

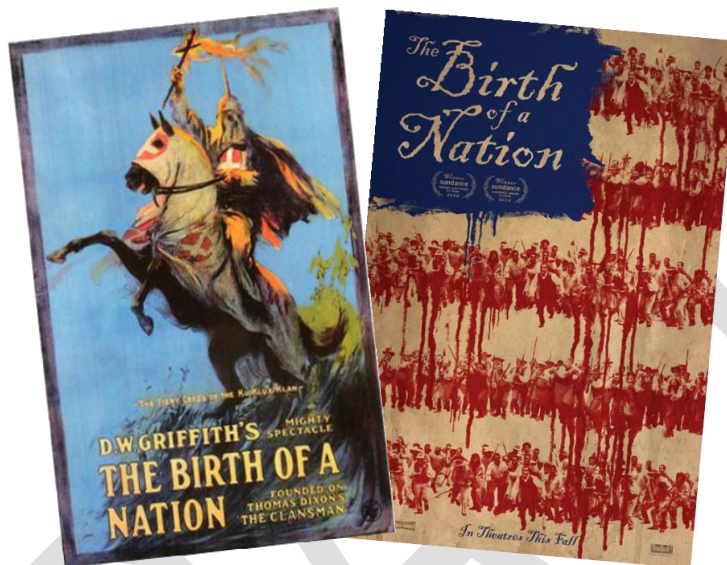
HISTORY 2189B

# History at the Movies

Winter 2021

online synchronous weekly screening (TBA)

online synchronous seminar/lecture course (Thursdays 2:30-4:30)



Posters for *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915 & 2016

Instructor: Prof. Alan MacEachern

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:00-12:00 via Zoom

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Lectures and tutorials will take place in a virtual, synchronous format - on-line and at a dedicated time

This is a draft syllabus. Please see the course site on OWL for the final syllabus. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the course.

**Course Description (in academic calendar):**

This course explores representations of history on film, and the strengths and weaknesses of film as a medium for history, in both fictional film and documentaries from more than a century of historical moviemaking.

**Course Description (in full):**

Film is one of the most powerful ways in which we imagine and remember the past. There is no shortage of historical films – both documentaries and feature films – that imaginatively re-create the past while simultaneously raising important questions about that past. And yet historical films are “good” in a different way than historical texts are. As a medium for history, film has its own strengths and weaknesses, its own genres and conventions.

His2189 goes to the movies to study the past, the history of filmmaking, and the nature of history itself. We will watch the entirety or snippets of a host of films from more than a century of filmmaking: Hollywood blockbusters, documentaries, Heritage Minutes, and even online conspiracy videos. As we’ll see, every historical film represents a dialogue between the time it depicts and the time it was created – so each is doubly a window into the past.

Each week, there will be a **TBA** evening screening of one feature-length film or selections from several films, and a Thursday afternoon class with both lecture and seminar components. Both the screening and class will be held via Zoom.

**Learning outcomes:**

Students completing this course will

- Appreciate and evaluate historical films as both secondary sources (representations and interpretations of the past they describe) and primary sources (representations of the time in which they were created).
- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of film as a medium for history.
- Become familiar with the history of film.
- Develop historical thinking skills: assessing historical significance, evaluating evidence and accuracy, identifying context and perspective.
- Develop verbal and written communication skills.

**Course Materials:**

There is no textbook to purchase for this course. Readings are available on the course OWL site, through the Weldon Library online system, and/or at the URL given. Some of the movies being screened are available through Weldon’s subscription to [Kanopy](#) – those are noted below. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them in class and in the final exam.

## Methods of Evaluation:

*All assignments will be discussed further in class.*

- **Participation (10%) and in-class responses (20%) – 30%**

You are expected to attend all screenings and classes, and participate in class discussion on Zoom and OWL. In 10 screenings or classes, you will write a very short, informal response to readings or discussion. You will be graded on all, and your 8 best will go toward your final mark.

- **Historical film review – 20%**

Your first major assignment will be to write a historical film review. You will choose and watch a film about some historical subject; the film must be made before the year 2000, and not be one we study in class. You should then research and find reviews of this film from when it was first released (we will discuss where to find these reviews in class). You will then write a paper of about 1500 words (6 pages, double-spaced) describing both how your film portrays the historical event and also how your film is a product of the historical period in which it was made. You must inform me of your chosen film, via email, by 1 February. The film review is due on 22 February.

- *For more on this assignment, see “Film Review” document in OWL.*

- **Historical film treatment – 25%**

Your second written assignment will be to write a treatment for a proposed historical film. A “treatment” is a synopsis of, and pitch for, a proposed film. You will come up with an idea for a film about a real historical figure or event, research that topic, and write a synopsis of the imagined film you would like to make about this topic in history. Your treatment should be about 2000-2500 words (8-10 pages double-spaced), concisely describing the plot or structure of your imagined film, identifying its main characters and themes, and explaining the argument or statement it seeks to make about the past. The film treatment is due on 29 March.

- *For more on this assignment, see “Film Treatment” document in OWL.*

- **Final exam – 25%**

A final take-home exam covering all material in the course (films, readings, and classes will be distributed on 5 April, to be completed and submitted on OWL by 12 April.

### ***The fine print:***

Students will submit all written assignments in electronic form through the course OWL site. The Faculty of Social Science’s policy statement on plagiarism and the use of plagiarism detection software is attached to this syllabus.

The two major assignments have a built-in, blanket extension: they can be submitted without penalty up to 7 days after they were due. Beyond that, there will be a 5% deduction per day, including weekends. This does

not apply to the response papers. All course assignments must be completed to pass the course, and all must be submitted by midnight 19 April.

Students with special requirements are advised to contact the Student Development Centre. The SDC will handle all documentation and make arrangements with the instructor for academic accommodation. Students encountering serious problems that might affect their performance in a course should inform Academic Counselling in their home faculty immediately. See also the Faculty of Social Science's policy statement on medical accommodation, which is appended to the plagiarism statement attached.

**Accommodation for missed assignment deadlines with a Self-Reported Absence:**

If a student reports an SRA for an assignment (e.g. an essay) the new due date will be 48 hours after the SRA was submitted. For example, if you complete an SRA on March 19, 3:00pm, your new due date will be March 21, 3:00pm.

## Course Schedule – Topics, screenings, & readings:

1. Week of 4 January **Trailers**
  - Screening: Selections from *12 Years a Slave* (Steve McQueen, 2013).
  - Reading:
    - Pierre Sorlin, “The Film in History,” in Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *The History on Film Reader* (2009), 15-16.
    - Robert A. Rosenstone, “History in Images / History in Words,” in Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *The History on Film Reader* (2009), 30-41.
  
2. Week of 11 January **What time does to film & what film does to time**
  - Screening: [\*Dawson City: Frozen Time\*](#) (Bill Morrison, 2016).
  - Reading:
    - Scott MacDonald, “The Filmmaker as Miner: An Interview with Bill Morrison,” *Cineaste* (2016), 40-3.
    - Mary A. Doane, “The Representability of Time,” in Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *The History on Film Reader* (2009), 75-84.
    - Marnie Hughes-Warrington, “Pasts, Presents, Futures,” *History Goes to the Movies* (2006), 58-79.
  
3. Week of 18 January **The history of film**
  - Screening: Selections from [\*The Birth of a Nation\*](#) (D.W. Griffith, 1915), *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939), and *The Birth of a Nation* (Nate Parker, 2016).
  - Readings:
    - Thomas Cripps, “The Year of *The Birth of a Nation*,” in *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900–1942* (1993), 41–69.
    - Ruth Elizabeth Burks, “*Gone with the Wind*: Black and White in Technicolor,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* (2004), 53-73.
  
4. Week of 25 January **The historical film as a secondary and primary source**
  - Screening: *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967).
  - Readings:
    - Bosley Crowther, “Run, Bonnie and Clyde,” *New York Times*, 3 September 1967.
    - Charles Thomas Samuels, Review of *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Hudson Review* 21:1 (Spring 1968), various pages.
    - Arnon Gutfeld, “Nostalgia, Protest and Tradition in the 1960s: History as Reflected by *Bonnie and Clyde*,” *Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas* (2009), 5-34.
  
5. Week of 1 February **Text and film**
  - Screening: *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Daniel Vigne, 1982).
  - Readings:
    - Selections from Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983), preface, introduction, 42-47, 60-1, and 76.
    - Robert Finlay, “The Refashioning of Martin Guerre,” *American Historical Review* (1998), 553-71.

- Natalie Zemon Davis, “On the Lame,” *American Historical Review* (1998), 572-603.

6. Week of 8 February                    **The documentary**

- Watch online: [The Valour and the Horror - Bomber Command](#) (Brian McKenna, 1992).
- Readings:
  - Selections from David J. Bercuson and S.F. Wise, *The Valour and the Horror Revisited* (1994):
    - Wise and Bercuson, “Introduction,” 3-11.
    - Wise, “The Valour and Horror: A Report for the CBC Ombudsman,” 13-30.
    - William Morgan, “Report of the CBC Ombudsman,” 61-72.
    - Brian McKenna and Terence McKenna, “Response to the CBC Ombudsman Report, November 10, 1992, Galafilm Inc.,” 73-88.

7. Week of 15 February                **Reading week – no classes**

8. Week of 22 February                **Accuracy, truth, and “larger truths” (1)**

- Screening: *Chernobyl* (2019), episodes 1-3.
- Listenings/readings:
  - *Chernobyl* podcast, episodes 1-3.
  - Marnie Hughes-Warrington, “Reality,” *History Goes to the Movies* (2006), 101-21.

9. Week of 1 March                    **Accuracy, truth, and “larger truths” (2)**

- Screening: *Chernobyl* (2019), episodes 4-5.
- Listenings/readings:
  - *Chernobyl* podcast, episodes 4-5.
  - Andiy Manchuk, “My Chernobyl and HBO’s Version,” 9 June 2019, <http://liva.com.ua/my-chernobyl-and-hbos-version.html>.
  - Masha Gessen, “What HBO’s ‘Chernobyl’ Got Right, and What It Got Terribly Wrong,” *The New Yorker*, 4 June 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/what-hbos-chernobyl-got-right-and-what-it-got-terribly-wrong>.

10. Week of 8 March                    **Is it ok to laugh?**

- Screening: Selections from *The Great Dictator* (Charlie Chaplin, 1940), *Life is Beautiful* (Roberto Benigni, 1997), and [The Last Laugh](#) (Ferne Pearlstein, 2016).
- Readings:
  - Sander L. Gilman, “Is Life Beautiful? Can the Shoah Be Funny?” in Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *The History on Film Reader*, 108-21.
  - Lawrence Baron, “Serious Humor: Laughter as Lamentation,” in Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *The History on Film Reader* (2009), 122-32.

11. Week of 15 March                    **The biopic and the Bechdel test**

- Screening: *On the Basis of Sex* (Mimi Leder, 2018) and selections from [Stories we Tell](#) (Sarah Polley, 2012).
- Readings:

- Dennis Bingham, “The Lives and Times of the Biopic,” in *A Companion to the Historical Film*, 233-54.

## 12. Week of 22 March **Fake history?**

- Screening: Selections from *JFK* (Oliver Stone, 1991) and *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Michael Moore, 2004).
- Readings:
  - Marita Sturken, “Reenactment, Fantasy and the Paranoia of History: Oliver Stone’s Docudramas,” *History & Theory* (1997), 64–79.
  - “Michael Moore: Cinematic Historian or Propagandist?” section, *Film & History* (2005), 7-18.

## 13. Week of 29 March **The future of history on film**

- Screening: Selections from *The Act of Killing* (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012) and *The Look of Silence* (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2014).
- Readings:
  - Oki Rahadiano Sutopo, “*The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*: A Critical Reflection,” *Crime Media Culture* (2017), 235-43.

### **Additional Statements**

#### ***Academic Offences:***

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

#### ***Accessibility Options***

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Student Accessibility Services at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar’s website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

#### ***Medical Issues***

The University recognizes that a student’s ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_illness.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf) to read about the University’s policy on medical accommodation. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student,

whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation.

Please visit [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic\\_policies/index.html](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html) to view all updated academic policies regarding medical accommodations.

### ***Plagiarism***

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Students are expected to retain all research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, your instructor may ask you to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against you.

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.



B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are another writer's ideas.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in "A" above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in "A" above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

### ***Scholastic Offences***

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### ***Copyright***

Lectures and course materials, including power point presentations, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own educational use. You may not record lectures, reproduce (or allow others to reproduce), post or distribute lecture notes, wiki material, and other course materials publicly and/or for commercial purposes without my written consent.

### ***Health and Wellness***

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### ***Use of Electronic Devices***

Electronic devices are required for participation in the online portions of this course.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or e-mail [vangelen@uwo.ca](mailto:vangelen@uwo.ca).