

HIST 3100.431: Early Modern Europe on Film

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Instructor: Professor Jakob Burnham
Teaching Assistant: Michael Singler

Office Hours: By Appointment
Course Meeting Location: Online

Course Description:

This class introduces students to the study of early modern European history (1450-1800) through the visual media of film and TV. While we will survey the general history of this tumultuous period—including the Renaissance, Religious Reformation and Violence, Imperialism, and Revolutions—we will consider the role of film as a medium for the representation of major social, political, and cultural events. In addition to watching films, we will read various texts on historical film studies as well as topically relevant primary and secondary sources to critically analyze these media's (re)imaginings of the past and their historical and popular contexts. We will look at the relationship between the actual events of early modern European history—as related by eyewitnesses and analyzed by historians—and their memory constructed through film and television.

This course prepares you to engage with any media content--whether historical or not--that you will come into contact with through your everyday life by giving you the opportunity to practice the tools and skills related to critical inquiry, oral and written communication, and analytical reasoning.

Course Objectives:

1. Familiarize students with the history of early modern Europe through textual primary sources and visual representations.
2. Introduce students to the main principles, methods, and approaches to the study of film as a visual medium, a cultural institution, and a form of expression.
3. Provide students with fundamental critical and research skills in the fields of cultural and historical analysis as well as film and cinema studies.
4. Develop a precise analytic vocabulary that will guide students' "close readings" of historical films.

Course Structure:

This course takes place 100% online. Students will complete contextual and primary source readings before watching each module's film (or sometimes films). Though the students may set their own pace,

there will be “check-points” to ensure consistent and active course engagement. You **MUST** complete the assignments for Module 1 before you move to Module 2, and so on and so forth.

Please note: As with any course at the university, you are expected to put in the adequate time and effort to succeed. The 5-week summer courses are *accelerated* not *abridged*--they move quickly because they must cover the same ground that you'd cover in a 15-week semester. Student should be prepared to spend **~12 hours per week** on course content: about 1/2 of which is watching the films, and the other 1/2 is completing the readings and writing assignments or activities for the module. Each week as ~3 modules, and I **strongly** recommend you do NOT do all of the weekly modules in one day.

Course Communication:

Office Hours: I welcome everyone to my office hours. You can come to talk about a specific question related to the course or somethings else as well. I am a resource for your success and office hours are one way to access me as much as you want. You can email me for an appointment, and we can meet to discuss whatever you might need.

Email via Canvas: For this course, you can contact me using the Canvas messaging system. I try to answer emails quickly during my working hours (M-Th, 7am – 4pm; Friday 7-11am). I **SOMETIMES** answer emails at outside of these hours, but with generally longer delays.

Please do not send an email in the middle of the night (or 15 minutes before something is due) and expect an immediate answer. Many email questions or problems you have can be resolved by reading the syllabus or looking at Canvas, so please double check those places before you reach out—you might save yourself sometime!

Course/Learning Environment and Inclusion:

Every student in this class should have the right to learn and engage within an environment of respect and courtesy from others. We will discuss our classroom's habits of engagement and I also encourage you to review UNT's student code of conduct so that we can all start with the same baseline civility understanding (Code of Student Conduct). UNT strives to offer you a high-quality education and a supportive environment, so you learn and grow. As a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can be successful at UNT, go to unt.edu/success and explore unt.edu/wellness. To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to scrappysays.unt.edu.

A Note on Texas Senate Bill 17:

This recent law that outlawed diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, *does not* in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations regarding academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB17. You should not feel the need to censor your speech pertaining to topics pertaining to race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion within our classroom discussion.

Course Accommodations:

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](#) website. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Academic Integrity:

The University of North Texas promotes the integrity of learning and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the University. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the University's actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence.

Eagle Alert:

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class. Therefore, the course calendar is subject to change, according to [Campus Closures Policy](#).

Course Material:

There are no required books for this course. All other material will be available on Canvas or supplied in hard-copy by the instructor

Course Requirements:

- ***Orientation Activities (10%)***: Students will be expected to complete so short assignments as they pertain to some of the week's films/themes. These assignments will be completed via Canvas at the beginning of the semester.
- ***Reflection Posts (30%)***: Students will be expected to post reflections (via a discussion board) of 500-words for some week's themes/films. Prompts will be provided as jumping-off points for students as they formulate their reflections. These posts should draw from both the textual information and the films. (Due on Sundays at 12pm/Noon)
 - Additionally, students are required to engage the reflections of other fellow students' posts. (Due on Sundays at 11:59pm)

- **Paired-Source Evaluation (15%):** Around the middle of the course, students will write a short paper (4 pages) contextualizing one of our course films in the context of a primary source on its theme. This work will be mainly based on readings for the course.
- **Scene Critique Video (20%):** During Week 12, students will select a single 5-7-minute scene from one of the films from Unit 3 (or another relevant film of your choice – just be sure to run it by me). Then, using a software program of your choice, create a voiceover critique of that scene. Their critique should include commentary on two aspects: a) a historical critique of the arguments and character portrayals in the scene and b) a film studies critique of the technical and artistic aspects of the scene.
- **Comparative Analysis (Final) (25%):** At the end of the semester students will watch *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988) and *Cruel Intentions* (1999) and write a comparative analysis of 6 pages.

Grading Scale:

A: 100-89.5%
B: 89.4-79.5%

C: 79.4%-69.5%
D: 69.4%-59.5%

F: \leq 59.4

I will round your final grade, not assignment grades, but only on the final decimal place. So, for example, an 89.45 would round to 89.5, an A; however, an 89.44 would round to an 88.4, a B. There must be a line otherwise everyone is “just .01 away.”

Late Work Policy:

All work submitted by 11:59pm three days after the due date (i.e. the following Wednesday) will be accepted and graded, with a deduction of 2 points per day (a max of 6, a little until 10%), Any assignment submitted after that time (i.e. 12:00am on Thursday) will receive a deduction of 12.5 (meaning you can make no more than a 50%). I very much encourage you to submit something for every assignment—even a “50” is significantly better for your final score than a “0”.

Anything and everything turned in by **Friday, 19 June 2026** at 5:00pm will be graded. Because of the short turn around between the last day of class and deadline for the submission of final grades, there can be *almost* NO exceptions for this rule.

All "major" assignments (i.e. the non-reflection posts) must be completed in order to pass the class.

Course Schedule

NOTE: Each module must be completed in its entirety in order to access next module (i.e. you must complete the course in order as described here)

Week 1: 18 - 24 May

Module 1: Introduction

- Syllabus
- Canvas Introduction Modules

- Orientation Assignments

Module 2: History and Film

- *American Historical Review* Forum on History and Film

Module 3: The Rotten Renaissance

- Textbook/Secondary Source Reading
- Primary Source Readings: Petrarch's "On Posterity", Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* "Michelangelo"
- Film: *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965)

Module 4: Reforming a Religion

- Textbook/Secondary Source Reading
- Primary Source Readings: Selections of Thomas More's Writings
- Film: *A Man for All Seasons* (1966)

Week 2: 25 – 31 May

Module 5: The Making of a Ruler

- Textbook/Secondary Source Reading
- Primary Source Readings: Selections from Calendar of State Papers and Elizabeth I's correspondence.
- Films: *Elizabeth* (1998) and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007)

Module 6: The Myth of the New World

- Textbook/Secondary Source Reading
- Primary Source Readings: Cortes' letters, selections from Diaz's *Destruction of the Indies*, and Sources on Jamestown and Pocahontas.
- Films: *Pocahontas* (1993) and *The Road to Eldorado* (1998)

Module 7: Religion and the East Indies:

- Textbook/Secondary Source Reading
- Primary Source Readings: Selections from Jesuit *Correspondence*
- Film: *Silence* (2016)

Week 3: 1 – 7 June

Module 8: Complete Paired-Source Evaluation Assignment

Module 9: Witch-hunts and "Witch-hunts"

- Textbook/Secondary Source Reading: On Canvas
- Primary Source Readings: Documents from the English Revolution and Sources on Witchcraft
- Films: *Witchfinder General* (1968)

Module 10: The Absolutist Monarch

- Textbook/Secondary Source Reading:
- Primary Source Readings: Jean Bossuet's *The Divine Rights of Kings*, and other selections
- Films: *The Man in the Iron Mask* (1998)

Week 4: 8 – 14 June

Module 11 : The Seven Years' War:

- Textbook/Secondary Source Reading: Roberts, *History of Europe*
- Primary Source Readings: *The Treaty of Paris* (1763) and Documents on the Seven Years' War
- Films: *The Last of the Mohicans* (1997)

Module 12: Complete Video Critique Assignment

Module 13: The Transatlantic Slave Trade

- Textbook/Secondary Source Reading:
- Films: *Roots* (1977), ep 1 and 2
- Primary Source Readings: Narratives of Enslaved Lives and Selections on Enlightenment Thought

Week 5: 15 - 21 June*

NOTE: These modules are due FRIDAY, 19 June 2026!

Module 15: The French Revolution

- Textbook/Secondary Source Reading
- Primary Source Readings: Writings by and about Marie Antoinette, Speeches from the National Convention, Memoirs of Revolutionary Paris
- Film: *Marie Antoinette* (2006)

Module 16: Complete Comparative Film Assignment