

Dr. Jon Cowans
Class meets: MW 4-5:20, Conklin 424

Office: Conklin 305; jonco58@aol.com
Office hours: MW 3:30-4, 5:30-6pm

FILM AND HISTORY: 21:510:301 (Spring 2019) index 20171

This course examines how historical films present history, focusing mainly on American feature films. It seeks less to list these films' inaccuracies than to identify and analyze how and why they have mythologized the past. By learning to spot films' ideologies, assumptions, strategies, and visions of the past, one can identify the evolution of modern societies' historical mythologies, values, and beliefs.

READINGS & FILMS

Course reader, available only at Porta Print, 33 Halsey St., 973 622-1828

GRADING

Students are bound by the university's academic integrity policy, which appears here:

<http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/office-dean-student-affairs/academic-integrity-policy>.

If you are unsure whether something is permitted, ask the professor, as the penalties are very strict.

TESTS: There will be a midterm on Mon. Mar. 4 and a final exam on Wed. May 15, 11:45-2:45. The format for these exams will be a series of short essays (1/2 to 1 page).

LECTURE QUESTIONS: At the end of each session, you must hand in a 3x5 card with one or two brief questions or comments on the day's material. Grades are based on the number of days when you attend and hand in a card; each unexcused absence lowers this score by five points. To receive credit, your card must contain a relevant question or comment. Each unexcused absence lowers this score by five points. Time missed for arriving late or leaving early is added up; each 80 minutes constitutes an absence.

For an absence to be excused, you must provide written evidence of a valid reason, and all excuses must be in by the day of the final exam. Your overall course grade will fall by five points for each unexcused absence starting with the fourth one. Any student who misses eight or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will not earn credit in this course; such students should withdraw from the class.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Everyone is required to participate regularly in class discussions. Your score reflects both the frequency of your participation and the quality of your comments and questions about the day's readings and films. Use of electronic devices such as *cell phones* is strictly prohibited and will lower this score. Students are expected to pay attention throughout the entire class, including during the showing of film clips. Laptops are not allowed in this class.

QUIZZES: There will be several unannounced quizzes, with a few short, specific questions on the readings and films assigned for that day. The lowest grade on the quizzes will not count. There can be no makeups for pop quizzes, so missing a quiz without a valid excuse incurs a zero on that quiz. If you have a valid, documented excuse, then we will average one less quiz for you at the course's end; the missed quiz thus does not count against you.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Lecture questions	5%
Class participation	10%
Quizzes	20%
Midterm	25%
Final exam	<u>40%</u>
	100%

Wed. 1-23: Introduction

Mon. 1-28: Film and History

"Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood" (R-1)

"The Pedant Goes to Hollywood: The Role of the Academic Consultant" (R-2)

"Historical Authenticity in *A Man Called Horse*" (R-3)

Wed. 1-30: Rome

"Oppositions, Anxieties, and Ambiguities in the Toga Movie" (R-4)

Clips: *Sign of the Cross* (1932); *Quo Vadis?* (1951)

Mon. 2-4: Rome

"The Roman Empire in American Cinema after 1945" (R-5)

Film: *Ben-Hur* (1959)

Wed. 2-6: Rome

"Spartacus: Testing the Strength of the Body Politic" (R-6)

Clips: *Spartacus* (1960)

Mon. 2-11: Rome

"*Gladiator* and Contemporary American Society" (R-7)

"Gladiators and Blood Sport" (R-8)

"*Gladiator* in Historical Perspective" (R-9)

Film: *Gladiator* (2000)

Wed. 2-13: The Middle Ages

"The Birth of Modern Medievalism in England and America" (R-10)

"The Holy Grail of Hollywood: King Arthur Films" (R-11)

Film: *First Knight* (1995)

Mon. 2-18: The Middle Ages

"*Kingdom of Heaven* and the Multi-Temporality of Medieval Film" (R-12)

Film: *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005)

Wed. 2-20: British Royalty

"The Monarchy and Film" (R-13)

"A Tyrant for All Seasons" (R-14)

Clips: *A Man for All Seasons* (1966)

Mon. 2-25: British Royalty

"The Royal Bio-pic in the 1990s" (R-15)

"Queen and Country: *Elizabeth*" (R-16)

Film: *Elizabeth* (1998)

Wed. 2-27: Revolution

"The Perils of Revolution" (R-17)

Clips: *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935); *Viva Villa!* (1934)

Mon. 3-4: Midterm

Wed. 3-6: Open session

Mon. 3-11: Westerns

Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (R-18)

Henry Nash Smith, "The American West as Symbol and Myth" (R-19)

"The Frontier Myth" (R-20)

Clips: *Stagecoach* (1939)

Wed. 3-13: Westerns

"The Western Is American History, 1939-1941" (R-21)

"Criminals as Heroes" (R-22)

Film: *Jesse James* (1939)

Mon. 3-25: Westerns

"Killer Elite: The Cult of the Gunfighter" (R-23)

Film: *High Noon* (1952)

Wed. 3-27: Westerns

"Women in Western Films" (R-24)

"The Woman in the Western" (R-25)

Film: *Shane* (1953)

Mon. 4-1: Westerns

"The Main Critical Issues in *The Searchers*" (R-26)

"Captivity, Purity, and Feminine Values in *The Searchers*" (R-27)

"Native American Reactions to *The Searchers*" (R-28)

Film: *The Searchers* (1956)

Wed. 4-3: The American South

"The Growth of a Mythology: The South in Film" (R-29)

"War Comes to Tara" (R-30)

Clips: *Gone with the Wind* (1939)

Mon. 4-8: The American South: Slavery

"Slavery and the South in Silent Film" (R-31)

"Hollywood's Inscription of Slavery" (R-32)

Clips: *Band of Angels* (1957); *Mandingo* (1975)

Wed. 4-10: The American South: The Civil Rights Era

"Hollywood and the Reinterpretation of the South" (R-33)

"*Mississippi Burning*" (R-34)

Film: *Mississippi Burning* (1988)

Mon. 4-15: War Films

"The Western and the War Film, 1940-1945" (R-35)

Film: *Bataan* (1943)

Wed. 4-17: War Films

"*Patton*" (R-36)

Clips: *Patton* (1970); *Catch-22* (1970)

Mon. 4-22: War Films

"Vietnam at the Movies" (R-37)

Film: *Coming Home* (1978)**Wed. 4-24: War Films**Reviews of *The Deer Hunter* (R-38)Clips: *The Deer Hunter* (1978)**Mon. 4-29: War Films**Reviews of *Platoon* (R-39)**Film:** *Platoon* (1987)**Wed. 5-1: War Films**

"The Myth of the Good War" (R-40)

"Realism, Historical Truth, and the War Film" (R-41)

Film: *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)**Wed. 5-6: Open Session**

	Film Schedule			
	Swank	Amazon Rent	Youtube	Netflix
Mon. 2-4: Ben-Hur, 1959 (3:32)	yes	\$4	\$3	yes
optional Wed. 2-6: Spartacus, 1960 (3:04)	yes	\$4	\$3	yes
Mon. 2-11: Gladiator (2:35)	yes	\$4	\$3	yes
Wed. 2-13: First Knight (2:14)	yes	\$4	\$3	yes
Mon. 2-18: Kingdom of Heaven, 2005 (2:24)	NO	\$4	\$3	yes
optional: Wed. 2-20: A Man for All Seasons, 1966	yes	\$4	\$3	yes
Mon. 2-25: Elizabeth, 1998 (2:00)	yes	\$4	\$3	yes
Wed. 3-13: Jesse James, 1939(1:47)	NO	\$4	\$3	yes
Mon. 3-25: High Noon (1:25)	yes	\$4	\$3	NO
Wed. 3-27: Shane (1:58)	yes	\$4	\$3	yes
Mon. 4-1: The Searchers (1:59)	yes	\$4	\$3	yes
optional: Wed. 4-3: Gone with the Wind (3:37)	yes	\$4	\$3	yes
Wed. 4-10: Mississippi Burning (2:05)	yes	NO	NO	yes
Mon. 4-15: Bataan (1:53)	yes	\$3	\$3	NO
Mon. 4-22: Coming Home, 1978 (2:06)	yes	NO	free?	yes
optional: Wed. 4-24: The Deer Hunter (3:03)	yes	NO	NO	yes
Mon. 4-29: Platoon (2:00)	yes	\$4	\$3	yes
Wed. 5-1: Saving Private Ryan (2:50)	yes	\$4	\$3	yes

DANA library also owns most of these films on DVD.

Be sure to check the year of release as there may be other films with these titles. If you are unsure, ask me.

Try to avoid directors' cuts so that we are watching the same films.

Try to watch the optional films – at least part of them. Knowing them will help you on the midterm and final.

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus' disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219, by phone at 973-353-5375 or by email at odsnewark@newark.rutgers.edu.