

Spring Semester 2012  
HTS 2085  
**REEL HISTORY: UNITED STATES HISTORY THROUGH  
HOLLYWOOD FILMS**

Dr. Eleanor Alexander

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Class Meets: Monday, 2:05-4:55 p. m.

Classroom: D. M. Smith Building, room 208

Office: 123 Old Engineering Building

Office Hours: Monday, 12:00-2:00 p. m. and by appointment

### **COURSE STATEMENT**

What is history? It is a body of facts that have been accepted by historians as valid and significant. History is seeing the past through the eyes of today. The main task of the historian is not to record facts, but to interpret and evaluate them. History is the selection, arrangement, and interpretation of facts for the purpose of telling “how it really was.”

Like written history, contemporary Hollywood feature films are an interpretation of their society. They too may be considered historical evidence, for they share some properties with written history. Like traditional historical materials such as diaries and newspapers, contemporary films reflect the society that produced them. Twentieth-century films are a record of that time period. Both the filmmaker and historian share a common methodology. They study appropriate sources, then select and arrange facts to tell their story. But neither a single movie, nor a single article or book can be considered the absolute authority on a topic, for both present biased interpretations. Therefore, film evidence, as well as books and articles must be evaluated in conjunction with other information on the subject, if a more balanced and truthful interpretation of history is sought.

Many argue that film evidence is invalid because filmmakers are not historians. Their primary goal is to entertain and make money, rather than presenting the truth about the past. These elements are most obvious in historical dramas. However, it is the historian’s task to separate fantasy from fact. A major goal of this course is determining what is valid in contemporary films and historical drama.

Therefore, this course examines Hollywood feature films and historical dramas as historical evidence. Students view movies on various topics and write essays comparing that film evidence to information in more

traditional sources, such as articles from history, political science, and sociology journals. The course is based around six broad questions:

1. Is film a legitimate historical source?
2. To what extent is film evidence legitimate?
3. What determines the legitimacy of film evidence?
4. What determines the illegitimacy of film evidence?
5. Is film evidence ever better than traditional historical sources?
6. Can Hollywood films be used to teach history?

### **ELEMENTS OF U. S. HISTORY STUDIED THIS SEMESTER**

1. 1919 Baseball World Series Scandal
2. Prohibition
3. Gendered America
4. American Race Relations [Desegregation]
5. The Cold War
6. The Space Race
7. The Hazards of Nuclear Power
8. Watergate

### **COURSE GOALS**

1. To give students practical experience in critical analysis by evaluating full length feature films as historical evidence
2. To motivate students in the interrogation of traditional scholarly sources by exposing them to relevant written material on past events
3. To use film as a means of motivating students to learn United States history
4. To improve students' research and writing skills through the assignment of critical essays on selected subjects that use film and traditional sources as evidence
5. To impart some knowledge of U. S. history

### **RECOMMENDED FOR WRITING COMPETENCY**

Lunsford, Andrea. *Easy Writer*. Boston: St. Martins 2010

OR

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*.  
Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2010

### **COURSE FORMAT**

I begin each topic with a brief lecture on the subject. Students view films during class time. The movie is shown only once. It is the student's

responsibility to view those missed because of class absences. I do not lend films. Some are available for loan at the Georgia Tech Library. Discussion of the film and assigned readings conclude each unit.

### **CLASS ROOM COURTESY**

I run a tight ship. Class begins at **ON TIME at 2:05 p. m.** Lateness is penalized as an absence. Students are allowed three absences and/or late entries. **On the fourth, students loose ten points on their final grade. IF YOUR SCHEDULE DOES NOT ALLOW YOU TO GET TO THIS CLASS ON TIME, I SUGGEST THAT YOU DROP IT.** Excused absences are not penalized. However, students must provide documentation relevant to the absence.

Students **may not** hold private conversations during lectures, discussions, or film viewing. Drinking non alcoholic beverages is permitted; but not eating. Please turn off cell phones and **BE COURTEOUS ENOUGH NOT TO WORK ON MATERIAL FOR OTHER COURSES IN MY CLASS.** Students caught doing assignments for other classes, ordering/dating on-line, generating and/or answering e-mails, loose five points on their final grade. The same applies to students caught texting, using ear phones etc. You are in this class to learn American history, how to critically evaluate related material, and how to write analytical essays on the eight topics studied this semester. This class period **IS NOT** the time for other professors' assignments and/or internet quests, unless the material is related to our topic, and is shared in class discussion.

### **HONOR CODE**

Students at Georgia Tech adopted the honor system. Therefore, cheating in any form is prohibited. When this is detected, a **"ZERO"** grade is given for the assignment.

### **GRADING**

The final grade is an average of scores accrued during the semester.  
 A+=95 A=90 A--=89 B+=85 B=80 B--=79 C+=75 C=70 C--=69  
 D+=65 D=60 D--=59 F=50

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Students will write eight (8) five (5) page essays [double spaced] evaluating selected films and related topical articles as historical evidence. Please note, four and one-half pages or four and three-quarters pages **are not** five page essays! Papers of less than the required pages get low scores. You may of course, write more than five pages. **No late papers will be accepted;**

**not even those brought to class by late comers.** I start class on time. That is when I'll collect the essays. If you are not in class when I begin collecting the essays, your paper is late and will not be accepted. **You may only slip papers under my office door if you will not be in class on the due date. These papers must arrive before the class begins; that is, before I leave my office for the D. M. Smith Building. Afterwards, they are considered late papers and will not be graded.**

## **ESSAY FORMAT**

Since this is a history class, expect not only to view history; but also to read and write about it. The five page essays critique the unit film[s] by discussing the veracity of their information based on assigned readings. Each essay must have a title. The title cannot be Essay One, Essay Two, etc. Essays include a **BRIEF ONE PARAGRAPH SUMMARY of the film's plot.** It should not cover an entire page, nor should it consist of two or three paragraphs. Give the essence of the film, not a blow by blow account.

The analysis of the film is based on articles accompanying each unit. Include and document at least one quote from each. Compare what is true or false about Hollywood's version of history by using the designated articles as a guide. Consider what is missing in Hollywood's account of history. Is the film presentation biased? Also comment on articles written by historians, psychologists, political scientists, journalists, and/or sociologists. Do they agree/contradict each other, or themselves? Explain. Is the author's thesis believable? Does s/he cite supporting valid evidence? Is her/his article biased? These are considerations when writing analytical essays.

**REQUIRED ARTICLES** are listed in the syllabus under each unit. **They will be posted on line ON-LINE. You will receive an access code and instructions on accessing this material. On rare occasions some articles may be distributed in class. If absent that day, acquiring the material is your responsibility.**

The essay ends with a bibliography of readings for the unit and any additional sources you quoted. A bibliography is arranged in alphabetical order by the author's last name. It is not numbered. You may copy the bibliography for each unit directly from this syllabus. **ON AVERAGE, STUDENTS READ 60-110 PAGES WEEKLY. I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO SUBSTITUTE FILMS AND/OR ARTICLES. STUDENTS WILL BE NOTIFIED BY E-MAIL A MINIMUM OF ONE WEEK BEFORE THE ESSAY IS DUE.**

Essays lose points for misspelled words, improper citation of quoted material, improper bibliographic form, grammatical errors, unclear thoughts,

and typos. Plagiarized film reviews are not read. You must cite the source and include the reviewer's remarks in quotation. Plagiarized film reviews are easily recognized. Also, someone else in the class will have found and used the same material.

Essays are usually due the week following a completed unit.

### **DUE DATES FOR ESSAYS**

1. Unit I—January 23, 2012
2. Unit II—February 6, 2012
3. Unit III--February 20, 2012
4. Unit IV—March 5, 2012
5. Unit V—March 26, 2012
6. Unit VI—April 9, 2012
7. Unit VII—April 23, 2011
8. Unit VIII—Final exam date

### **TOPICS, FILMS, UNIT READINGS**

#### **Unit I 1919 WORLD SERIES SCANDAL**

**FILM:** *Eight Men Out*

#### **READINGS**

- Anderson, William. "Saving the National Pastime's Image." *Journalism History*. (Fall 2001) 27:3, 105-112.
- Bachin, Robin. "At the Nexus of Labor and Leisure." *Journal of Social History*. (Summer 2003) 36: 4, 94-116.
- Goetsch, Douglas. "Baseball's Loss of Innocence." *American Scholar*. (Spring 2011) 80:2, 82-95.
- Monaham, Eileen. "The Literature of the Sox Side." *Chicago History*. (Fall 2008) 36:1, 26-49.
- Ogden, David. "Major League Baseball and Myth Making." *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History & Culture*. (Spring 2007) 15:2, 66-78.
- Pomrenke, Jacob. "Bringing Home the Bacon." *Journal of Illinois History*. (2006) 9:4, 265-282.
- Sherony, Keith. "A Tale of Two Teams." *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History & Culture*. (Fall 2009) 18:1, 107-124.
- Voight, David. "The Chicago Black Sox and the Myth of Baseball's Single Sin." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*. (Sept. 1969) 62:3, 293-306.

## UNIT II: PROHIBITION

### FILMS

*The Roaring Twenties*

*The Public Enemy*

### READINGS

- Beshares, Laura. "Honorable Style in Dishonorable Times: American Gangsters of the 1920s and 1930s." *Journal of American Culture*. (2010) 33:3, 197-206.
- Burnham, J. C. "New Perspectives on the Prohibition "Experiment of the 1920s." *Journal of Social History*. (Fall 1968) 2:1, 51-68.
- Frendreis, John. "A Hundred Miles of Dry: Religion and the Persistence of Prohibition in the United States." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*. (Fall 2010), 10:3, 302-319.
- Hoffman, Dennis. "Yesterday's City: Crime-Fighting Scientists." *Chicago History*. (March 1990) 19: 1-2, 84-96.
- Jones, Bartlett. "Prohibition and Eugenics, 1920-1933." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*. (April 1964) 18:2, 158-172.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Prohibition and Prosperity, 1920-1930." *Social Science*. (1975) 50:2, 78-86.
- Kyvig, David. "Women Against Prohibition." *American Quarterly*. (Dec. 1976) 28:4, 465-482.
- Lawson, Ellen. "Smugglers, Bootleggers & Scofflaws." *Prologue* (Fall 2011) 43: 3, 28-35.
- Mennell, S. J. "Prohibition: A Sociological View." *Journal of American Studies* (August 1969) 3:2, 159-175.
- McDonough, Daniel. "Chicago Press Treatment of the Gangster, 1924-1931." *Illinois Historical Journal*. (1989) 82:1, 17-32.
- Willich, Michael. "Close That Place of Hell: Poor Women and the Cultural Politics of Prohibition." *Journal of Urban Studies*. (July 2003) 29:5, 555-574.
- Woodiwiss, Michael. "Capone to Kefauver: Organized Crime in America." *History Today* (June 1987) 37:6, 1-8.

### UNIT III: GENDERED AMERICA

#### FILM: *A League of Their Own*

#### READINGS

- Everbacili, Tracy. "Breaking Baseball's Barriers: The 1953-1954 Negro Leagues and Expansion of Women's Public Roles." *American Journalism*. (Winter 2005) 22:1, 13-33.
- Gorman, Bob. "Twice Perfect." *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History & Culture*. (Spring 2008) 16:2, 107-116.
- Latimer, Leah. "A Game of Her Own." *New Crisis*. (March/April 2003) 110:2, 28-34.
- Pierman, Carol. "Baseball Conduct and True Womanhood." *Women's Studies Quarterly*. (Spring/Summer 2005) 33:1-2, 68-85.
- Weiler, Karen and Catriona Higgs. "Living the Dream: A Historical Analysis of Professional Women Baseball Players." *Canadian Journal of the History of Sport*. (May 1992) 23:1, 46-54.
- Wilson, Brenda. "Nicknames and Women Professional Baseball Players." *Names [American Name Society]*. (Dec. 1990) 38:4, 305-322.
- "Women's Baseball in the 1860s." *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History & Culture*. (Spring 2011) 19:2, 1-26.

### UNIT IV: AMERICAN RACE RELATIONS [DESEGREGATION]

#### FILMS: *The Jackie Robinson Story*

*Ruby Bridges*

#### READINGS (Ruby Bridges)

- Anderson, Bentley. "Prelates, Protest, and Public Opinion: Catholic Opposition to Desegregation, 1947-1955." *Journal of Church and State*. (Summer 2004) 46:3, 617-644.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pamphleteering Against Prejudice: The Catholic Press Attacks Jim Crow in Twentieth Century America." *American Catholic Studies*. (Summer 2009) 120:2, 1-26.

- Buck, Emily. "Desegregation Discussions in Lincoln Parish During the Critical Summer of 1969." *North Louisiana History*. (Spring/Summer 2009) 40:2-3, 47-71.
- Crespino, Joseph. "The Best Defense is a Good Offense: The Stennis Amendment and the Fracturing of Liberal School Desegregation Policy, 1964-1972." *The Journal of Policy History*. (2006) 18:3, 304-325.
- Davies, Gareth. "Richard Nixon and the Desegregation of Southern Schools." *Journal of Policy History*. (Oct. 2007) 19:4, 367-394.
- Kotlowski, Dean. "With All Deliberate Delay: Kennedy, Johnson, and School Desegregation." *Journal of Policy History*. (17:2) 155-192.
- Landphair, Juliette. "Sewage, Sidewalks, and Schools: The New Orleans Ninth Ward and Public School Desegregation." *Louisiana History*. (Jan. 1999) 40:1, 35-62.
- Muller, Mary Lee. "New Orleans Public School Desegregation." *Louisiana History*. (January 1969) 40:1, 35-62.
- Wieder, Alan. "The New Orleans School Crisis: The Whites Who Stayed." *Vitae Scholastica*. (1986) 5:1-2, 169-189.

### **READINGS (Jackie Robinson)**

- DeLorne, Joshua. "The Interest conversion Principle and the Integration of Baseball." *Journal of Black Studies*. (Nov 2010) 41:2, 367-384
- Kelly, John. "Integrating America: Jackie Robinson, Critical Events and Baseball Black and White." *International Journal of the History of Sports*. (Nov. 2005) 22:6, 1011-1035.
- Lamb, Chris. "I Never Want to Take Another Trip Like This One: Jackie Robinson's Journey to Integrate Baseball." *Journal of Sport History*. (Summer 1997) 24:2, 177-191.
- Vernon, John. "Jim Crow, Meet Lieutenant Robinson: A 1944 Court-Martial." *Prologue*. (Spring 2008) 40:1, 36-43.
- Washburn, Pat. "New York Newspapers and Robinson's First Season." *Journalism Quarterly*. (Winter 1981) 58:4, 640-644.



## UNIT V: THE COLD WAR

**FILMS:** *Fail Safe*

*Dr. Strangelove*

### READINGS

- Bell, Jonathan. "Social Politics in a Transoceanic World in the Early Cold War Years." *Historical Journal* (June 2010) 53: 2, 401-421.
- Brands, H. W. "For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, The Soviet Union, and the Cold War." *Diplomatic History* (Jan. 2009) 33:1, p. 165-171.
- Bruno, Laura. "The Bequest of the Nuclear Battlefield: Science, Nature, and the Atom During the First Decade of the Cold War." *Historical Studies in the Physical & Biological Studies*. (2003) 33:2, p. 237-261.
- Kramer, Bernard, et al. "Attitudes Towards Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War: 1945-1982." *Journal of Social Issues* (Spring 1983) 39:1, p. 7-24.
- Mickiewicz, Ellen. "Efficacy and Evidence." *Journal of Cold War Studies*. (Fall 2011) 13:4, 138-171.
- Taylor, Bryan. "Insisting on Persisting: The Nuclear Rhetoric of 'Stockpile Stewardship.'" *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* (Summer 2008) 11:2, p. 303-334.

## UNIT VI: THE SPACE RACE

**FILMS:** *The Right Stuff*

*Apollo 13*

### READINGS

- Duff, Brian. "The Road Show." *Air and Space Smithsonian*. (Dec./Jan. 1996) 10:5, 78-86.
- Fries, Colin. "Sports Milestones in Space: Take Me Out (To Space) To the Ballgame." *Quest: History of Spaceflight*. (Jan, 2003) 10:2, 37-40.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Traditions of the Space Age." *Quest: History of Spaceflight*. (Jan. 2004) 11:1, 31-39.
- Gilfoyle, Timothy. "Space Age in Chicago: Interviews With James A. Lovel." *Chicago History*. (March 2002) 30:30, 54-65.

- Kelly, Michelle. "An Interview With Michael Collins." *Quest: History of Space Flight* (2009—2<sup>nd</sup> quarter) 16:2, 6-17.
- Lathers, Marie. "No Official Requirement: Women, History, Time, and the US Space Program." *Feminist Studies*. (Spring 2009) 35:1, 14-40.
- Launius, Roger. "Interpreting the Moon Landings: Project Apollo and the Historians." *History of Technology*. (Sept. 2006) 22:3, 225-255.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Sphere of Influence: The Sputnik Crisis and the Master Narrative." *Quest: History of Spaceflight*. (Oct. 2007) 14:4, 6-18.
- Lewis, Richard. "End of Apollo: End of an Era." *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*. (Jan. 1971) 27:1, 26-28.
- McQuaid, Kim. "Sputnik Reconsidered." *Canadian Review of American Studies*. (2007) 37:3. 371-401.
- Rothfork, John. "NASA, the Sixties, and the American Hero." *Colorado Quarterly* (1975) 24:1, 102-111.
- Swenson, Lloyd. "The Megamachine Behind the Mercury Space Craft." *American Quarterly*. (June 1960) 21:2, 210-227.
- Werth, Karsten. "A Surrogate for War: US Space Race Program in the 1960s." *Amerikastudien*. (2004) 49:4, 563-587.
- Whelan, Joseph. "The Press and Krushcev's Withdrawal From The Moon Race." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. (Summer 1968) 32:2, 33-51.

## **UNIT VII: THE QUESTION OF NUCLEAR POWER**

**FILMS:** *The China Syndrome*  
*Silkwood*

### **READINGS**

Selected articles from the special issue of *Time: Japan's Meltdown*. (2011) 177:12

## **UNIT VIII: WATERGATE**

**FILMS:** *All The President's Men*  
*Nixon [Part II]*

## READINGS

- Benoit, William. "Richard Nixon's Rhetorical Strategies in His Public Statements on Watergate." *Southern Speech Communication Journal*. (1982) 47:2, 192-211.
- Candee, Dan. "The Moral Psychology of Watergate." *Journal of Social Issues*. (Spring 1975) 31:2, 183-190.
- Calhoun, Robert. "Watergate and Conservatism." *South Atlantic Quarterly*. (Spring 1984) 83:2, 127-137.
- Gambino, Richard. "Watergate Lingo: A Language of Non-Responsibility." *Freedom At Issue*. (1973) Issue 23, 7-13.
- Gamm, Larry. "Watergate and Political Trust." *Indiana Social Studies Quarterly*. (1976) 29:3, 38-50.
- Gouran, Dennis. "The Watergate Cover-Up: Its Dynamics and Its Implications." *Communication Monographs*. (Aug. 1976) 43:3, 176-187.
- Lang, Gladys. "Polling on Watergate: The Battle for Public Opinion." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 44:4, 530-548.
- Mayer, Joseph. "Watergate Flimflam." *Social Science Quarterly*. (1974) 49:2, 99-103.
- Neal, Fred. "The Cold War: Road to Watergate." *Center Magazine*. (1973) 6:5, 1925.
- Robinson, Michael. "The Impact of Televised Watergate Hearings." *Journal of Communication*. (June 1974) 24:2, 17-30.
- Royster, Vermont. "The Public Morality: Afterthoughts on Watergate." *American Scholar*. (Winter 1974) 43:2, 249-259.
- Schrag, Peter. "Watergate As Entertainment." *Social Policy*. (Sept. 1974) 5:3, 23-26.
- Stein, Howard. "The Silent complicity at Watergate." *American Scholar*. (Fall 1973) 43:1, 21-37.
- Tiwari, S. J. "Watergate Crisis: A View From the Third World." *India Quarterly*. (Oct. 1973) 29:4, 340-346.
- Watergate: Its Implications for Responsible Government." *Administration and Society*. (Aug. 1974) 6:2, 155-171.

- Wrong, Dennis. "Watergate: Symptom of What Sickness?"  
*Dissent*. (Oct. 1974) 21:4, 507-514.
- Zimmer, Troy. "Impact of Watergate on the Public's Trust  
And Confidence in Mass Media." *Social Science  
Quarterly*. (March 1979) 59:4, 743-751.

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