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HY 200
 American History, American Cinema
 History, Hollywood, and Representing the American Past

Films tell great stories. But when these narratives are set in the past, historians worry when filmmakers sacrifice historical accuracy for the “good story.” Should we care? Should filmmakers adhere to a historical ethical code when they craft their narratives? Maybe they are using history to tell a different kind of story, one that tells the story of the human condition. Nevertheless, audiences assimilate and even learn history through film, and historical inaccuracy can give audiences a false understanding of history. Given the power film has as a rhetorical medium, we should be concerned about what kind of history is being portrayed on the screen. In this class we will address the problems surrounding representing history on film. We will ask classical philosophical questions about art, representation and the role of the artist in society. In effect, we will be looking at the rhetoric of art, and the ways art influences the way we think about history. But we will also ask questions about the ways historians craft their narratives as well, raising similar issues about the role and obligations historians have in retelling the past. They too tell stories, but writing in a scholarly style for other historians, have they forgotten their role in narrating the past to the general public? In effect this class engages in critical questions about what we mean by “history” and how do we tell historical narratives to understand the past.

Books:

Don DeLillo, *Libra*
 Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*
 Doug Monroy, *Rebirth*

Reading Packet:

Robert Rosenstone, “History in Images/History in Words”
 Plato, “Theory of Art” from *The Republic*
 Walter Benjamin, “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”
 Marita Sturkin, “Reenactment, Fantasy, and the Paranoia of History: Oliver Stone’s Docudramas”
 Max Holland, “After Thirty Years: Making Sense of the Assassination”
 Philip Deloria, “Counterculture Indians and the New Age” and “Conclusion: The Grateful Dead Indians” from *Playing Indian*
 Lizbeth Cohen, “Encountering Mass Culture at the Grassroots”

Films:*JFK**The Searchers**How The West Was Won**Little Big Man**The Godfather**My Big Fat Greek Wedding**Mi Familia/My Family**Real Women Have Curves***Assessment:**

Class Participation: 20%

Analytical Paper: 20%

Tutorial 2: 30%

Tutorial 3: 30%

Class Participation:

This class is conducted in a seminar-style format where students are expected to come to class prepared (that means having read all the assigned reading) and ready to engage in discussion. I grade participation based upon preparedness, constructive dialogue and engagement. In the traditional Socratic setting (you will get a sense of this as you read Plato), this class will be a forum of dialogic learning and I have no inhibition about calling upon people. I recognize that this is not the ideal learning environment for all students, but I believe this is the best format for constructive discussion. Class begins at 9:30 am unless otherwise stated. Attendance is required, and students who fail to come to class are required to write a 5-7 page paper for that day's reading for each day missed. Failure to turn in a make-up paper will result in failing this class. If you are sick or have an excusable absence (to be cleared with me) you must notify me by email or phone by 9:00 am. Afternoon film viewings are a required part of this class. If you have a scheduling conflict, such as work, you must discuss this with me. Failure to come to the film viewings will be treated as an absence. Afternoon films will begin at 1:00 pm.

Analytical Paper:

Your first paper is a traditional 6-8 page analytical paper that develops an argument that addresses the problem of representing history in film and literature. While you are free to develop your own argument, the paper must integrate at least one of the theoretical readings (Plato or Benjamin), Stone's *JFK*, one of the articles (Holland or Sturken), and DeLillo's *Libra*. Should you wish, you can watch an additional docudrama of Oliver Stone's (such as *Platoon*, *Nixon*, or *The Doors*), *Forrest Gump*, or another historical docudrama, but you need to clear your choice with me ahead of time. This paper is due at noon on Friday June 9th, however if you choose to watch the additional film you can turn your paper into me (by email attachment or in my inbox) on that Friday by 5:00 pm. Papers must follow conventional formatting (12 point type, 1 inch margins, double spaced) and notation styles should follow either Turabian/Chicago or MLA. Examples of these formatting styles are available at the Tutt Library web site or at the Reference Desk at the Library

Tutorials:

On the second and third Friday of this block, class will be broken down into small groups where students will present their papers to their peers and myself. The papers will be read aloud and students will be allotted extra time to present film clips. There will also be additional time allotted for a short discussion on the papers presented. The paper will be 6-8 pages in length that draw upon the themes for these weeks (such as The Western and Western History, Mythology, Immigration, and the American Dream) readings, and films. In addition to the required films, students are required to view and integrate an additional film in their papers (as well as the readings). Papers will be due after student presentations. The grade for this assignment will be based upon your paper (20%), your presentation (5%), as well as your participation (5%) in the Tutorial. I will supply a brief bibliography of films as suggestions, but students should feel free to view films of their choosing.

Reading and Class Schedule

Monday June 5, 2006

Introduction

Class Meets at 10:00 am for a course overview and will reconvene at 1:00 pm to discuss Rosenstone's "History in Images/History in Words."

Tuesday June 6

Theorizing Art and History:

Reading:

Plato, "Theory of Art"

Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

Delillo, *Libra*, pp. 3-116

Afternoon Film: *JFK*

Wednesday June 7

Stone and Delillo: Artists or Historians?

Reading:

Holland, "After Thirty Years"

Sturkin, "Reenactment, Fantasy, and the Paranoia of History"

Delillo, *Libra*, pp. 117-268

Thursday June 8

Can We Find "Truth" in the JFK Assassination?

Reading:

Delillo, *Libra*, pp. 269-456

Friday June 9

Analytical Paper Due at 12:00 pm (or 5:00 pm if looking at an additional film)

Monday June 12

What and Where is the West?

Reading:

Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, Introduction-Chapter 3

Afternoon Film: *The Searchers*

Tuesday June 13

Making Sense of Race and the American Frontier

Reading:

Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, Chapter 4-7

Afternoon Film: *How The West Was Won*

Wednesday June 14

Is the American West the History of America Writ Small?

Reading:

Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, Chapter 8-10

Afternoon Film: *Little Big Man*

Thursday June 15

Historicizing Native Americans and the Future of the Western

Reading:

Philip Deloria, "Counterculture Indians and the New Age" and "Conclusion: The Grateful Dead Indians"

Friday June 15

Tutorial 1

Monday June 18

Morning Film (class begins at 8:00am):

The Godfather

Afternoon Film:

My Big Fat Greek Wedding

Tuesday June 19

Immigration and the American Dream: The European Experience

Reading:

Lizabeth Cohen, "Encountering Mass Culture at the Grassroots"

Afternoon Film:

Mi Familia/My Family

Wednesday June 20

Immigration and the American Dream: The Mexican American Experience

Reading:

Doug Monroy, *Rebirth*, Introduction- Chapter 2

Afternoon Film:

Real Women Have Curves

Thursday June 21

Do Men and Women Experience Immigration and Americanization Differently?

Reading:

Doug Monroy, *Rebirth*, Chapter 4-En Fin (Conclusion)

Friday June 22

Tutorial 2

Tutorial Times and Groupings to be Determined