

History 381: Cinema and History



Spring 2017

Professor Vanessa Schwartz

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Taper 336

Office Hours: Monday: 10-12 and by appointment

Course Description:

This course explores the boundaries and definitions of history through an examination of the visual representation of the past in film. It assumes that film functions as an invaluable medium for understanding contemporary notions of how we conceive of the past. In the course we will consider such key historical issues as authenticity, dramatization, point of view, propaganda, biography, nostalgia. We will consider debates about the word versus the image, film's romance with history, the uses of film as historical evidence, and the role of television and video in shaping notions of history.

Course Requirements:

All scheduled meetings are mandatory. More than two missed classes will result in failure.

Required Texts:

Doctorow, *Ragtime*

Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema*

Lindeperg, *Night and Fog*

Musical score from the Broadway musical of "Ragtime" by Ahrens and Flaherty
(can be streamed at Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Ragtime-Musical-Studio-Cast-Recording/dp/B00138CXSK/ref=tmm_msc_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=&pf_rd_p=)

Citations for blackboard materials:

- Schwartz, "Film and History" from Donald and Renov, eds. Sage Handbook of Film Studies (2008), pp.199-215.
- Schama, "Clio at the Multiplex" New Yorker, January 11, 1998
- Browne, The Godfather Trilogy, pp. 1-22. 76-108, 167-181
- Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country, pp.4-13
- Leo Charney on Nostalgia (unpublished essay)
- Jameson, from Postmodernism, and the Logic of Late Capitalism, pp.16-25
- Kracauer, from From Caligari to Hitler, pp 3-11, 61-76
- Appleby et. al. from Telling the Truth about History, 146-159 and Chapter 3.
- Slotkin, "Myth and the Production of History" in Bercovitch, Ideology and Classical American Literature
- Sharpe, "History From Below", in Burke New Perspectives on Historical Writing
- AHR Forum on Film, v. 93, 1988 pp.1173-1209.
- Rosenstone, "Reds as History" Reviews in American History v. 10, n. 3 (Sept. 1982)
- Stansell, "Reds" in Carnes, Past Imperfect
- Kracauer, "Biography as an Art Form" from The Mass Ornament
- Phil Rosen, Change Mummified, pp.147-200.
- Hegel, Philosophy of History pp. 29-33
- Sobchack, "Surge and Splendor: A Phenomenology of the Hollywood Historical Epic" Representations 29 (Winter 1990): 24-49

- Davis, "Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead" Yale Review v. 76 (Summer 1987):457-482
- White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation" from Tropics of Discourse
- Joan Mellen, from The Film Guide to the Battle of Algiers p.16-23
- Mellen Interview with Gillo Pontecorvo in *Film Quarterly*, v. 26, n.1 (Autumn 1972): 2-10).
- Nik Cohn, "Tribal Rights of the New Saturday Night" from New York Magazine June 7, 1976
- Alice Echols, from Shaky Ground, p.159-192
- Hughes, "Empire of the Beat" from Ross and Rose, Microphone Fiends
- Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, "Four Pieces Snatched from Hell" and "In the Very Eye of History," 3-17 and 30-47
- Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Schindler's List is no Shoah: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory," *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 22, No. 2 (Winter, 1996), pp. 292-312.

Films to be Screened:

- Sunset Boulevard* (1950)
- Godfather II* (1972)
- American Graffiti* (1973)
- The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920)
- Reds* (1981)
- The Man who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962)
- McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971)
- Coal Miner's Daughter* (1980)
- Selections from *The Ten Commandments*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Nicholas and Alexandra*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *The Sound of Music*, *Cleopatra*, *Ben Hur*
- Ragtime* (1981)
- Battle of Algiers* (1966)
- Saturday Night Fever* (1977)
- Schindler's List* (1993)
- Night and Fog* (1956)
- The People vs. O.J. Simpson* (2016)
- O.J. Simpson: Made In America* (2016)

Written Assignments and Presentations:

- 1) Each week one student will be responsible for making a "review packet" of film reviews, will present a summary of how the film was reviewed, and will describe

its production history, which should also be summarized in a hand-out. The presentations should be no more than 15 minutes long and will be presented on Mondays. Each student will do one of each of these presentations.

2) Paper: Each student will write a 5-7 page paper based on the readings and the films seen. Topics will be handed out in advance. **Paper is due February 15.**

3) Final Project: Film Treatment: This final project will be a treatment for an historical film. Students will choose something about which they want to make an historical movie and will develop a full-scale proposal that they will assemble in a keynote or powerpoint. That proposal will include a serious 5 page description of the historical problem, person, event, theme being represented, a selection of one or several historical consultants based on the reading you have done for the paper, pages of images that include visuals such as costumes and set designs. The final project will also include a "pitch" day in which students give a presentation of the film as if they were trying to sell it to a studio. The project requirements will be outlined in greater detail in the third week of the course. Students must write a two-paragraph proposal for their film by week 7, produce a bibliography and filmography week 9 and hand in final projects May 8 at 5pm via email to vschwart@usc.edu.

Grading:

Presentation: 20%
Class Participation: 20%
Paper: 25%
Final Project: 35%



Course Schedule and Reading Assignments:

Part I. What is Cinematic History?

Week One: Cinema Tells Its Own History

January 9: Lecture: Is film a suitable medium for historical representation?
Introduction of class

Read for Wednesday:

*Schwartz, "Film and History"

*Schama, "Clio at the Multiplex" New Yorker, January 11, 1998

Screen: *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)

January 11: Discussion

Week Two: Cinematic Techniques of Defining the Past: The Flashback and Allegory in the Service of the Present

No Class on Monday, 1/16 (Holiday)

Prepare for Wednesday:

*Browne, *The Godfather Trilogy*, 1-22, 76-108, 167-181

Screen: "*The Godfather, Part II*" (1974)(200 mins.)

*<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-ca-movie-flashbacks-20161213-story.html>

Wednesday, January 18: Discussion of Allegory and Flashback and "The Godfather, Part II"

Week Three: What is Nostalgia? Another of Hollywood's Notions of History?

January 23: What is Nostalgia? Clip reel in class: Nostalgia clips: "New York, New York," "The Way We Were" "Avalon" "Summer of '42," "That's Entertainment" (30 mins.)

Read for Monday: *from Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, pp. 4-13

Read for Wednesday:

*Charney on Nostalgia

*Jameson from *Postmodernism and the Logic of Late Capitalism*, p.16-25

Screen *American Graffiti* (1973) (120 mins.)

January 25: Discussion

Week Four: Film, Ideology and Collective Mentality

January 30: Does Film Represent a Collective Mentality?

Read for Monday: *Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, pp.3-11, 61-76

For Wednesday:

Screen: "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (1920) (75 mins)

Read Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema*, pp.1-86

February 1: Discussion

Part II. Method and Genre

Week Five: History and Myth

February 6: History and Myth

Read for Monday: *Chapter Three, *Telling the Truth About History*, "History Makes a Nation"

Read for Wednesday:

*Slotkin, "Myth and the Production of History" in Bercovitch and Jehlen, *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, pp.70-90

Screen: *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962, 122 minutes)

February 8: Discussion

Week Six: History from Below

February 13: What is Social History?

Read for Monday:

*Jim Sharpe, "History from Below" in Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, pp.24-41.

*Appleby on social history, esp. 146-159

For Wednesday:

*AHR Forum on Film, v. 93, 1988 pp.1173-1209

Screen: *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971) (120 mins.)

February 15: Discussion and Paper due by class time

Week Seven: Memory and Testimony: The Romance of the Past and the Past as Romance

Feb. 20:

No Class: Holiday

Screen *Reds* (1981) (196 mins.)

*Rosenstone, "Reds as History" Reviews in American History v. 10, n. 3 (Sept. 1982)

*Stansell, "Reds" in Carnes, Past Imperfect

Feb. 22: Discussion

Week Eight: Biography and/as the Biopic

Feb. 27: Biography as History

For Monday: *Kracauer, "Biography as an Art Form" from The Mass Ornament

For Wednesday:

*Rosen, p.147-200

*Hegel, Philosophy of History pp. 29-33

Screen: *Coal Miner's Daughter* (1980, 125 minutes)

March 1: Discussion

Week Nine: Epic: The Big Story on the Big Screen

March 6: The Scale of History

Screen In Class Monday: Epics Clips, from "Lawrence of Arabia" (1962)

"Nicholas and Alexandra" (1971) "Doctor Zhivago" (1965) "The Sound of Music" (1965) "Cleopatra" (1963) "Ben Hur" (1959)

Screen: "The Ten Commandments" (1956)

*Sobchack, "Surge and Splendor: A Phenomenology of the Hollywood Historical Epic" Representations 29 (Winter 1990): 24-49.

*Natalie Zemon Davis, "'Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead': Film and the Challenge of Authenticity," 269-283.

March 8: Discussion

SPRING BREAK MARCH 12-19

Part III. The Politics of Re-Presenting the Real

Week Ten: History and Fiction: A Contradiction in Terms? What is Historical Fiction?

March 20: Fictions and Facts

Read for Monday:

Doctorow, *Ragtime*

*White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation" from Tropics of Discourse

For Wednesday:

*Listen to the "Ragtime Soundtrack"

Screen: *Ragtime* (1981) (150 mins)

March 22: Discussion

Week Eleven: Docudrama

March 27: The Look of the News: Discussion

*Joan Mellen, from The Film Guide to the Battle of Algiers p.16-23

*Joan Mellen, "An Interview with Gillo Pontecorvo" in *Film Quarterly*, v.26. n.1 (Autumn 1972); 2-10.

*Watch all bonus materials for the film on the Criterion DVD. *The Battle of Algiers* (117 minutes) Criterion Collection.

No Class; Prof. Schwartz giving talk in NYC.

Week Twelve: Documentary vs. Docudrama: FOCUS ON OJ SIMPSON

NO CLASS ON APRIL 3 because of 18 hours of screening the following:

The People vs. O.J. Simpson (2016)

O.J. Simpson: Made In America (2016)

Discussion April 5: comparison of documentary vs. docudrama

Week Thirteen: Fiction Film as Artifact

April 10: What kind of document is this anyway?

Read for Monday:

*Nik Cohn, "Tribal Rights of the New Saturday Night" from New York Magazine June 7, 1976

*Holleran, *Dancer from the Dance* and another selection

*Echols, from *Shaky Ground*

*Hughes, "Empire of the Beat"

Screen for Wednesday: *Saturday Night Fever* (1977, 113 minutes)

Discussion: April 12

Week Fourteen: The Holocaust as Limit Case

April 17: Why the Unrepresentable?

Read for Monday:

*Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, "Four Pieces Snatched from Hell" and "In the Very Eye of History," 3-17 and 30-47

*Miriam Bratu Hansen, "*Schindler's List* is no *Shoah*: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory," 201-217.

For Wednesday: Sylvie Lindeperg, *Night and Fog: A Film in History*, Part 1, "The Film's Inception: A Failure of Gazes," 27-140

Screening: *Night and Fog* (Resnais, 1955, 32 mins) and *Schindler's List* (1993, 195 minutes)

April 19: Discussion

**Week Fifteen: Pitch Party
Class to be Rescheduled**

Final Projects due Monday May 8 at 5pm.

