

Classical World in Cinema

01:190:212

Monday and Wednesday, 5:35-6:55 in Loree 020

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Ruth Adams Bldg 012
Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30-5 and by appt.

Course Description

Blood! Sex! Revenge! History? Ancient Greece and Rome have inspired several recent hit movies, building on a long cinematic tradition of using new technology to re-imagine the past. This course will explore the ancient cultures that inspired today's movies, as well as the movies themselves, for what they can teach us about the past and the present. To supplement our understandings of these films, there will be readings from primary sources, as well as articles and chapters from the textbook.

Course Goals

Students will gain familiarity with the basic outlines of ancient history and many aspects of ancient culture and literature. We will also develop the ability to critique films not simply for historical inaccuracies, but also with an eye towards contemporary modern reactions and the artistic concerns that motivate filmmakers. Using short writing assignments and class discussion, student will become proficient in discussing and analyzing films.

Textbooks

Cyrino, M. *Big Screen Rome*. Wiley-Blackwell (3rd Ed.) ISBN: 1405116846

Homer. *The Essential Homer*. Trans. Lombardo. Hackett. ISBN: 0872205401

Euripides. *Medea*. Trans. Svarlien. Hackett. ISBN: 0872209237

Plautus. *The Pot of Gold and Other Plays*. Trans. Watling. Penguin. ISBN: 0140441492

NB: If you own copies of these works in different translations, you may read those instead.

Other readings will be available on Sakai, along with study guides with discussion questions and Powerpoints from lecture

Structure of the course

On Mondays we will discuss the ancient material and on Wednesdays we will focus on the films. You can watch the week's film over the weekend or between Monday and Wednesday, but you MUST have seen it by Wednesday's lecture. The films are on reserve in the Media Center in the Douglass Library, which offers screening stations for individuals or small groups. I will run a class screening on Tuesday nights at 8 in Campbell A4 (on the College Ave campus.)

Evaluation

- 10 % Weekly quizzes: Can occur either Monday or Wednesday; lowest score dropped. If you know you will miss class, let me know in advance and document your absence to make up the quiz.
- 20 % Essay: Due April 18, 3-4 pages. Topics to be posted on Sakai.
- 20 % Short responses and interactive comments: Each student will make one discussion posting on Sakai. Sign up for the films of your choice in class, and follow the instructions on Sakai. You can earn up to 10 extra credit points on this score by making regular to online discussions.
- 20 % Midterm: The midterm will consist of short answer questions, identifications, and an essay.
- 30 % Final: The final will have the same format as the midterm, but will be slightly longer.

Schedule

Monday's readings are mandatory; Wednesdays are optional but recommended.

Week 1: Myths at the movies

Wed. 1/18: Introduction and test case: Hercules (2003)

Week 2: Troy (Petersen 2004)

Mon. 1/23: *Iliad* [*Essential Homer Books* 1 (1-19), end of 6(73-82), 16 (153-175), 24 (230-240)]

Wed. 1/25: Solomon, "Viewing *Troy*." (.pdf on Sakai)

Week 3: O, Brother, where art thou? (Coen 2000)

Mon. 1/30: *Odyssey* [*Essential Homer Books* 1.1-102 (241-4), 9-12 (298-365), 23 (454-465)]

Wed. 2/1: Flensted-Jensen, P. "Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed" (.pdf on Sakai)

Week 4: Medea (Pasolini 1969)

Mon. 2/6: Euripides' *Medea*

Wed. 2/8: McDonald, "Pasolini's *Medea*." (.pdf on Sakai)

Week 5: Black Orpheus (Camus 1959)

Mon. 2/13: Vergil, *Georgics* 4 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10 (.pdf on Sakai)

Wed. 2/15: 'Why Obama is wrong about Black Orpheus' (link on Sakai)

Week 6: 300 (Snyder 2006)

Mon. 2/20: Herodotus *Histories* book 7 (link on Sakai)

Wed. 2/22: G. Nisbet (Sakai)

Week 7: A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum (Lester 1966)

Mon. 2/27: Plautus, *Pseudolus*

Wed. 2/29: Cyrino, Ch. 6

Week 8: Cabiria (Pastrone 1914)

Mon. 3/5: MIDTERM

Wed. 3/7: Livy books 29-30 (link on Sakai)

Week 9: Spartacus (Kubrick 1960)

Mon. 3/19: Cyrino, Ch. 4

Wed. 3/21: Primary sources on Roman slavery (link on Sakai)

Week 10: Cleopatra (Mankiewicz, 1963)

Mon. 3/26: Cyrino, Ch. 5

Wed. 3/28: Plutarch's Life of Anthony (link on Sakai)

Week 11: Ben-Hur (Wyler 1959)

Mon. 4/2: Cyrino, Ch. 3

Wed. 4/4: Selections from Josephus (link on Sakai)

Week 12: Gladiator (Scott 2000)

Mon. 4/9: Cyrino, Ch. 9

Wed. 4/11: from Sourcebook on Gladiators (.pdf on Sakai)

Week 13: Agora (2009)

Mon. 4/16: Ancient sources; Watts, 'Murder of Hypatia'

Wed. 4/18: Paper due

Week 14: Contempt (Le Mepris) (Godard 1963)

Mon. 4/23: *Odyssey* 19-24 [*EH* 403-482]

Wed. 4/25: Carson, A. "Contempts." (.pdf on Sakai)

Mon. 5/1: Review