

University of Wisconsin – Madison

Lee Palmer Wandel: lpwandel@wisc.edu
Office hours: T 10:00-12:00 & by appt.

History 600: History & Film

3 Credits

W 1:20-3:15

Humanities 5245

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%

Meetings:

January 24 Introductions

January 31 Wisconsin Center for Film & Theater Research: <http://wcftr.commarts.wisc.edu/>
meet in class then walk over together

February 7 Film choices: Which film? Why?

February 14 Historiography: Identify and discuss 2-3 books on the period of your film

February 21 First Reports: Historical accuracy

February 28 First Reports: Historical accuracy

March 7 First Reports: Historical accuracy

March 14 First Reports: Historical accuracy

March 21 Second Reports: Thinking about History

Spring Break

April 4 Second Reports: Thinking about History

April 11 Second Reports: Thinking about History

April 18 Second Reports: Thinking about History

April 25 Discussion of drafts

May 2 Final papers due