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History vs. Hollywood

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Office Hours: Wed 8:00-8:45
Classroom: Library

"When less than everything has been said about a subject, you can still think on further. The alternative is for the audience to be presented with a final deduction (...) no effort on their part. What can it mean to them when they have not shared with the author the misery and joy of bringing an image into being?"

— Andrei Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time

Course Description:

It has been argued that Americans get most of their knowledge about historical events by viewing films that are a part of the mass entertainment industry. Television has furthered this perspective with reality and satirical news shows. Studies show that for the most part Americans believe that what is depicted in films and on television is an accurate presentation of history. If these generalizations are true, several questions come immediately to mind. First of all, how accurately do Hollywood and the mass media portray historical events and characters? What dangers exist for American democracy if many people believe in and understand a history that never happened? To find out the answers to these and other questions, the History vs. Hollywood course is asking students to be critical film and television viewers and reviewers. Using the films, and primary and secondary sources, students will be asked to analyze the accuracy and impact of Hollywood films about History.

The Hollywood's History elective course is a survey of films connected to United States History and Global History & Geography themes such as the causes and effects of world conflicts, and the expansion of human rights throughout the world, and social anxieties of contemporary events. These themes will be explored using various print, photographs, film, video, and on-line learning. Students are engaged to read and understand historical content and concepts as a historian and to develop critical historical thinking skills aligned with the common-core.

Academic Expectations (including learning habits and skills):

- Provide students with the opportunity to study topics in depth (posthole) as an elective and far beyond a typical survey classes in either Global or American History.
- Provide students with an opportunity to use contemporary media and technology in their study of History.
- Provide students with the opportunity to raise and answer significant historical questions.
- Allow students to explore and use the Internet for historical research kills using peer reviewed journals.
- Use primary and secondary sources to provide data to help answer significant historical questions.
- Help students to communicate with other young historians about their studies.
- Help students to assemble and publish historical film reviews.
- Make history more meaningful by providing images, in addition to written words as messages of interpreting history.
- Help students to understand the role of film in influencing popular conceptions of historical figures and events.
- Make history more meaningful by providing images, in addition to written words as messages of interpreting history.
- Help students to understand the role of film in influencing popular conceptions of historical figures and events.
- Students will develop and apply critical thinking to historic events, people, and places.

Behavioral Expectations (including classroom norms and routines):

- Students will come to class prepared with pen, notebook, homework, worksheets, and course materials daily.
- Students will be respectful to their classmates' point-of-view.
- Students will speak in-turn and create an atmosphere of calm debate.
- Students will have a do-now to complete as soon as they enter the classroom.
- Students will respect all school and NYCDOE rules & regulations while in the classroom.
- Students will be placed in collaborative groups and have limited choices as to group members in the groups they are participating in.
- Students will be responsible for viewing films or film clips online for free and completing coursework outside of the Saturday session hours.

Course Materials/Required Texts:

- Mr. Ott's Classroom Wiki (www.mysocialstudiesteacher.com), lessons, assignments, review
- Jupiter Grades (assignments, forum questions/discussions, grades)
- Various Primary & Secondary Documents pertaining to each topic.

Course Requirements/Grading Policy:

- Classwork – 65%
- Project – 15%
- Reviews - 20%

Assignments:

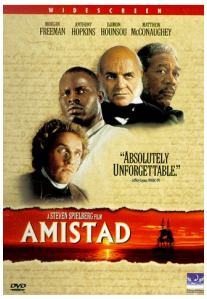
- Students will write a *reflection/review* for each film viewed. (Review)
- Students will participate in a *discussion/debate* after each film. (Classwork)
- Students will complete a *historical analysis* (fact verses fiction essay) on one film of their choice (Project)

Academic Integrity Statement

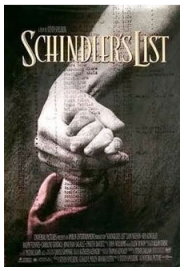
All students are expected to act with civility, personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their own efforts. An environment of academic integrity is requisite to respect for self and others and a civil community.

Academic integrity includes a commitment to not engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty include cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting another persons' work as one's own, using Internet sources without citation, taking or having another student take your exam, tampering with the work of another student, facilitating other students' acts of academic dishonesty, etc.

Required Movies on Reverse Side



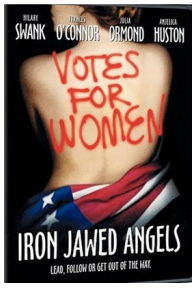
Amistad (1997) — This movie is a fictionalized account of the 1839 revolt by illegally enslaved Africans aboard the Spanish ship, *Le Amistad*. When the ship was seized on the high seas by a U.S. Navy vessel, abolitionists filed a court case to free the Africans. The trial and subsequent appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court highlighted to the public the evils of slavery and is seen as a major step toward turning the North against the South's "peculiar institution." The litigation involved a sitting President of the United States, a former President, and the Queen of Spain. For the captives, the outcome would determine whether they lived their lives in freedom or in slavery.



Schindler's List (1993) — This film depicts the heroism of Oskar Schindler, a German war profiteer, drinker, womanizer, and gambler, who, because of his fundamental decency and great courage, saved more than 1,100 Jews from death in the Holocaust. The film is based on the historical novel by Thomas Keneally, in which only the dialogue and certain details are fictional. Mr. Keneally based the book on events reported to him by the "Schindlerjuden", people whose lives had been saved by Schindler and who were eyewitnesses to Schindler's heroic actions.



Glory (1989) — Another accurate Civil War movie, this film tells the tale of the first official black regiment in the Civil War. Glory tells the story of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts 54th Volunteer Regiment, the first regular U.S. army unit composed of black soldiers during the Civil War. Colonel Shaw, a white abolitionist, and hundreds of black volunteers in his regiment, gave their lives to prove that black men could fight as well as whites in the armies of the mid-19th century.



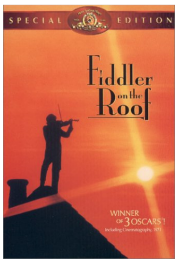
Iron Jawed Angels (2004) — Most people don't know that in order to get the vote American women suffered imprisonment and torture. It's not taught in the history books but Alice Paul and the women who picketed the White House developed, the tactics and techniques of non-violent mass action which Mahatma Gandhi was developing independently on the other side of the globe. For picketing the White House they were arrested on false charges and tortured in prison. The scandal that resulted was one of the major factors in forcing President Wilson to support votes for women. This film, a fictionalized account of this struggle, is reasonably accurate in all historically important respects.



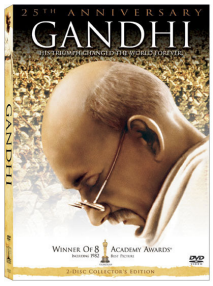
Ghosts of Mississippi (1996) — It looked like the assassin of civil rights worker Medgar Evers would get off scott free. This is the story of Evers' widow and a courageous prosecutor who brought the killer to trial again closing this festering wound of injustice.



The Right Stuff (1983) — This movie shows the recruitment, training, and space flights of the first U.S. astronauts. The film shows how the mantle of having "the right stuff" shifted from the USAF test pilots to the Mercury Astronauts during a time when the Soviet Union reigned supreme in the space race. The movie is based on Tom Wolfe's non-fiction book of the same title.



Fiddler on the Roof (1971) — Describes the experiences of many Eastern European Jewish immigrants to the United States. It deals with issues of love, parenting, tolerance and tradition in ways which appeal to everyone. It is also a beautiful musical, possessing a compelling story line, enchanting music, excellent cinematography, and stunning choreography.



Gandhi (1982) — This is a biography of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian social reformer whose invention, nonviolent mass action, changed the face of the 20th century. The movie shows the tremendous power of nonviolent mass action, the struggle for Indian independence, Gandhi's saintliness (and some of his unsaintly qualities), the difficulties caused by the Hindu/Muslim rivalry in India, the operation of the British Empire in India, the discrimination against Indians in South Africa, and Gandhi's efforts to improve Indian civil rights in South Africa.



Hotel Rwanda (2004) — Tells how Paul Rusesabagina protected 1,268 people who took refuge in the Hotel Mille Collines. Like "Schindler's List," this movie paints an inspiring portrait of one man's evolving moral conviction and how, using his wits and charm, he held maniacal killers at bay.



JFK (1991) — This film takes many liberties with the truth and oversells itself as presenting fact. Seen in its best light, the film is a speculation about history which includes much supposition and imagination. Some teachers have used it to stimulate discussion about the JFK assassination. If this is done, careful research should be undertaken beforehand to separate the fact from the fiction.

Additional Films added as Necessary