

20th Century Asian History through Film

Section 1

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【Course Outline / Description】

This course is an exploration of 20th century Asian history through the analysis of a selection of films. Film is an exciting medium to approach the study of history. In this course, we will engage with debate on how historical films portray the past, whether they can or should strive for historical accuracy, and to what degree they present opinions or interpretations of the past.

An important part of the course is learning about the historiographical (the writing of history) debates which surround historical events. Therefore, significant time in class will be devoted to analyzing those debates, and how these films engage with and challenge existing historiography.

We will also dive deeply into the historical context of each film, by reading sources about those events and acquiring knowledge about those topics. This will help us to be better prepared to analyze each film for its historical messages and interpretations.

In-class discussions are a central component of the class. These discussions revolve around interpretations of the films, discussions of historical context, and discussions of the readings.

Students will write three exams in the class. There will also be periodic forum postings in the Assignments section of Blackboard, in which students will need to provide their written analysis of films and the writing assignments, as well as their personal thoughts and reactions.

Section 2

【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- refer to a wide range of historical films related to the history of Asia in the 20th century
- have developed a broader historical knowledge of 20th century Asian history
- develop their skills of critical analysis and historical interpretation
- improve writing, reading, and oral discussion skills
- utilize source materials effectively
- use proper citation formats, including the use of footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations and a bibliography in the forum postings
- develop an understanding of historiography
- engage with historical debates surrounding important 20th century Asian history events
- understand how historical films are in effect dialogues with the past, which is an ongoing process affected not only by the past, but also by the present context under which a film was produced

- be able to identify and analyze the historical argument being put forward in a historical film and be able to also understand that every historical film has an argument being made about the past

Section 3

【Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials】

August 30 Topic: Introduction to the course- Assignments: None

September 1 Topic: *Picture Bride* (1994)- Assignments: Read Bailey (on *Picture Bride*) pgs. 104-107; “Hawaii: Life in a Plantation Society” and other materials in Assignments folder on Blackboard

September 6 Topic: *The Last Emperor* (1987)- Assignments: Read Rosenstone Chapter 6 “Telling Lives” pgs. 101-123; *New York Times*, “Bertolucci Brings Back Imperial China”; **Forum 1 due**

September 8 Topic: “World History on Film”- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 1 “Introduction: World History Through Film” pgs. 3-23; Review “Overview of Chinese History in the 20th century” word document file

September 13 Topic: “*The Last Emperor* in the Context of early 20th century Chinese History”- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 2 (on *The Last Emperor*) pgs. 24-27; **Forum 2 due**

September 15 Topic: *Gandhi* (1982)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 2 (on *Gandhi*) pgs. 27-31

September 20 Topic: “The Past on Film”- Assignments: Read Rosenstone Chapter 2 “To See the Past” pgs. 13-34

September 22 Topic: “*Gandhi* in the context of Indian History in the early 20th century”- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Gandhi*; Review “Gandhi Historical Context” PowerPoint file; **Forum 3 due**

September 27 Topic: Review for Exam I- Assignments: Prepare for Exam I Review

September 29 Review for exam and Exam I during class today

October 4 Topic: *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 3 “Filmic Approaches to Global Conflict and War: Japanese Wartime Experiences” pgs. 49-52

October 6 Topic: “War and Conflict on Film”- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 3 (on *Letters from Iwo Jima*) pgs. 53-56

October 11 Topic: “*Letters from Iwo Jima* in the context of World War II”- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Letters from Iwo Jima*; Review “Background to the Iwo Jima Battle” PowerPoint file; **Forum 4 due**

October 13 Topic: *The Burmese Harp* (1956)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 3 (on *The Burmese Harp*) pgs. 62-64

October 18 Topic: “*The Burmese Harp* and historical context of World War II”- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *The Burmese Harp*; **Forum 5 due**

October 20 Topic: *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 3 (on *Grave of the Fireflies*) pgs.64-67

October 25 Topic: “*Grave of the Fireflies* in the context of World War II”- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Grave of the Fireflies*; Read Selden, “A Forgotten Holocaust: US Bombing Strategy, the Destruction of Japanese Cities & the American Way of War from World War II to Iraq”; **Forum 6 due**

October 27 Topic: *White Light, Black Rain* (2007)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 3 (on *White Light, Black Rain*) pgs. 57-59

November 1 Topic: “Exploring Documentary Historical Films”- Assignments: Read Rosenstone Chapter 5 “Documentary” pgs. 79-98; **Forum 7 due**

November 3 Topic: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959)- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *White Light, Black Rain*

November 8 Topic: “Historical Context and *Hiroshima mon Amour*”- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*; Read Nina Ekstein, “The Impact of Photographs in *Hiroshima mon Amour*”; **Forum 8 due**

November 10 Topic: Review for Exam II- Assignments: Prepare for Exam II Review

November 15 Review for exam and Exam II during class today

November 17 Topic: *Tokyo Story* (1953)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 7 (on *Tokyo Story*) pgs. 154-156

November 22 Topic: “Conducting Historical Research Using Films as a Source”- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 8 “World History Films as a Basis for Research and Writing” pgs. 176-186

November 24 Topic: “*Tokyo Story* and Postwar Japan’s Historical Context”- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Tokyo Story*; **Forum 9 due**

November 29 Topic: *Tokyo Sonata* (2008)- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Tokyo Sonata*

December 1 Topic: “The Lost Decade in Japan and *Tokyo Sonata*”- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Tokyo Sonata*; Review “Lost Decade” PowerPoint file; **Forum 10 due**

December 6 Topic: *Lost in Translation* (2003)- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Lost in Translation*

December 8 Topic: Review for Final Exam- Assignments: Prepare for Final Exam Review

December 13-17: Final Exam Week

Please note that details of the above schedule are subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class.

【Textbooks/Reading Materials】

- Scott C.M. Bailey, *Approaching Recent World History Through Film* (Routledge Press)
- Robert Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History* (Routledge Press)
- Other articles, primary sources, secondary sources, videos, and other relevant materials will also be assigned and listed in the “Assignments” folders on Blackboard

Section 4

【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

Exams (x's 3)- 20% each, 60% of total grade

Class participation- 20%

Forum Postings- 20%

The **Exams (3)** are worth a combined 60% (or 20% each). These will be based on the material covered in the class, including the readings, lectures, films, and activities. To do well, you will need to keep up with the readings and take good notes during all class sessions. The exams are a combination of identification items and essay questions.

Class participation is based on active and involved participation in discussions and activities, preparedness throughout the semester (demonstrating that you have done the readings and are engaging with the material) and maintaining a positive attitude. Class participation is worth 20% of your final grade. Attendance is required for all sessions.

Forum postings are periodic responses to the readings and films which are conducted on Blackboard in the “discussions” section. Students will be given assignments to read and questions to discuss. Each forum posting will be graded from 0-10 points based on content, organization, clarity of writing, and use of sources to support your responses. It must be properly formatted, using both internal citations/references (footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations) and a bibliography/works cited. Each forum posting should be a minimum of 250 words (no maximum). Include a word count at the end. These are worth 20% of your final grade for the class.

Section 5

【Additional Information】

Attendance and active participation are required in this course and are a significant part of the grade. To do well in the course, you should prepare all reading and writing assignments prior to each class meeting and be prepared to actively participate. Thoughtful and informed discussions are an important part of the class.