GEM2005M/HY2243 Film and History
Syllabus 2002-2003

See also module web page:
http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/hisilg/GEM2005m.html

Lecturers: A/P Ian Gordon, Dr. Tim Barnard, Dr Richard Derderian
Venue: LT 8 Monday 4pm – 8pm

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Films often use historical events as the basis for their entertaining stories. Through a study of film this module will examine the film as historical document, the interpretation of history in film, and contrast filmic representation of history with printed sources. Students will evaluate whether is it possible for historians to use films as data (documents) to construct history and critically evaluate claims about the past? What light do films shed on the past? How reliable are films as the grounds for making inferences about the past? How can films be used with other sources of information in constructing history and justifying claims about the past? Can controversies about the past be settled using films as the basis? What are the similarities and differences in the criteria for the critical evaluation of historical films and the historian's accounts of the past? What are the similarities and differences in the ways in which historians and film makers gather relevant clues/information about the past?

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.

MODES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Four hour lecture-film showing -seminar. Students will read prior to the lecture-seminar session and use the session to discuss in groups issues raised by the films. Further group discussions and finalized projects will be completed outside the classroom through the IVLE.

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, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Russia, Singapore, and Vietnam. In 2002-2003 the three themed areas are: Nations and Myths; Asians on Film, Film in Asia; and Minorities in History.

**SYLLABUS**

**Part I Introduction (1 week)**
Key Issues of Film and History (July 29)

**Part II Nations and Myths (4 weeks)**
1) **Australian Mates** (August 5)
   Film: *Gallipoli* (1981)

2) **Scotland Forever** (August 12)
   Film: *Braveheart* (1995)

3) **The Wild Wild American West** (August 19)
   Film: *The Wild Bunch* (1969)

4) **The Unflappable British** (August 26)
   Film: *Dr No* (1962)

**Part III Asian History on Film, Film History in Asia (4 weeks)**
1) **Kipling and Fantasies of White Rule** (September 2)
   Film: *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975)

2) **Sports, Empire and Bollywood** (September 16)
   Film: *Lagaan: Once upon a time in India* (2001)

3) **Wong Fei Hung, Foreign Devils and Chinese Cinema** (September 23)
   Film: *Once Upon a Time in China II* (1992)

4) "**What Really Happened**: The Truth and Japanese Cinema" (September 30)
   Film: *Rashomon* (1950)

**Part IV Minorities in History (4 weeks)**
1) **The Holocaust** (October 7)
   Film: *The Music Box* (1989)

2) **Japanese Internment** (October 14)
Film: *Come See the Paradise* (1990)

3) **African-American Heroes (October 21)**
*Film: Glory* (1989)

4) **Native American Warriors (October 28)**
*Film: Last of the Mohicans* (1992)

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**ASSESSMENT**

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

Six (6) Assignments/Projects. Essay.

On average, assignment/project every second week. Essay due in Week 11.

**CA: 100%:**

6 Projects (40%)

Group Assessment (10%)

Individual Assessment (10%)

Essay (40%)

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**TEXT AND READINGS**

**Core reading:**

**Week 1 (Required Reading, prior to class)**

**Essential:**
Chap. 1 "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History into Film," pp. 19-44.

**Additional:**

Chap 9 "Film and the Beginnings of Postmodern History" pp. 198-225

**Week 2 (Required Reading, prior to class)**
**Additional:**

**Week 3 (Required Reading, prior to class)**

**Additional:**

**Week 4 (Required Reading, prior to class)**

**Additional:**

**Week 5 (Required Reading, prior to class)**

**Additional:**

**Week 6 (Required Reading, prior to class)**

**Additional:**

**Week 7: (Required Reading, prior to class)**

**Additional:**

**Week 8: (Required Reading, prior to class)**
Bey Logan, "Wong Fei Hung" in Once Upon a Time in China II DVD Supplement.

**Additional:**
Diana Preston, A Brief History of the Boxer Rebellion: China's War on Foreigners, 1900 (London: Constable and Richardson, 1999), pp. xv-xxxiv. [For those interested, the rest of the book will provide a background to events]
Esther C. M. Yau, At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

**Week 9: (Required Reading, prior to class)**
"Rashomon" by Ryunosuke Akutagawa in Rashomon: Criterion Collection DVD.
"In a Grove" by Ryunosuke Akutagawa in Rashomon: Criterion Collection DVD.

**Additional:**
Donald Richie, The Films of Akira Kurosawa (Berkeley: University of California

**Week 10 (Required Reading, prior to class)**

**Additional:**

**Week 11 (Required Reading, prior to class)**

**Additional:**

**Week 12 (Required Reading, prior to class)**

**Additional:**

**Week 13 (Required Reading, prior to class)**

**Additional:**