

GEM2005/HY2243 Film and History Syllabus 2006-2007

See also module web page:

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/hisilg/2243-06-07.html>

Lecturers: A/P Ian Gordon, A/P Tim Barnard

Venue: LT 11 Monday 4pm – 8pm

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

1. Through a study of film this module will examine the interpretation of history in film, and contrast filmic representation of history with printed sources. Students will critically evaluate a set of issues regarding film and history such as: What light do films shed on the past? How reliable are films as the grounds for making inferences about the past? What are the similarities and differences in the criteria for the critical evaluation of historical films and the historian's accounts of the past? The module is for students with an interest in film as a form of social expression.
2. On completion of this module students should be able to:
 - Initiate, conduct, and present findings on an aspect of film and history.
 - Develop and present arguments in a critical assessment of the ways in which popular films represent the past.
 - Deploy appropriate methodologies to evaluate the tension between social events and the representation of them in film.
 - Appreciate the debates over the interaction between the personal and the social in film.
 - Grasp the diverse genres that have characterised filmic depictions of social and cultural phenomena over the twentieth century, the context of twentieth-century cinema, and the contexts that shape the subjects of the films viewed and appreciate the methodologies that have produced this knowledge.

TEACHING MODES

Four hour lecture-film showing. Students will read prior to the lectures and can use the remainder of the session to discuss in groups issues raised by the films. Group discussions will primarily occur outside the classroom through the IVLE.

SCHEDULE

Lecture and Film Showing: Monday 4pm to 8pm (or when the film finishes). LT11.

SYNOPSIS

The module will commence with an introductory session covering methodological and theoretical issues regarding film and history. This will be followed by three themed areas of filmic representation covering such topics as: the Great Depression, Fascism/the Holocaust/World War II, the Cold War, the Vietnam War; Roman Empire, Nationalism and Anti-colonialism. Students will study up to twelve popular films from a variety of countries possibly including America, Australia,

Britain, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

SYLLABUS

Part I Introduction (1 week)

Introduction: Key Issues in Film and History (Week 1: August 14)

Part II History, Memory, and Narrative (5 weeks)

1) What do we remember about the past? (Week 2: August 21)
Film: *Memento* (2000)

2) Why do we Remember?: Memory and the Past (Week 3: August 28)

Film: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)

3) How stories are told (Week 4: September 4)

Film: *Pulp Fiction* (1994)

4) Peggy who? (Week 5: September 11)

Film: *The Buddy Holly Story* (1978)

5) Pretty pretty Peggy Sue (Week 6: September 18)

Film: *The Real Buddy Holly Story* (1985)

Part III Film, History and Stereotypes (2 weeks)

1) "You have offended my family and you have offended the Shaolin Temple" (Week 7: October 2)

Film: *Enter the Dragon* (1973)

2) "I can't believe you were gonna ditch for *The Joy Luck Club*" (Week 8: October 9)

Film: *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004)

Part IV Choice and History (3 weeks)

1) Family and Business: "You broke my heart" (Week 9: October 16)

Film: *The Godfather: Part II* (1974)

2) Government and Security: "I don't give a ** how I do it" (Week 10: October 23)**

Film: *To Live and Die in LA* (1985)

3) Society and the Individual: "Are you looking at me?" (Week 11: October 30)

Film: *Taxi Driver* (1976)

Part V Outsiders in America (2 weeks)

1) Look Up in the Sky (Week 12: November 6)

Film: *Superman* (1978)

2) Take the Next Step (Week 13: November 13)

Film: *X-Men* (2000)

ASSESSMENT

The assessment in this module will be entirely continuous, without a final exam.

CA: 100%:

Students must complete five (5) assignments/projects. On average, assignment/project every second week.

5 Projects (50%)

- Project 1 due noon Friday September 8
- Project 2 due noon Friday September 22
- Project 3 due noon Friday October 13
- Project 4 due noon Friday November 3
- Project 5 due noon Friday November 17

Discussion Group participation every week (25%)

The deadline for participation in discussion groups is *8pm the day before the projects are due (Thursday)*.

Hence, for Discussion 1, the closing date is 8pm Thurs September 7.

Discussion 2: 8pm Thurs September 21

Discussion 3: 8pm Thurs October 12

Discussion 4: 8pm Thurs November 2

Discussion 5: 8pm Thurs November 16

Essay due in class November 6, 2006. (25%) See:

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/hisilg/essays2005.htm>

TEXTS & READINGS

All the essential readings will be available online through the IVLE under: Library eReserve. Be sure to download and save the reading because each individual student can only access it once through the Library eReserve.

Core reading: (Under each project question, there will be a main reading. For each film, there will be supplemental readings and films. All key readings are available through the IVLE)

Week 1 (Required Reading, prior to class)

Robert A. Rosenstone, "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 93, No. 5. (Dec., 1988), pp. 1173-1185.

Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996). Chap 2. "The Historical Film: Looking at the past in a Postliterate Age," pp. 45-79.

Dudley Andrew, "Film and History" in *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 176-89.

PROJECT 1: Memory and History

Bill Schwarz, "'Already the Past': Memory and History Time" in *Regimes of History*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 135-51.
John Urry, "How Societies Remember the Past," in Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe eds, *Theorizing Museums* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 45-65.

Week 2 (Memento)

Susan A. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 5. (Dec., 1997): 1372-1385.

Week 3 (Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind)

David L. Smith, "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind and the Question of Transcendence" in the *Journal of Religion and Film*, 9, 1 (2005):

<http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol9No1/SmithSunshine.htm>

Alexander Pope, "From Eloisa to Abelard": <http://www.monadnock.net/poems/eloina.html>

Steven Johnson, "The Science of *Eternal Sunshine*": <http://slate.msn.com/id/2097502>

Week 4 (Pulp Fiction)

Fiona A. Villella, "Circular Narratives: Highlights of Popular Cinema in the '90s," *Senses of Cinema* No. 3 (February 2000).

<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/00/3/circular.html>

Additional Films of interest and relevance (Weeks 2, 3 and 4):

Rashomon (1950)

Wonderland (2003)

Hero (2003)

Run Lola Run (1999)

Breaker Morant (1981)

PROJECT 2: Constructing History

Robert A. Rosenstone, "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 93, No. 5. (Dec., 1988), pp. 1173-1185.

Week 5 (The Buddy Holly Story)

Judith Bloch, "Review: *The Buddy Holly Story*," *Film Quarterly* 32 (Autumn 1978): 42-46.

Week 6 (The Real Buddy Holly Story)

Melanie C. Green, Timothy C. Brock, and Geoff F. Kaufman, "Understanding Media Enjoyment: The Role of Transportation Into Narrative Worlds," *Communication Theory* 14 (November 2004): 311-327

Additional Films of interest and relevance (Week 5 and 6):

The Beatles Anthology, Volume 1 (2003)

Backbeat (1994)

When We Were Kings (1996)

Ali (2001)

PROJECT 3: Film, History and Stereotypes

Robyn Weigman, "Race, Ethnicity and Film" in *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 158-68.

Hugh Cortazzi, "Asian Values May Not Be Particularly Asian":

<http://www.sfdonline.org/sfd/Link%20Pages/Link%20Folders/Human%20Rights/values.html>

Week 7

Wong Ain-Ling (ed.), *The Shaw Screen: A Preliminary Study* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), pp. 129-60

Week 8

Jane Park and Karin Wilkins, "Re-Orienting the Orientalist Gaze", *Global Media Journal* 4, 6 (Spring 2005)

<http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp05/gmj-sp05-park-wilkins.htm>

Pensri Ho, "Young Asian American Professionals in Los Angeles: A Community in Transition", in Contemporary *Asian American Communities: Intersections and Divergences*, ed. Linda Trinh Vo and Rick Bonus (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), pp. 134-46.

Additional Films that may be of interest:

Fist of Fury (1972)

The Joy Luck Club (1993)

PROJECT 4: History and Choice

Alfonso Gomez-Lobo, "Aristotle's Conception of the Right," in Robert J Cavalier et al editors, *Ethics in the History of Western Philosophy*. London: Macmillan, 1989, pp. 47-50.

John Fitch, "Archetypes on the American Screen: Heroes and Anti-Heroes," *Journal of Religion & Popular Culture* 7 (Summer 2004) <http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/art7-archetypes-print.html>

Week 9 (The Godfather: Part II)

Robert W. Snyder, "Organized Crime," in Kenneth T. Jackson, editor, *The Encyclopedia of New York City*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 866-868.

Week 10 To Live and Die in LA

Steve Barnett and JoAnn Magdoff, "Beyond Narcissism in American Culture of the 1980s", *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 1, No. 4. (Nov., 1986), pp. 413-424.

Norman Ansley, "A History of the United States Secret Service", *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science*, vol. 47, no. 1 (1956), pp. 93-109.

Week 11 Taxi Driver

Matthew J. Iannucci "Postmodern Antihero Capitalism and Heroism in *Taxi Driver*: On Travis Bickle, American," *Bright Lights Film Journal* No. 47 (February 2005):

<http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/47/taxi.htm>

Additional Films that may be of interest:

The Godfather (1972)

PROJECT 5: Others in America

Week 12 (Superman)

Gary Engle, "What Makes Superman So Darned American?" in Dennis Dooley and Gary Engle, editors, *Superman at Fifty: The Persistence of a Legend*. New York: Collier Books, 1988, pp. 79-87.

See also:

Donald H. Harrison, "Superman, the all-powerful immigrant, returns to save our American idealism," *Jewish Sightseeing.com*, June 13, 2006,

http://www.jewishsightseeing.com/dhh_weblog/2006-blog/2006-06/2006-06-13-

[superman_immigrant.htm](#)

Week 13 (X-Men)

Lawrence Baron, "X-Men as J Men: The Jewish Subtext of a Comic Book Movie," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 22 (Fall 2003): 44-52.

Additional Films that may be of interest:

Superman Returns (2006)

Batman Begins (2005)

X-Men: The Last Stand (2006)