HIST 3833 — Screening America’s Past  
Spring 2015

An examination of American history as depicted in American films. We will assess their relative accuracy, cultural context, and contributions to the shaping of the nation's collective memory.

Required Texts for Course:  

Course Schedule

March 23 Pre-assignment due (see page 2 of syllabus under “Course Requirements”); e-mail assignment to professor, fein@fordham.edu
Read: Rommel-Ruiz, Introduction and base your essay the reading.

March 28 (morning) Introduction to course  
Topic: Creation of American Mythology  
Read: Rommel-Ruiz, Chap. 2  
Birth of a Nation

March 28 (afternoon) 12 Years a Slave  
You must submit your presentation selection at the end of class.

March 29 (morning) Topic: Mythology continued  
Read: Articles on Blackboard  
Lincoln

March 29 (afternoon) Topic: Westerns  
Read: Rommel-Ruiz, Chap. 3-4  
Stagecoach; The Outlaw Josey Wales

April 25 (morning) Topic: The Cold War  
Read: Articles on Blackboard  
The Day the Earth Stood Still

April 25 (afternoon) Topic: War on Terror  
Read: Rommel-Ruiz, Chap. 8  
Argo; Zero Dark Thirty

April 26 (morning) Topic: Rebirth of Identity  
Gangs of New York  
Read: Rommel-Ruiz, Chap. 5

April 26 (afternoon) Presentations

May 4 Paper is due;  
E-mail assignment to professor, fein@fordham.edu by 11:59 PM
**Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to follow the academic standards of Fordham University, as stated in the “Undergraduate Arts & Sciences Policy of Academic Integrity” section of the *Student Handbook*. Any violation of academic integrity will be dealt with swiftly and severely. Plagiarism and/or cheating on exams will result in failure in addition to the penalties associated with academic dishonesty. Consult the *Student Handbook* on [www.fordham.edu/student_affairs](http://www.fordham.edu/student_affairs) for complete details.

**Course Requirements**

**Pre-Assignment:** Read Rommel-Ruiz’s “Introduction” in *American History Goes to the Movies*. In a brief essay (2-3 pages), explain how we should approach our analysis of cinematic histories.

Conclude your essay (last 1-2 paragraphs) answering the following question: How do you feel the perception of American history is influenced by film?

At the end of the essay, please indicate the one film you feel has had the greatest impact on your perception of American history (you need not write an explanation, I just want to know which film).

**Classroom Attendance & Participation:** This includes attendance, classroom preparedness, participation in discussions, and ability to fulfill assignments. Students are expected to attend every meeting, contribute to class, and submit any written assignments on the expressed due date. Absences are not acceptable in intensive courses. Being absence will not be tolerated and may result in failure of the course.

**Presentation:** Each student will select one of the presentation topics and present at least 2 films on that topic in class on the afternoon of April 26. The presentations should be approximately 15 minutes (time will vary depending on course enrollment). Presentations must include (but are not limited to) the following:

- The historical context in which the films were made;
- The historical accuracy of the films;
- The message the films convey, or attempts to convey, about the United States;
- An analytical comparison of the films.

Students may use any tools to enhance their presentations, such as PowerPoint presentations, handouts, websites, etc. EACH PRESENTATION MUST INCLUDE BRIEF CLIPS FROM THE FILMS PRESENTED, highlighting students’ points. You must submit your presentation selection at the end of class on March 28.

**Paper:** Each student will be required to submit a paper based on your presentation of 7-10 pages that are typed and double-spaced, with proper margins. The paper should be a more in-depth analysis of the presentation topic. *The paper must, where ever possible, make reference and relate to Rommel-Ruiz’s book.* There should be considerable (3-4 pages) focus on the historical event and/or historical context in which the films were made. This will require students to use at least one secondary source, such as a historical monograph, journal article, acceptable website (.edu or .org site that must be approved by the professor), etc. The paper must be properly footnoted and include a list of works cited.

**Grading Policy**

Each student’s final grade will be determined in the following manner:

- Pre-Assignment — 10% of grade
- Classroom attendance & participation — 20% of grade
- Presentation — 35% of grade
- Paper — 35% of grade

Letter grades are equivalent to the following numerical grades:

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<th>Grade</th>
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