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Office hours: T 10:30-12:30 & by appt.

History 600: History & Film

In this class we shall be pursuing two interconnected lines of inquiry. First, we shall be evaluating films for their historical accuracy. In so doing, we shall also be exploring the very question of accuracy: do costumes, lighting, architecture ground it? Can a modern medium represent the past? Second, we shall be considering the ways films shape our sense of the past. This question extends beyond questions of “costume”—or dress—or historically correct lighting and furniture, to the ways that seeing moments enacted come to inform our thinking about past events.

Each student is to choose one film to analyze over the course of the semester. We shall talk about those choices in the third class meeting. Each will then research that choice for historical accuracy in terms that will differ from film to film and present that first analysis as a 30-minute oral report in class. Each will then consider how that film has shaped his/her understanding of the moment in history the film depicts, which will form the second oral report in class. For the oral reports, each student should be prepared to present clips of her or his chosen film and have comments organized in an outline to lead the class through the analysis of the film and its representative segments.

Each student will write a 6000-word research paper on the film s/he has chosen, due the last day of class.

The History Lab offers help with writing: <http://history.wisc.edu/thehistorylab.htm>

Grading:

participation in weekly discussion: 30%

 this means helping to build a collective analysis

first oral report: on the historical accuracy of your chosen film: 15%

second oral report: on the ways that film shapes your sense of the past: 15%

final essay: 40%

Films: Each student will choose a film for analysis. Students wishing to have others view the film, in order to think critically collectively about it, should let me know the second class meeting, so that we can arrange movie nights.

Meetings:

September 12 Introductions

September 19 history/film

September 26 Film choices

October 3 Historiography

October 10 First Reports

October 17 First Reports

October 24 First Reports

October 31 First Reports

November 7 Second Reports

November 14 Second Reports

November 21 Second Reports

November 28 Second Reports

December 5 Discussion of drafts

December 12 Discussion of drafts

December 16 Final papers due