History 3390: Special Topics
“Reel History”

This course focuses on films that interpret and reflect U.S. history. Throughout the semester we will pay close attention to both how the past is presented on the screen and the forces that led to the motion pictures’ production. Thus, we are interested in contextualizing why films about various historical subjects emerged when they do. As such, we will watch movies in class and discuss them. Our discussions will be based not only on the images, but also on criticism and other writing analyzing the films and history.

The films I have picked were for the most part produced in Hollywood and depict either a historical era or event. Most of them were released nationwide, while a few had limited viewership. In order for us to get a glimpse of not only the depiction of history, but also the history of film, I have chosen some silent films for us to watch.

My primary objective in this class is to have us use an interdisciplinary approach to the study of history via the medium of film. I hope that we all learn to see the past in different ways and that in the process gain a new perspective not only on history, but also on the production of film, both artistically and commercially.

Required Texts:
E. H. Carr, *What is History?*
ISBN: 0-394-70391
Cedric J. Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory & Meaning: Black & The Regimes of Race in American Theater & Film Before World War II.*
ISBN: 978-0-8078-5841-7
Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film, Film on History.*
ISBN: 978-1-4082-8255-7
(The assigned articles are available on Blackboard.)

Course Requirements:
There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. Your midterm will be administered on October 18 and the final will take place on Thursday, December 8, 1 p.m. -3:45 p.m. In addition, three response papers on the films will be due throughout the semester and one essay based on film reviews will also be required. There are no designated due dates for the response papers, instead I have divided the course into three parts and each essay will be due during one of those sections. The film review paper will be due on November 15. You are required to come to class and watch the films as a community.
Grade Distribution:
Midterm Exam: 20%; Final Exam: 20%; 3 Response Papers: 10%. Film Review Assignment: 10%; Attendance and Participation: 20%.

Plagiarism, Rules, Procedures:
I must remind you that academic dishonesty, including cheating on an exam or quiz, and plagiarism of any form, meaning presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, will not be tolerated. Cutting and pasting information from a website without citing the data constitutes plagiarism. If anybody is caught committing this egregious offense she/he will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. To prevent you from committing plagiarism, your papers will be submitted to “Safe Assign,” on Blackboard, which will check your essay to ensure you are not trying to pass someone else’s work as your own.

In addition, I ask that you respect your fellow students and me. If you are compelled to talk while in class—DO NOT. I find this habit annoying and just plain rude. I will not tolerate class disturbances of any kind. This means cell phones and other electronic devices are prohibited. If you do not comply with these rules I will ask you to leave the room. Finally, I must remind you that this class starts when I walk in the classroom; therefore you should be ready to pay attention and take notes when I start talking. I urge you to take notes—you will not be able to remember what was said if you do not, and a good deal of the exams are based on class content.

Keypad/Clicker:
We will use REEF polling to register responses in the class and also to record attendance. You can use your smart phone, tablet, or computer to access the app or website. A link to more information on the “clicker” can be found on Blackboard. You will need to register the device on Blackboard. Attendance is worth 20% of your grade. If you do not show up to class, it is likely you will not do well in it.

Schedule

Part I
Week 1: August 23
Introduction


Week 2: August 30
The New World

Readings: Rosenstone, Introduction, Chapters 1-4.

Week 3: September 6
Birth of A Nation
Readings: Robinson, Preface, Chapters 1 & 2.

Week 4: September 13
Gone with the Wind

Readings: Robinson, Chapters 3 & 5.

Week 5: September 20
Old San Francisco


Week 6: September 27
Reds

Reading: Rosenstone, Chapter 6.

Part II

Week 7: October 4
The Big Parade


Week 8: October 11
The Grapes of Wrath


Week 9: October 18
Come See the Paradise


Midterm.

Week 10: October 25
Saving Private Ryan.

Part III
Week 11: November 1
Salt of the Earth


Week 12: November 8
Selma


Week 13: November 15
Stonewall


Film Review Paper Due.

Week 14: November 22
Platoon


Week 15: November 29
United 93


The final exam is scheduled for Thursday, December 8, 1 p.m.-3:45 p.m.