

SYLLABUS
Fall 2023
History 600: The Middle Ages in Film
Humanities 5255
Thursdays 1:20-3:15 pm

Prof. Elizabeth Lapina
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Office: 4131 Humanities
office hours: Tuesdays 12:15-1:15PM

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, but most will be films that are little known to the general public. Some of them will be recent, but most will date from the middle to late 20th century. Some of them will be American, the rest European and Asian. In the course of the seminars, the students will gain an awareness of medieval realities and medieval texts on which these films are based. However, we will move beyond simply noting whether each film is offering a faithful or an unfaithful representation of history and 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. Two topics in particular will be at the center of our discussion: violence and gender.

TRIGGER WARNING: The films we will be discussing will be dealing with many violent themes, including rape.

CREDIT POLICY STATEMENT: The credit standard for this 3-credit 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 online time, reading, writing, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the time you have completed this undergraduate capstone seminar, you will have gained knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- You will have become familiar with certain key themes – particularly those having to do with violence and with gender – of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries.
- You will become familiar with representations of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period in American, European and Japanese cinema.
- You will have gained a better understanding of how history has been – and is – used to comment upon, justify, and criticize various contemporary developments.
- You will have gained experience in developing a research question and will present an argument in a paper between 15 and 20 pages long.

GRADE:

- Participation: 30%
- Research Topic: 5%
- Research Question: 5%
- Annotated bibliography: 5%
- Outline (1-2 pages double-spaced; has to contain your research question and your provisional thesis): 5%
- Rough draft (submitted on-time): 5%
- Final presentation: 15%
- Final draft: 30%

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: assignments submitted late will receive a reduction of 5% per workday.

FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT: The students will have to choose a film, a cluster of films, or a topic that runs across a series of films, which they will analyze in their essays and oral presentations. The thesis statement will have to do with either violence or gender (or both).

The grade for the paper assignment will be based on the following:

- A clear, yet original thesis statement.
- A thesis statement that has something to do with violence or gender.
- Clear structure with one idea per paragraph.
- A close analysis of a film or films with discussions of specific scenes.
- Length of at least 15 pages (double-spaced).
- Incorporation of basic information about the film (name of director, date and country of production).
- An understanding of the historical period represented in the film.
- An understanding of the historical period when the film was made.
- Engagement with scholarship (peer-reviewed books and articles)
- An awareness that the reader might not have watched the film.

WEEK 1. January 23: Introduction to the Course



WEEK 2. January 31: *Braveheart* (1995)

- Laurie A. Finkie and Martin B. Shichtman, “The Passion of the Scot.” *Cinematic Illuminations. The Middle Ages on Film* (Baltimore, 2010) 180-194.



WEEK 3. February 6: **Rashomon (1950)**

- “Rashomon,” Donald Richie, *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* (Berkeley, 1996)



WEEK 4. February 13: **The Last Duel (2021)**

Research topic due (upload to Canvas).

- Eric Jager, *The Last Duel* (New York, 2004)
Chapter 4: “The Crime of Crimes,” 53-76.
Chapter 10: “Convent and Crusade,” 186-189.



WEEK 4. February 20: **The Passion of Joan of Arc (1929)**

Research question due (upload to Canvas).

- Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir, “Joan as Jesus: A Feminist Theological Analysis of Dreyer’s The Passion of Joan of Arc.”



WEEK 5. February 27: **The Messenger (2009)**

- Nickolas Haydock, “Shooting the Messenger: Luc Besson at War with Joan of Arc.”



WEEK 6. March 6: Marketa Lazarova (1967)

Annotated bibliography due (upload to Canvas)

- Petr Bubeníček, *Subversive Adaptations Czech Literature on Screen behind the Iron Curtain* (2017) 135-145.
- David Sorfa, “The Touch of History: a Phenomenological Approach to 1960s Czech Cinema”



WEEK 9. March 13: The Northman (2022)

Detailed outline due (upload to Canvas)

- Hughes, S.F., “Some Thoughts on The Northman (2022)” *Arthuriana* 32(2) (2022) 89-101.

WEEK 10. March 20: NO CLASS: ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR

Rough drafts due (upload to Canvas e-mail a copy to your partner).

WEEK 11: April 3: NO CLASS: ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR

Constructive criticism assignment due (upload to Canvas and e-mail a copy to your partner)

WEEK 12: April 17: PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 13: April 24: PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 14: May 1: PRESENTATIONS

LIST OF 'MEDIEVAL' FILMS

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/medfilms.html>

A SELECTION OF BOOKS ON MEDIEVAL FILMS:

- (1) John Aberth, *A Knight in the Movies: Medieval History on Film* (2003).
- (2) Barnau, Anke and Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Film* (2009).
- (3) Driver, Martha W., and Sid Ray, eds., *The Medieval Hero on Screen: Representations from Beowulf to Buffy* (2004).
- (4) Finkie, Laurie A. and Martin B. Shichtman, *Cinematic Illuminations. The Middle Ages on Film* (2010).
- (5) Haydock, Nickolas, *Movie Medievalism: The Imaginary Middle Ages* (2007).
- (6) Ramey, Lynn T. and Tison Pugh, *Race, Class, and Gender in 'Medieval' Cinema* (2007).
- (7) Harty, Kevin J. *The Reel Middle Ages: American, Western and Eastern European, Middle Eastern, and Asian films about Medieval Europe* (Jefferson, NC, 1999).
- (8) Aronstein, Susan, *Hollywood Knights* (2005)
- (9) Bildhauer, Bettina, *Filming the Middle Ages* (2011).
- (10) Elliott, Andrew B. R., *Remaking the Middle Ages* (2011)
- (11) Haines, John, *Music in Films on the Middle Ages* (2014)
- (12) Kellym Kathleen Coyne, and Tison Pugh, *Queer Movie Medievalisms* (2009)
- (13) Sigler, Lora Ann, *Medieval Art and the Look of Silent Film* (2019)
- (14) William F. Woods, *The Medieval Filmscape* (2014)
- (15) Bartlett, Robert, *The Middle Ages and the Movies, Eight Key Films* (2022).
- (16) Kevin Harty, ed., *Medieval Women on Film Medieval Women on Film. Essays on Gender, Cinema and History* (2020)