

HIST 310C History in Film – Subject to change

History in Film is a special topics history course that looks at some of the most significant events and themes of American history, through a collection of popular American films, all of which connect with historical events, either by directly depicting them or by setting the context for a time period. This course will also briefly examine the development of the technology of film-making and the history of the film industry. The emphasis, however, is on the historical events and themes of the American past, from the colonial frontier to the present. Topics include but are not limited to the Civil War and the birth of the KKK, the cowboy era in the American West, the interwar Prohibition era and the Second World War in the Pacific.

There are good films that do bad history, and bad films that do good history. Our concern will be less on the artistic/aesthetic success of the films, or on the many necessary violations of agreed upon facts, than on **how well they capture a period or event**. Robert Rosenstone's method of looking past film conventions for the subjective truth of a time period will guide our approach.

The question you should be asking while watching these films, or writing an essay on them, are:

- 1) Does it "work" as history?
- 2) Does it add to our (subjective) understanding of the past?

These questions are central to the course, as well as to the essay you will submit.

The grade breakdown for the course is as follows:

1) Summaries of readings: 15%

For each reading, a one page (200 word minimum) [summary/analysis](#) of what the author is saying, with what you take to be the thesis of the reading at the top of your summary. See the link for full instructions.

2) attendance: will be taken randomly 5%

3) midterm quiz: 20% Short answer questions drawn from lectures. Oct. 15

4) film review essay: 30% (1500 - 2000 words)

5) Final Exam: 30%