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Spring 2018

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 the films at home (via links provided on Blackboard), then discuss highlights and the readings in class. 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 use cinema as a way to approach the study of history. 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:

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 **March 20** and the final will take place on **Thursday, May 10, 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 **April 24**. 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.**

Schedule

Part I**Week 1: January 16***Introduction***Week 2: January 23**

Readings: Roland Barthes, "The Romans on Film;" Rosenstone, Introduction, Chapters 1-3.

Week 3: January 30*The General (1927)**Birth of A Nation (1915)*

Readings: Stephen Weinberger, "'The Birth of a Nation' and the Making of the NAACP." *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 45, no. 1 (2011): 77-93. Ed Rampell and Luis Reyes, "Cinema's Civil War Sesquicentennial." *Film International*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (2012): 6-11; Ron Briley, "Hollywood's Reconstruction and the Persistence of Historical Mythmaking." *The History Teacher*, Vol. 41, no. 4 (2008): 453-468.

Week 4: February 6
The Big Parade (1925)

Readings: Tony Williams, “The Big Parade,” *Senses of Cinema*, 68, (September 2013); Richard P. May, “Restoring The Big Parade,” *The Moving Image*, Vol. 5, no. 2, (2005): 140-146.

Week 5: February 13
Gone with the Wind (1939)

Readings: Thomas Pauly, “Gone with the Wind and The Grapes of Wrath as Hollywood Histories of the Depression.” *Journal of Popular Film*, Vol. 3, no. 3 (1974): 203-218; Leonard J. Leff, “David Selznick’s ‘Gone With the Wind’: ‘The Negro Problem.’” *The Georgia Review*, Vol. 18, no. 1 (1984):146-164.

Week 6: February 20

Stagecoach (1939)

Readings: David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, “Stagecoach,” in *Film Art: An Introduction*; Ronald L. Davis, “Paradise among the Monuments: John Ford’s Vision of the American West.” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 45, no. 3 (1995): 48-63.

Part II

Week 7: February 27
Salt of the Earth (1954)

Readings: Esteve Rimbau, Casimiro Torreiro, and Rosaura Revueltas, “ ‘This Film Is Going to Make History’: An Interview with Rosaura Revueltas.” *Cinéaste* 19, no. 2/3 (1992): 50-51; Carl R. Weinberg, “ ‘Salt of the Earth’: Labor, Film, and the Cold War.” *OAH Magazine of History* 24, no. 4 (2010): 41-45. Benjamin Balthaser, “Cold War Re-Visions: Representation and Resistance in the Unseen Salt of the Earth.” *American Quarterly* Vol. 60, no 2 (2008): 347-371; Scott Henkel and Vanessa Fonseca, “Fearless Speech and the Discourse of Civility in Salt of the Earth,” *Chiricú Journal: Latina/o Literatures, Arts, and Cultures* Vol. 1, no. 1 (2016): 19-38.

Week 8: March 6
Spring Break: March 12-16

Week 9: March 20
Midterm.

Week 10: March 27

Reds (1981)

Reading: Rosenstone, Chapter 6.

Part III

Week 11: April 3

Platoon (1986)

Reading: Rosenstone, Chapter 7-9; Marita Sturken, "Reenactment, Fantasy, and the Paranoia of History: Oliver Stone's Docudramas." *History and Theory* 36, no. 4 (1997): 64-79.

Week 12: April 10

Saving Private Ryan (1998)

Readings: Albert Auster, "Saving private Ryan and American triumphalism." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 30, no. 2 (2002): 98-104; Phil Landon, "Realism, Genre, and Saving Private Ryan," *Film and History*, 28, nos.3-4 (1998): 58-62.

Week 13: April 17

United 93 (2006)

Reading: Duncan Greenlaw, "'Until Justice is Done': Authenticity and Memory in Paul Greengrass's *Bloody Sunday* and *'United 93.'*" *Revue Canadienne D'Études Cinématographiques / Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 19, no. 2 (2010): 2-25.

Week 14: April 24

Selma (2014)

Reading: Marcos Norris, "Dr. King & the Image of God: A Theology of Voting Rights in Ava DuVernay's *Selma.*" *Journal of Religion & Film*, 20, no. 2 (2016): 1-28.
Film Review Paper Due.

Week 15: May 1

Stonewall (2015)

Reading: Martin Duberman, and Andrew Kopkind, "The Night They Raided Stonewall." *Grand Street*, no. 44 (1993): 120-47; Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crago, "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth." *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (2006): 724-51.

The final exam is scheduled for Thursday, May 10, 1 p.m.-3:45 p.m.

