegfeld</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frank Capra

- **1937**
  - Best Director: Frank Capra
  - Lost Horizon
  - Outstanding Production: Henry Blanke
  - The Life of Emile Zola

- **1938**
  - Best Director: Frank Capra
  - You Can't Take It With You
  - Outstanding Production: Henry Blanke

- **1939**
  - Best Director: Frank Capra
  - Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
  - Outstanding Production: David O. Selznick
  - Gone with the Wind

- **1943**
  - Best Director: Victor Fleming
  - Prelude to War
  - Best Documentary: Victor Fleming

- **1944**
  - Best Director: Frank Capra
  - The Battle of Russia
  - Best Documentary, Features: Desert Victory

- **1946**
  - Best Director: Frank Capra
  - It's a Wonderful Life
  - Best Motion Picture: Samuel Goldwyn
  - The Best Years of Our Lives