SYLLABUS

Fall 2014

History 600: The Middle Ages in Film

119 Noland Zoology Building

Mondays 1:20 – 3:15

Prof. Elizabeth Lapina

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In this course we will watch, read about and discuss a series of films on various medieval subjects. Some of these films will be blockbusters, while others will be hardly known outside a small circle of specialists. Some of them will be recent, while others will date from the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s. Many of the films will be American, but we will also discuss films made in other countries. With the help of both secondary and primary sources, we will gain an awareness of medieval realities (as far as these can be reconstructed by historians) and medieval texts, on which the films are based. However, we will move beyond simply noting whether or, rather, where each film is offering a faithful or an unfaithful representation of history. Rather, we will attempt to understand what attracted modern filmmakers to medieval history in the first place and what concerns – be they artistic, political, social, religious, etc. – made them represent it in the ways that they did.

OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 10-10:45 and Wednesday 10-10:45 (and by appointment)

REQUIREMENTS

[1] Entrance and exist surveys. In weeks 1 and 14 you will receive an online survey from the History Department. (not graded)

[2] A 10-minute presentation either of (a) one of the films discussed in class; (b) one of the films on one of the topics discussed in class (Joan of Arc, King Arthur or the crusades). If you choose “(b),” please confirm your choice with the instructor. For your presentation, it is up to you to choose what is particularly interesting about the film. However, you have to demonstrate your acquaintance not just with the film, but with the scholarly articles about it. This means that you might have to do some research on the film (in most cases this should mean reading extra articles from among those provided on the syllabus).


A one-paragraph summary of your topic to be submitted to your instructor. The summary should make clear the question that you will be asking in your paper. The research topic is due early in the semester, so you are free to change your mind later on and to take your research in a different direction.

[6] Rough draft of a Wikipedia article (or, in most cases, a correction of an existing Wikipedia article) on any film dealing with the Middle Ages. This can be one of the films we will discussing in class or another film. Make sure to clear your choice with the instructor. This site has a comprehensive list of films on medieval topics: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/medfilms.html. Also, if you are correcting an existing Wikipedia article, make sure that it is clear what changed you have made to the original article. Before writing or correcting an article, become familiar with other Wikipedia articles on films. Your article should address, where applicable, the following categories:
- Plot
- Cast
- Pre-production / production
- Cinematography / style
- Music / soundtrack
- Historical accuracy / historical inaccuracy (in some cases, this means the literalness with which the film follows its medieval source, such as, for example, Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*.)
- Reception (with three possible subcategories: Critical response; Awards and nominations; Box Office Performance)
- Political context / subtext
- Further reading (a bibliography)

[7] One-page Peer Review of the rough draft of a Wikipedia article. The review can be arranged as a narrative or as a list of suggestions.

[8] Final draft of a Wikipedia article.

[9] Rough Drafts. A polished draft should be between 15 and 20 pages long. Use 12pt font, 1” margins and double spacing.

[9] One-page Peer Review of a Rough Draft. This should be a formal response to a classmate’s paper. It should provide a brief summary of the paper and suggestions for improvement. The peer reviewer will also be responsible for asking one question following the final presentation of his/her peer.


PARTICIPATION
Participation is worth 15% of your final grade. We have 8 seminars dedicated to discussion and 2 seminars dedicated to presentations. This means that attendance of and participation in each seminar is worth 1.5% of your final grade. Please note that you will get only partial credit for mere attendance with minimal or no participation.

THE WEB
You should be able to find lots of information about the films on the Web (I, for example, often use http://www.rottentomatoes.com/). However, in the vast majority of cases the analysis found on the Web will be of (much) lower quality than that found in academic books and articles. Please be aware of this when writing your research papers and use the Web sparingly and with caution.
GRADING:

Research topic: 3%
Presentation of research topic: 2%
In-class presentation of a film: 10%
Peer-Review of Wikipedia Article: 5%
Wikipedia Article: 15%
Peer-Review of a Rough Draft: 5%
Final Presentation: 5%
Final Paper: 40%
Participation 15%

Please note that the penalty of any late assignment is 5%/24 hours (excluding weekends).

READING ASSIGNMENTS
You will never be required to read all of the articles listed under each topic. We will choose the articles to read for each class in the previous class. E-mail me if you have missed a class. Other texts are there to help you for your presentations and/or research papers. All of the texts available via learn@UW are preceded by a “UW.” Other texts will be available in the library (most, but not all of them, via Reserves at the College Library).

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM:
As a courtesy to your fellow students, I ask that you turn off all devices that access the internet during lectures.

WRITING CENTER:
The Writing Center is a very useful resource if you want help with your papers. Information about the Center can be found here:
http://www.writing.wisc.edu/

ACADEMIC HONESTY
The University of Wisconsin considers academic honesty to be a very serious issue. I will always enforce the university policies on academic honesty. I suggest that you read carefully the following website dealing with the rules about plagiarism:
http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html
If you have questions about plagiarism, please contact me or your TA. Further information about student codes of conduct is found here:
http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#points

DISABILITY
Disability guidelines for course accommodations are found at the UW McBurney Disability Resource Center site: http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu
SEMINAR #2. September 15

BRAVEHEART

Please bring a list of three films for the Wikipedia assignment, arranged in the order of preference.

FILM:
- *Braveheart* (Mel Gibson, 1995).

TEXTS (ON FILM):

TEXT (ON HISTORY):

SEMINAR #3: September 12

JOAN OF ARC
Please see at least one of the following three films:

- *Joan the Woman* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1916)
- *La Passion de Jeanne d’Arc / Tha Passion of Joan of Arc* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1928)
- *The Messenger* (Luc Besson, 1999)

**TEXTS (ON FILMS):**


**TEXTS (ON HISTORY):**


SEMINAR #4: September 29.

**KING ARTHUR IN THE US AND THE UK**

Please watch at least one of the following films:

- *The Knights of the Round Table* (Richard Thorpe, 1953)
- *Prince Valiant* (Henry Hathaway, 1954)
TEXTS (ON FILMS):

• Caroline Jewers, “Mission Historical, Or ‘[T]Here were a Hell of a Lot of Knights”: Ethnicity and Alternity in Jerry Bruckheimer’s King Arthur.” In Ramey and Pugh, Race, Class, and Gender in ‘Medieval’ Cinema, 91-106.


TEXTS (ON HISTORY):


• [UW] Sir Thomas Malory, “Sir Lancelot and Queen Guenivere.”

SEMIFR #5: October 6

KING ARTHUR IN FRANCE

Research topic due in class.

Please bring your laptop to class if you have one (we will have a presentation on updating Wikipedia).

FILMS:

Please watch at least one of those films:

• Lancelot du lac (Robert Bresson, 1974)

• Perceval le Gallois (Eric Rohmer, 1978)

TEXTS (ON FILMS, in addition to those for seminar # 6):


SEMINAR #6: October 13.

THE CRUSADES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A rough draft of your updated Wikipedia article is due. Please forward a copy / link to your peer and a copy / link to your instructor via e-mail.

Please watch one of the films:

- *King Richard and the Crusaders* (David Butler, 1954).
- *Saladin* (Youssef Chahine, 1963)
- *Kingdom of Heaven* (Ridley Scott, 2005)

**TEXTS (ON FILMS):**


TEXTS (ON HISTORY):

SEMINAR # 7. October 20.

THE CRUSADES IN SPAIN

Review of a peer’s Wikipedia article due. Please forward a copy to your peer and a copy to your instructor via e-mail.

Presentations of your paper topics.

Please watch El Cid (Anthony Mann, 1961)

TEXTS (ON THE FILM, in addition to those for Seminar #6)

TEXTS (ON HISTORY)
• [UW] The Poem of the Cid (early 13th century)
  http://ehr.oxfordjournals.org/content/CXXVI/520/517.short
SEMINAR # 8: October 27.

THE CRUSADES IN EASTERN EUROPE

A hard copy of the final draft of your Wikipedia article due in class.

Please watch one of the following films:
- *Alexander Nevsky* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1938).
- *The Valley of The Bees* (František Vláčil. 1967)

**TEXTS (ON FILM, in addition to those for Seminar #6)**

**TEXTS (ON HISTORY)**

November 3: MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR
November 10: MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR
November 14 (Friday): ROUGH DRAFTS DUE. E-mail one copy of your rough draft to your instructor and another to your peer-reviewer
November 20 (Thursday): PEER-REVIEWS OF ROUGH DRAFTS DUE. E-mail one copy of your comments to me and another to your peer.
November 24: PRESENTATIONS
December 1: PRESENTATIONS
December 8: PRESENTATIONS
December 15: HARD COPIES OF FINAL DRAFTS DUE IN MY MAILBOX

BIBLIOGRAPHY

HISTORY IN FILM:


THE MIDDLE AGES IN FILM:

- Finkie, Laurie A. and Martin B. Shichtman, *Cinematic Illuminations. The Middle Ages on Film* (Baltimore, 2010).
- Rosenbaum, J. *Movies as Politics* (Berkeley, 1997).
Goals of the History Major  
(approved by the department, March 23, 2011; revised by the department, February 27, 2013)

The goal of the history major is to offer students the knowledge and skills they need to gain a critical perspective on the past. Students will learn to define important historical questions, analyze relevant evidence with rigor and creativity, and present convincing arguments and conclusions based on original research in a manner that contributes to academic and public discussions. In History, as in other humanistic disciplines, students will practice resourceful inquiry and careful reading. They will advance their writing and public speaking skills to engage historical and contemporary issues.

To ensure that students gain exposure to some of the great diversity of topics, methodologies, and philosophical concerns that inform the study of history, the department requires a combination of courses that offers breadth, depth, and variety of exposition. Through those courses, students should develop:

1. Broad acquaintance with several geographic areas of the world and with both the pre-modern and modern eras.
2. Familiarity with the range of sources and modes through which historical information can be found and expressed. Sources may include textual, oral, physical, and visual materials. The data within them may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be available in printed, digital, or other formats. Modes of expression may include textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, essays, literary works, or digital presentations.
3. In-depth understanding of a topic of their choice through original or creative research.
4. The ability to identify the skills developed in the history major and to articulate the applicability of those skills to a variety of endeavors and career paths beyond the professional practice of history.

Skills Developed in the Major

Define Important Historical Questions

1. Pose a historical question and explain its academic and public implications.
2. Using appropriate research procedures and aids, find the secondary resources in history and other disciplines available to answer a historical question.
3. Evaluate the evidentiary and theoretical bases of pertinent historical conversations in order to highlight opportunities for further investigation.

Collect and Analyze Evidence

1. Identify the range and limitations of primary sources available to engage the historical problem under investigation.
2. Examine the context in which sources were created, search for chronological and other relationships among them, and assess the sources in light of that knowledge.
3. Employ and, if necessary, modify appropriate theoretical frameworks to examine sources and develop arguments.

Present Original Conclusions

1. Present original and coherent findings through clearly written, persuasive arguments and narratives.
2. Orally convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.
3. Use appropriate presentation formats and platforms to share information with academic and public audiences.

Contribute to Ongoing Discussions

1. Extend insights from research to analysis of other historical problems.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of a historical perspective to contemporary issues.
3. Recognize, challenge, and avoid false analogies, overgeneralizations, anachronisms, and other logical fallacies.