

COURSE DESCRIPTION HISTORY 165 Hollywood and American History

This course examines crucial events in American history, from the Puritans to the present, through the lens of Hollywood film and other media. We will consider how these visual representations have influenced our present understanding of key matters such as the Constitution, presidential politics, Protestant religion, racial tensions, and war-making. Material to be viewed includes *The Patriot*, *Gettysburg*, *Gold Diggers of 1933*, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *West Side Story*, and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*

History 165: Hollywood and American History, Monday and Wednesday, 12 -1, Fall 2016

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Office Hours, Monday 11-12
Wednesday 1-2

BE SURE TO READ THIS SYLLABUS CAREFULLY

I. What we are about.

This course examines crucial events in American history, from the Puritans to the present, through the lens of Hollywood film and other media. We will consider how these mostly visual representations have influenced our understanding of key matters in the present such as the Constitution, presidential politics, Protestant religion, racial tensions, and war-making. Each lecture will address the issues that are raised in the reading and the material you have viewed for the week. I welcome questions and discussion even in a large class. I will give you my best, and I will expect the same from each of you.

Reading (on reserve in Rosengarten and for sale at the Penn Book Center, on 34th just north of Walnut):

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Blight and Gooding-Williams
Bruce Kuklick, *A Political History of the USA*
Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America*
John Updyke, *Memoirs of the Ford Administration*

Films (on reserve in Rosengarten; on Campus Channels 11 and 22 the month of the assignment; and available for streaming. You may also look at them on DVD, via youtube, and so on):

Lincoln
To Be or Not to Be
The Best Years of Our Lives
West Side Story
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?
Dear America: Letters From Home

The Producers (1967)
The Man in the High Castle

Audio: *Hamilton: An American Musical*

Although History 165 is not a survey of American history, and although I will be lecturing on what is essential, you are going to need some background in the history of the United States, and in case you don't have this, I have assigned a small part of my text-book, *Political History of the USA* (PH) every week. Although you can easily use a library copy, I suggest you look at what I say to provide you with basic information. In addition to the required books, other assigned readings are accessible on the internet. I recommend that you do all the outside work for each week *before* the first class meeting of that week.

Many media and film clips will be shown in class; they will be made available to you for re-viewing at the end of each week. I have indicated this below as "in class viewing" to alert you to what will happen in class.

The interplay among the reading, my lectures, the visual material presented in class, and what you will view on your own is complex, and changes from week to week. The interplay demands your close attention. Don't be afraid to ask if you are not certain about something. The work load is also uneven, so you will want to plan the time you spend on the course to be sure to keep up. Finally, the visual material that we will be seeing is not evenly distributed – you'll see more later in the term, and we will be discussing why this is so.

II. Written work and expectations.

There are two short papers, one due on October 5; the other due on November 30. There will also be a final written exam. The instructions for the two papers are included in this syllabus.

To do well in this course, you must attend the lectures, do the reading and viewing, and participate in each section meeting. The three written parts of the class and section work count more or less equally in determining grades. A course on Hollywood naturally elicits from students a propensity to blather. This propensity will be negatively rewarded; in case you don't know what this means, you should read Harry Frankfurt's famous pamphlet, *On Bullshit*.

Read the university regulations on plagiarism. If you cheat, and I learn about it, I will do everything in my power to have you suspended from the University.

III. Assignments

Week 1 (Wednesday, August 31): Introduction

In class viewing: Jeter 1, Jeter 2, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*

Week 2 (Wednesday, September 7): Exploration and Native Americans

Reading: PH, 1-29

In class viewing: *The Last of the Mohicans*, 1920, 1957, 1992

Week 3 (Monday, September 12, and Wednesday September 14): The Puritans, and the Empire in America

Reading: PH, 30-43; from the web -- read some of the quotes from William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*; John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity"; Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"; Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address; finally google TULIP or The Five Points of Calvinism, and read what you find.

In class viewing: Ronald Reagan, Farewell Address; *Elmer Gantry*; Obama, "Amazing Grace"

Week 4 (Monday September 19, and Wednesday September 21): The Declaration of Independence, and the Revolution

Reading: PH, 44-73; from the web: Edmund Burke, Letter to the Electors of Bristol; Listen to and read the lyrics and plot summary of *Hamilton: An American Musical*

In class viewing: *1776*, *John Adams*, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*; *The Patriot*

Week 5 (Monday September 26, and Wednesday September 28): The Constitution, Democracy, and Slavery

Reading: PH, 73-110; from the web: Federalist 10, 14, and 51

In class viewing: *Andy Griffiths Show*; early version of first song of *Hamilton*

Week 6 (Wednesday, October 5): The Sectional Crisis

Reading: PH, 111-13; from the web: Thoreau, On Civil Disobedience; John C. Calhoun, Slavery a Positive Good

Week 7 (Monday October 10): Lincoln

Reading: PH, 132-135; from the web: Gettysburg Address,
View: The film *Lincoln*

In class viewing: from *Gettysburg*, "Battle Hymn of the Republic"

Week 8 (Monday October 17, Wednesday October 19): From the Civil War to World War I

Reading: PH, 135-201; W.E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (ed. Blight and Gooding-Williams), pp. 34-72, 90-158, 185-195; and from the web, Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”

In class viewing: *Birth of a Nation, I’ve Got a Secret, Wilson*

Week 9 (Monday October 24, Wednesday October 26): The New Deal

Reading: PH, 202-238; Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (read about half)

In class viewing: *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (again); and *Hyde Park on Hudson*

Week 10 (Monday October 31, Wednesday, November 2): World Ideologies and the Coming of World War II

Reading: PH, 238-244; and the other half of *The Plot Against America*.

View: The film *To Be Or Not to Be* (1942) (also available on youtube)

In class viewing: Edward R. Murrow, Roosevelt material, and from *Pearl Harbor* and *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (once more).

Week 11 (Monday, November 7, and Wednesday November 9): World War II, and the Early Cold War

Reading: PH, 224-265

View: The film *The Best Years of Our Lives*

In class viewing: *Human Comedy, Mrs. Miniver, Private Ryan, Longest Day, Battle of the Bulge,*

Week 12 (Monday November 14 and Wednesday November 17): Kennedy

Reading: PH, 265-274

View: The film *West Side Story*

In class viewing: Marilyn Monroe, *Thirteen Days, Ich bin ein Berliner, Zapruder, The Butler*

Week 13 (Monday, November 21)

View the film: *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?*

In class viewing: *Growing Up in the 1950s*

Happy Thanksgiving

Week 14 (Monday November 28 and Wednesday November 30): 1960s, Home and Abroad

Reading: PH, 277-298

View: The films *The Producers* (1967); *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam* (*Dear America* is available on youtube)

In class viewing: protest songs, MLK, *Path to War*, RFK, April; RFK, June; from *Bobby*

Week 15: (Monday December 5, Wednesday December 7): Republican Ascendancy and the Middle East

Reading: PH, 299-322; John Updyke, *Memoirs of the Ford Administration*

In class viewing: Reagan 1943; Reagan, 1984

Week 16 (Monday December 12): Obama

View: *Man in the High Castle* (two episodes)

In class viewing: Bush 2001, McCain 2008, Bin Laden twice, Battle Hymn twice

IV. Instructions for the papers

Paper 1 due Wednesday October 5.

Choose any movie below. Watch it. Note the date the film was released. A film may be about some historical event or incident, or it may be more or less firmly set in some time period, or it may reveal something about the time it was produced. Discuss the film in relation to these issues, how the movie interacts and intersects with its historical context. You will find a great deal of information about the movie on the internet, and you may want to juxtapose what the films tell us about a certain time period, and what a written history tells us.

1250 to 1500 words. Put the name of the film on the cover page of the paper, along with your name, class, email address.

Please do not ask to do a paper on a film not on this list.

A Civil Action
All the Kings Men (1949)
All the Presidents Men
Advise and Consent
Apollo 13
Baby Face
The Best Man
Born on the Fourth of July
Chinatown
The Day the Earth Stood Still
The Deer Hunter
The Deer Slayer
The Dirty Dozen
Do the Right Thing
Dr. Strangelove
Eight Men Out
Erin Brocovitch
Failsafe
Friday Night Lights
Forrest Gump
42
Gabriel Over the White House
Glory
Gold Diggers of 1933
Good Night and Good Luck
Gone With the Wind
The Graduate
In the Line of Fire
JFK

Kramer versus Kramer
The Last Hurrah
A League of Their Own
Little Big Man
The Manchurian Candidate (1962)
Midnight Cowboy
Mississippi Burning
Mission to Moscow
The Monuments Men
Mr Smith Goes to Washington
Night to Remember
Nixon
North Star (1943)
North By Northwest
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
Paths of Glory
Patriot Games
The Searchers
Shane
Seven Days in May
Sunrise at Campobello
Tennessee Johnson
The Thin Red Line
Three Days of the Condor
Wall Street
The Way We Were
The Young Lions
The Wizard of Oz

Paper 2. Due Wednesday November 30

Interview an adult, aged 40 or over, about his or her favorite movie about American history. Let the person define what he or she takes to be American history. Watch the movie. Then, in 1250-1500 words, analyze its usefulness for a course of this type, that is, the film's ability to expose the complex relationship between cinematic presentation and historical fact, insofar as that can be determined. OR compare the historical reality that the movie is about to the movie itself. OR, making use of a more lengthy interview, discuss the way in which the movie has influenced your interviewee's sense of history and orientation to the present.

Put the name of the movie, and name and telephone number of your interviewee on the cover page with your name, class, and email address.