

HIST 399: SPECIAL STUDIES (1 credit)

SPRING 2014

Radicalism in Film

Offered in conjunction with HIST 351: American Radicalism

Instructor:	Adam Turner	Class location:	Peterson 103
Email:	act@uoregon.edu	Class meeting:	Alt. Mon, 4:00–4:50 p.m.
Office:	McKenzie 340M	Office hours:	MW 1:30-3:00 & by appt.

Course Website: <http://blogs.uoregon.edu/hist399radicalism/>

Introduction

This optional, 1-credit course pairs with HIST 351, American Radicalism. There are many interesting movies that overlap with the topics we explore in HIST 351, from labor conflict to civil rights to environmentalism. In this class we will view, comment on, and discuss four such films in the context of American Radicalism.

Historically focused films present interpretations of the past. In HIST 399: Radicalism in Film we will analyze these interpretations. We will compare the content and approaches of each film with the relevant material in HIST 351. Film content, like written sources, can be critically analyzed for its perspectives, interpretive choices, biases, and reliability. We will examine and discuss the films' relative successes and failures in their portrayals of the past, and consider how the present shapes our views of the past. We will apply the same skills historians use to examine traditional sources like documents and books – techniques like sourcing, close reading, and corroboration – to non-traditional sources like movies.

Guidelines

Movies

In order to critically study movies, we have to watch them. We will watch four movies in this course, one each for the four major topic areas of American Radicalism.

The movies will be available to stream on a university server. If needed, they will also be screened on Mondays at 4:00 PM in Peterson 103. We will watch the films in weeks 3, 5, 7, and 9, and meet to discuss them in weeks 4, 6, 8, and 10. The films are: *Matewan*, *Bound for Glory*, *Malcolm X*, and *The East*. **See the Calendar for details.**

Be forewarned that several movies on the syllabus might contain content that may offend some sensibilities, including violence, explicit language, and/or sexual references. If you anticipate that such material may prevent you from completing the required work for the course, please see me.

Expectations

The work that you agree to by enrolling in this 1-credit HIST 399 course has three parts: (1) in-class participation; (2) virtual participation; (3) film response blogging.

1) In-Class Participation: Active participation in the 5 discussion classes is essential. To get the most out of the class, you must have watched the week's assigned film with a critical eye. Your in-class participation grade will be based on you actively joining in the discussion with questions, comments, thoughts, and critiques related to the film and course material. Attendance is mandatory (excepting emergencies or religious holidays). **The discussion classes will take place Mondays at 4:00-4:50 PM in Peterson 103, in weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10.** Because we meet only 5 times during the term, one absence will lower your in-class participation grade by at least one letter grade, and three or more absences will result in a zero for your in-class participation grade.

2) Virtual Participation: A portion of your participation will take place virtually. This participation will take place on Twitter. Your task will be to Tweet reactions while watching the movies, using the hashtag #hist399, to contribute to a “backchannel.” The goal is to actively engage with the film (to watch it critically, rather than passively) and to lay some groundwork for the later in-class discussion. I will assess these Tweets qualitatively, not quantitatively. You only need to Tweet once or twice during each film (though I hope you’ll find it helpful and will do more), but should aim for “think” rather than “thin” Tweets.

I borrow media studies Professor David Silver’s distinction between [thick and thin Tweets](#). Thick Tweets move the conversation forward by providing something new: a piece of information, a critique, or an unanswered question, for example.

(3) Film Response Blogging: During the term, you will choose 3 out of the 4 films and post a film response on the course blog (about 200-300 words). **Posts are due by the end of the day on the Saturday before a discussion.** Late posts will be penalized one-third of a letter grade per day late. Your response should analyze the portrayal of the past in the film in light of the themes and topics of the American Radicalism course. Some things you might focus on include:

- Exploring the perspective (including biases or objectives) of the filmmakers;
- Analyzing the historical accuracy of the portrayal (in a detailed and a broad sense);
- And/or examining the relative success and reliability of the film as a source of historical information.

You do not need to do any outside research for these posts. They should be your own thoughtful reflection based on your analysis of the film and what you have learned in the History 351, American Radicalism, course.

All blog posts will be evaluated according to the following 0-4 scale:

RATING	CHARACTERISTICS
4	Exceptional. The blog entry is focused and coherently integrates examples with explanations or analysis. The entry demonstrates awareness of its own limitations or implications, and it considers multiple perspectives when appropriate. The entry reflects in-depth engagement with the topic.
3	Satisfactory. The blog entry is reasonably focused, and explanations or analysis are mostly based on examples or other evidence. Fewer connections are made between ideas, and though new insights are offered, they are not fully developed. The entry reflects moderate engagement with the topic.
2	Underdeveloped. The blog entry is mostly description or summary, without consideration of alternative perspectives, and few connections are made between ideas. The entry reflects passing engagement with the topic.
1	Limited. The blog entry is unfocused, or simply rehashes previous comments, and displays no evidence of student engagement with the topic.
0	No Credit. The blog entry is missing or consists of one or two disconnected sentences.

Rubric borrowed from: [Mark Sample, HNR353](#).

Bonus participation points are available for posting comments (they can be critical, but avoid being hurtful or insensitive) on fellow students' blog entries.

Assessment

Your final grade is will be calculated as follows:

- In-Class Participation: 30%
- Virtual Participation: 20%
- Film Response Blogging: 50%

Classroom Courtesy

Laptops and smart phones may be used in class but only for classroom activities such as note-taking. Messaging unrelated to class is unacceptable (and will in any event lead to you not participating fully in class).

Academic Integrity

The work you submit must be your own. You may not turn in another student's work or copy work published anywhere else. If you wish to quote or paraphrase someone else's work, you must include a citation or hyperlink. If you have questions about whether something constitutes plagiarism, contact me before you turn in your assignment, not after.

Accommodations

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.