

University of Wisconsin – Madison

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Office hours: T 10:30-12:30 & by appt.

History 600: History & Film
3 Credits
T 3:30-5:25
Humanities 1217

Objectives:

In this class we shall be pursuing two interconnected lines of inquiry. First, we shall learn how to evaluate any film for its historical accuracy. In so doing, we shall also be exploring the very question of accuracy: do costumes, lighting, architecture ground it? Can a modern medium represent the past? Second, we shall learn to attend to the ways films shape our sense of the past. This question extends beyond questions of “costume”—or dress—or historically correct lighting and furniture, to the ways that seeing moments enacted come to inform our thinking about past events.

The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course’s learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated research time, reading, writing, individual consultations with the instructor and student partners, and other work as set forth in the syllabus.

Requirements:

Each student is to choose one film to analyze over the course of the semester. We shall talk about those choices in the third class meeting. Each will then research that choice for historical accuracy in terms that will differ from film to film: February 14, each student will present a brief summary of the historiography s/he has identified for the film. Each student will present historical analysis as a 20-minute oral report in class. Each will then consider how that film has shaped his/her understanding of the moment in history the film depicts, which will form the second 20-minute oral report in class. For the oral reports, each student should be prepared to present clips of her or his chosen film and have comments organized in an outline to lead the class through the analysis of the film and its representative segments.

Each student will write a 6000-word research paper on the film s/he has chosen, due the last day of class, May 2. The History Lab offers help with writing:

<http://history.wisc.edu/thehistorylab.htm>

Students wishing to have others view the film, in order to think critically collectively about it, should let me know the second class meeting, so that we can arrange movie nights.

Academic Integrity:

The University has clear policies on academic integrity. Please be sure you understand these rules, as this course is governed by them: <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>

Grading:

participation in weekly discussion: 30%

this means helping to build a collective analysis as well as brief reports on research

first oral report: on the historical accuracy of your chosen film: 15%

second oral report: on the ways that film shapes your sense of the past: 15%

final essay: 40%

Accommodation:

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Meetings:

September 11 Introductions

September 18 Wisconsin Center for Film & Theater Research: <http://wcftr.commarts.wisc.edu/>
meet in class then walk over together

September 25 Film choices: Which film? Why?

October 2 Historiography: Identify and discuss 2-3 books on the period of your film

October 9 First Reports: Historical accuracy

October 16 First Reports: Historical accuracy

October 23 First Reports: Historical accuracy

October 30 First Reports: Historical accuracy

November 6 Second Reports: Thinking about History

November 13 Second Reports: Thinking about History

November 20 Second Reports: Thinking about History

November 27 Second Reports: Thinking about History

December 4 Discussion of drafts

December 11 Final papers due