

Hist/AS25

The Civil War in Film

Bowdoin College, Spring 2007

Meets: Kanbar 109, MW 11:30-1:00
Prof. Patrick Rael
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This course examines the history of the Civil War as presented in feature films. Of course, the Civil War has long captured the American imagination. In the last century, films have become perhaps the most important culture expression of popular historical consciousness. We will thus explore the history of the Civil War by examining film as a medium for interpreting that conflict. What was the Civil War about, and what were its consequences? How have feature films offered understandings of this central conflict in American history? How do films more generally handle historical subjects, and what does this say about their role in formulating the popular historical consciousness? How have films as history changed over time? What, in short, is the relationship between film as a pop-cultural expression and the American past? In essence, then, we are examining the history of historical interpretations — perhaps more than we are actually examining the history of the war itself.

This course is a first-year seminar, intended to do several things: introduce students to their subject areas, introduce students to college-level paper-writing, practice introductory skills in their discipline (in this case, history), and socialize students to the seminar experience. This last objective is important. Seminars at any level require the intensive participation of students. Do not expect your professor to provide highly-structured lectures; it is up to the students to carry this class forward. This course will also challenge you to practice presenting your ideas, in both written and oral forms. We will practice various forms of paper writing, and end the class with a run-through of the entire process of writing a research paper. And we will participate in the College's Oral Communications Project, which will challenge us to work on our presentation skills. The course will require considerable work outside of class. I expect students to spend at least two hours in personal study on this course for every hour spent in class. This time should be spent reading, reviewing class notes, and preparing course assignments. Finally, we will of course watch several films. These will be shown on Monday evenings, in Scarles 315.

WEB HELP

You will find this syllabus, as well as many other resources to help you through this course, on the web. You should be able to access the course website via Blackboard. In addition, you will find much of use on my homepage, located at <http://academic.bowdoin.edu/faculty/P/prael/>. Of particular use will be my online writing guides, which you can find at <http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>.

BOOKS

- Chadwick, Bruce. *The Reel Civil War*. New York: Vintage, 2002.
- Cassidy, John M. *Civil War Cinema: A Pictorial History of Hollywood and the War Between the States*. Missoula, Mont.: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1986.
- Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. 3rd edition. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 2001. ISBN 0312274664. \$7.99. A short, concise, and complete guide for history undergraduates.
- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. ISBN 0226816273. \$13.00. The ultimate student guide to citations and paper writing.
- Hacker, Diana. *Rules for Writers: A Brief Handbook*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. ISBN: 0312241429. \$26.30. A handy reference for tackling writing problems.

ASSIGNMENTS

Writing workshops (5 @ 4 pts each = 20%): A series of short assignments designed to help improve your writing. We will hold workshops on plagiarism, topic sentences, presenting primary sources, citations, and evidence.

Film analysis (15%): A four-page piece of formal writing analyzing a historical film about the Civil War of your choice (not on the syllabus). You will submit a first draft (10%) and a final draft (5%).

Film analysis presentation (10%): A class presentation based on the film you select for your analysis. We will work with the Oral Communication Project on this assignment.

Research paper (35% total): A formal research paper assignment designed to familiarize you with the research process. Your paper may not be about a single film, but must engage several (at least three) films, all of which speak to a particular theme, problem, or concern. This will be broken down into steps, as below:

Annotated bibliography	5%
Road map	5%
First draft	5%
Peer evaluation	5%
Self evaluation	5%
Final paper	10%

Research presentation (10%): A second class presentation based on your work for the final paper.

Attendance and participation (10%): Thoughtful participation and consistent attendance are particularly crucial in a seminar class such as this.

COURSE CONTRACT

ATTENDANCE: No absences are “excused” -- you are responsible for all material covered during missed class days. Those who may miss class to attend extra-curricular events are requested to inform me, as a courtesy, of planned absences. If special considerations (such as illness) prevent you from fulfilling course obligations, please provide me with documentation so we may consider an exception.

LATE OR MISSED ASSIGNMENTS: Unless stated otherwise, assignments are due at the beginning of class; assignments handed in later in the day (during or after class) will be considered one day late. I will accept late assignments with no penalty only for documented health or other emergencies. In general, assignments which receive letter grades will be marked down one-third of a grade (e.g., from B+ to B), for each day late. A final but crucial point: **All work must be completed in order to pass this course.**

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC HONESTY: Each author owns his or her own ideas, words, and research. You *must* give appropriate credit — generally in the form of quotations and proper footnotes — when using the work of another scholar. I expect you to be familiar both with Bowdoin's honor code, and with the guidelines for proper citation and attribution of sources provided for this course. If you have any questions, ask rather than take risks. *Plagiarism, whether intentional or not, is a serious violation of academic standards and Bowdoin's honor code.* I will enforce violations of the honor code by bringing immediate, uncontested action before the Judicial Board. Minimum penalties for plagiarism will be to fail the course.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

- This is a tentative schedule, liable to change to suit class needs. The online syllabus always offers the most recent version of the syllabus.
- All readings should be completed before class.
- We will not discuss each reading with the same degree of rigor. I will do my best to let you know when to make special efforts with your reading. You are, however, responsible for all the assigned material, whether or not we discuss it in class.

Class topic

Instruction in writing and methods

Film screenings

Presentation-related assignments

Due dates

Date	Topic and assignment
1/22	Introductions
1/24	The Civil War and Reconstruction: An Overview Read: James M. McPherson, “A War that Never Goes Away,” <i>American Heritage</i> 41, no. 2 (March 1990) < http://www.americanheritage.com >; Mark C. Carnes, “Hollywood History,” <i>American Heritage</i> 46, no. 5 (September 1995) < http://www.americanheritage.com >. How academics watch historical films First film analysis assignment given

1/29	<p><u>The Epic Era: Extermination</u> Read: Bruce Chadwick, <i>The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film</i> (New York: Knopf, 2001), ch. 8; Eric Niderost, "The Birth of a Nation," <i>American History</i> 40, no. 4 (October 2005), <pdf>. Film screening: "The Birth of a Nation"</p>
1/31	<p>Paper writing instruction</p>
2/5	<p><u>The Epic Era: Sentimentalism</u> Read: Chadwick, <i>Reel Civil War</i>, ch. 10; Leonard J. Leff, "'Gone with the Wind' and Hollywood's Racial Politics," <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> 284, no. 6 (December 1999) <pdf>. Film screening: "Gone with the Wind" Feb. 6: Evening presentation preps (group A)</p>
2/7	<p>Film analysis presentations (group A)</p>
2/12	<p><u>Sentimentalism, Antebellum Style</u> Read: Chadwick, <i>Reel Civil War</i>, ch. 5; Kendra Hamilton, "The Strange Career of Uncle Tom," <i>Black Issues in Higher Education</i> 19, no. 8 (June 2002) <Academic Search Premier>. Film screening: "Uncle Tom's Cabin" Feb. 13: Evening presentation preps (group B)</p>
2/14	<p>Film analysis presentations (group B) Film analysis due (group A)</p>
2/19	<p><u>The Sectional Crisis: Madmen</u> Read: Sean Wilentz, "Homegrown Terrorist," <i>New Republic</i> (October 24, 2005), 23-30 <pdf>; Peggy A. Russo, "John Brown Goes to Hollywood: <i>Santa Fe Trail</i> and <i>Seven Angry Men</i>," in <i>Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown</i>, Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman, eds. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 190-212 <pdf>. Film screening: "Santa Fe Trail"</p>
2/21	<p>Workshop: Plagiarism Film analysis due (group B)</p>
2/26	<p><u>The Sectional Crisis: Saints</u> Read: Fredrickson, "A Man But Not a Brother" Film screening: "Abe Lincoln in Illinois"</p>
2/28	<p>Workshop: Topic sentences</p>
3/5	<p><u>Epic Revisions</u> Read: Chadwick, <i>Reel Civil War</i>, ch. 13; Lorna Fitzsimmons, "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman: Film, Intertext, and Ideology," <i>Studies in the Humanities</i> 28 (June-December 2001), 94-110. Film screening: "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman"</p>
3/7	<p>Final paper assignment and the research process Library research session</p>
3/26	<p><u>The Civil War: Revisions</u> Read: Chadwick, <i>Reel Civil War</i>, ch. 14; Thomas Cripps, "Frederick Douglass: The Absent Presence in 'Glory,'" <i>Massachusetts Review</i> 36, no. 1 (Spring 1995) <Academic Search Premier>. Film screening: "Glory" Film analysis revisions due March 27: Evening presentation preps (group A)</p>
3/28	<p>Workshop: Presenting primaries</p>
4/2	<p><u>The Civil War: Resurrections</u> Read: Thomas Desjardin, "America's Flawed Valhalla," <i>Military History</i> 21, no. 3 (August 2004). [Academic Search Premier]; Phillip Beidler, "Ted Turner et al. at Gettysburg; or, Re-Enactors in the Attic," <i>Virginia Quarterly Review</i> 75, no. 3 (Summer99) <pdf>. Film screening: "Gettysburg" April 3: Evening presentation preps (group B)</p>
4/4	<p>Research presentations</p>

4/9	<p><u>The Civil War: Margins</u> Read: Stuart W. Sanders, "The Baxter Springs Massacre," <i>America's Civil War</i> 18, no. 4 (September 2005) <pdf>; Stuart W. Sanders, "Quantrill's Last Ride," <i>America's Civil War</i> 12, no. 1 (March 1999) <Academic Search Premier>; Larry Wood, "They Rode with Quantrill," <i>America's Civil War</i> 9, no. 5 (November 1996) <Academic Search Premier>; Donald Gilmore, "Revenge in Kansas, 1863," <i>History Today</i> 43, no. 3 (March 1993) <pdf>. Film screening: "Ride with the Devil"</p>
4/11	<p>Research presentations Topic statement due</p>
4/16	<p><u>The Civil War: The North</u> Read: Timothy J. Gilfoyle, "Scorsese's Gangs of New York: Why Myth Matters," <i>Journal of Urban History</i> 29, no. 5 (July 2003), 620-27 <pdf>. Film screening: "Gangs of New York"</p>
4/18	<p>The writing model Bibliography form</p>
4/23	<p><u>The Civil War: Postrevisionism</u> Read: Kevin Grauke, "Vietnam, Survivalism, and the Civil War: The use of History in Michael Shaara's <i>The Killer Angels</i> and Charles Frazier's <i>Cold Mountain</i>," <i>War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities</i> 14, no. ½ (2002) ,pdf>; Ed Piacentino, "Searching for Home: Cross-Racial Bonding in Charles Frazier's <i>Cold Mountain</i>," <i>Mississippi Quarterly</i> 55, no. 1 (Winter 2001-2002) <pdf>. Film screening: "Cold Mountain"</p>
4/25	<p>Workshop: Citation Annotated bibliographies due</p>
4/30	<p><u>Reconstruction: Unreconstructed</u> Read: Chadwick, <i>Reel Civil War</i>, ch. 12. Film screening: "The Undefeated" Road map due</p>
5/2	<p>Workshop: Evidence First draft due</p>
5/7	<p><u>Reconstruction: Reconstructed?</u> Read: Robert J. Rabel, "Impersonation and Identity: Sommersby, The Return of Martin Guerre, and the Odyssey," <i>International Journal of the Classical Tradition</i> 9, no. 3 (Winter 2003), 391-406 <pdf>. Film screening: "Sommersby"</p>
5/9	<p>Group meetings Peer and self evaluations due</p>
	<p>Final draft due, noon.</p>