

HI33Y-30 The Historical Film

20/21

Department

History

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

J.E. Smyth

Credit value

30

Module duration

22 weeks

Assessment

60% coursework, 40% exam

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This year-long survey of the historical film analyzes the development and dominance of feature historical filmmaking in Hollywood in conjunction with broader explorations of 'national' historical traditions in British, French, German, Italian, and Russian cinema.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

Readings, lectures, and seminar discussions will consider issues in historiography, 'documentary' alternatives, narration and editing, ideology, genre, censorship, race, gender, class, and reception. Course readings will be divided among traditional and revisionist historiography, memoirs and historical literature later adapted for the screen, screenplays, recent critical assessments of 'filmed history', and archival material on production and censorship. Topics will include documentary vs. feature film approaches, women's history on screen, representations of wartime collaboration and resistance to fascism, the biopic, the British Empire film genre, the transnational western, and the postmodern return of images in the nostalgia film since the 1970s.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be

covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Term 1

1. Introduction: Film & History: Beyond 'Separate But Equal'
2. D.W. Griffith and the Origins of Film Censorship
3. Resistant Images: Chaplin and Eisenstein
4. World War, National Epics, and Propaganda
5. Relativism and Consensus
6. The History of the Working Class
7. Biopics I: Eminent Victorians
8. Biopics II: Forgotten Men
9. Forgotten Women

Term 2

11. The Western
12. Global West: Karl May and Sergio Leone
13. Empire as a Way of Life: Britain in the 1930s
14. Postcolonial Critique and 'Lawrence of Arabia'
15. Remembering the 'Good War'
17. Resistance, Collaboration, and Conformists
18. Documenting the Holocaust
19. Noir and Spivs
20. Nostalgia and Postmodernism

Term 3

21. The 'New' Historical Turn
22. Review Session

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a systematic knowledge and understanding of the origins and development of the historical film in Hollywood and other 'national' traditions in Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, China, and Russia
- Critically analyse and evaluate classic and ongoing debates within the humanities about the representation and construction of history on screen
- Effectively communicate ideas, and make informed, coherent and persuasive arguments, relating to the content and form of history and biography in film, literature, and historiography and the reasons for shifts in discursive emphasis over time
- Critically review and consolidate theoretical, methodological, and historiographical ideas relating to the historical film

Indicative reading list

- Becker, Carl (1935). *Everyman His Own Historian*. New York: F. S. Crofts & Co.
- Bingham, Dennis (2010). *Whose Lives Are They Anyway?* Rutgers University Press.

- Bordwell, David et al. (1985). *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Clark, Suzanne (2003). *Cold Warriors*. University of Southern Illinois Press.
- Des Jardins, Julie (2003). *Women and the Historical Profession in America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Dika, Vera (2003). *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art & Film*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Elsaesser, Thomas (1996). *Fassbinder's Germany: History Identity Subject*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Ferro, Marc (1988). *Cinema and History*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Grindon, Leger (1994). *Shadows on the Past: Studies in the Historical Fiction Film*. Temple University Press.
- Gunning, Tom (1998). *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Filmmaking*.
- Jameson, Fredric (1990). *Signatures of the Visible*. London: Routledge.
- Klein, Kerwin Lee (1997). *Frontiers of the Historical Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Novick, Peter (1988). *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pollock, Griselda and M. Silverman (2011). *Concentrationary Cinema*. Berghahn.
- Richards, Jeffrey (1997). *Films and British National Identity*. Manchester University Press.
- Rosenstone, Robert A. (1995). *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Sklar, Robert and Charles Musser, eds (1997). *Resistant Images*. Temple University Press.
- Tashiro, Charles (1994). *Pretty Pictures*. University of Texas Press.
- Taylor, Richard (1998). *The Eisenstein Reader*. BFI.
- Vincendeau, Ginette (2003). *Jean-Pierre Melville: An American In Paris*. London: BFI.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Subject specific skills

See learning outcomes.

Transferable skills

See learning outcomes.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	18 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Total	300 hours

Type	Required
Tutorials	4 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Private study	260 hours (87%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

History modules require students to undertake extensive independent research and reading to prepare for seminars and assessments. As a rough guide, students will be expected to read and prepare to comment on three substantial texts (articles or book chapters) for each seminar taking approximately 3 hours. Each assessment requires independent research, reading around 6-10 texts and writing and presenting the outcomes of this preparation in an essay, review, presentation or other related task.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group D1

	Weighting	Study time
Seminar contribution	10%	
1500 word essay	10%	
3000 word essay	40%	
7 day take-home assessment	40%	

Feedback on assessment

Written feedback provided via Tabula; optional oral feedback in office hours.

[Past exam papers for HI33Y](#)

Availability

Courses

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 4 of UITA-R3V2 Undergraduate History and Italian