

University of Wisconsin – Madison

Lee Palmer Wandel: lpwandel@wisc.edu

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

History 600: History & Film

3 Credits

T 1:20-3:15

Humanities 5255

In person

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 of you is to **choose one film** to analyze over the course of the semester. We shall talk about those choices **October 3**. You will then research that choice for historical accuracy in terms that will differ from film to film: **October 10, you will present a brief summary of the historiography** you have identified for the film. The following three weeks, students will present historical analysis as a **20-minute oral report** in class. For the second oral presentation, each of you will consider how that film has shaped your understanding of the moment in history the film depicts, again for **20 minutes**. For your oral reports, you should be prepared to present clips of your chosen film and have comments organized in an outline to lead the class through the analysis of the film and its representative segments.

Each of you will write a **6000-word research paper** on that film, due the last day of class, **December 12**. The [History Lab](#) offers help with writing.

Anyone wishing to have others view the film, in order to think critically collectively about it, should let me know by 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.

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:

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| September 12 | Introductions |
| September 19 | Wisconsin Center for Film & Theater Research meet in class then walk over together |
| September 26 | Meet with Ken Kwapis |
| October 3 | Film choices: Which film? Why? |
| October 10 | Historiography: Identify and discuss 2-3 books on the period of your film |
| October 17 | First Reports: Historical accuracy |
| October 24 | First Reports: Historical accuracy |
| October 31 | First Reports: Historical accuracy |
| November 7 | Second Reports: Thinking about History |
| November 14 | Second Reports: Thinking about History |
| November 21 | Second Reports: Thinking about History |
| November 28 | Second Reports: Thinking about History |
| December 5 | Discussion of drafts |
| December 12 | Final papers due |