

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

There is also a Mini-Research Project, in which students will choose a historical film related to 20th Century Asian history and research the historical context of that film.

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

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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】

Lesson 1 Topic: Introduction to the course- Assignments: None

Lesson 2 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

Lesson 3 Topic: *The Last Emperor* (1987)- Assignments: Read Rosenstone Chapter 6 “Telling Lives” pgs. 101-123; *New York Times*, “Bertolucci Brings Back Imperial China”

Lesson 4 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

Lesson 5 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

Lesson 6 Topic: *Gandhi* (1982)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 2 (on *Gandhi*) pgs. 27-31-

Lesson 7 Topic: “The Past on Film”- Assignments: Read Rosenstone Chapter 2 “To See the Past” pgs. 13-34

Lesson 8 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

Lesson 9 Topic: *The Wind Rises* (*Kaze Tachinu*) (2013) Assignments: None

Lesson 10 Topic: “*The Wind Rises* and Japan’s Entry into World War II” Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *The Wind Rises*

Lesson 11 Topic: Review for Exam I- Assignments: Prepare for Exam I Review

Lesson 12 Review for exam and Exam I during class today

Lesson 13 Topic: *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 3 “Filmic Approaches to Global Conflict and War: Japanese Wartime Experiences” pgs. 49-52

Lesson 14 Topic: “War and Conflict on Film”- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 3 (on *Letters from Iwo Jima*) pgs. 53-56

Lesson 15 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

Lesson 16 Topic: *The Burmese Harp* (1956)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 3 (on *The Burmese Harp*) pgs. 62-64

Lesson 17 Topic: “*The Burmese Harp* and historical context of World War II”- Assignments:

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Read materials in Assignments folder on *The Burmese Harp*

Lesson 18 Topic: *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 3 (on *Grave of the Fireflies*) pgs.64-67

Lesson 19 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”

Lesson 20 Topic: *White Light, Black Rain* (2007)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 3 (on *White Light, Black Rain*) pgs. 57-59; Read Rosenstone Chapter 5 “Documentary” pgs. 79-98

Lesson 21 Topic: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959)- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *White Light, Black Rain*

Lesson 22 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*”

Lesson 23 Topic: *Tokyo Story* (1953)- Assignments: Read Bailey Chapter 7 (on *Tokyo Story*) pgs. 154-156

Lesson 24 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

Lesson 25 Topic: “*Tokyo Story* and Postwar Japan’s Historical Context”- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Tokyo Story*

Lesson 26 Topic: *Kuroi Ame (Black Rain)* (1989)- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Kuroi Ame*

Lesson 27 Topic: “Historical Context and *Kuroi Ame (Black Rain)* (1989)”- **Mini-Research Project Due**

Lesson 28 Topic: *Tokyo Sonata* (2008)- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Tokyo Sonata*

Lesson 29 “The Lost Decade in Japan and *Tokyo Sonata*”- Assignments: Read materials in Assignments folder on *Tokyo Sonata*

Lesson 30 Review for Final Exam- Assignments: Prepare for Final Exam Review

Final Exam Schedule: TBA

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

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【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

Exams (x's 2)- 20% each, 40% of total grade

Class participation- 20%

Vlog Postings- 20%

Mini-Research Project- 20%

The **Exams (2)** are worth a combined 40% (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.

Vlog 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, films to view, and questions to discuss or possibly even debate. Each vlog posting will be graded from 0-10 points based on clarity, effort, analysis, and organization. The vlog postings are short videos or audio files of 2-3 minutes in which you record your thoughts, opinions, and analysis. These are worth 20% of your final grade for the class.

Mini-research Project is a historical analysis of the historical context of a film which should be a minimum of 1000 words (no maximum). It will be worth a possible 20 points. This will be an analysis of the historical context of a film of your choice (related to 20th Century Asian History), based on historical research into the historical context of the time and place of the film's subject matter and its actual production. You must use in-text citations and a bibliography as well as academic sources. The mini-research project is 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 assignments prior to each class meeting and be prepared to actively participate. Thoughtful and informed discussions are an important part of the class.