

European History Movie Critique

100pts (Final Exam for AP)

Historians like to discuss and discredit films for their inaccuracies, but the average person learns a great deal about the past from these cinematic representations. I bet each of us can think of at least one scene from a movie that really affected our understanding of an historical event or time. Movies can excite students about history and teach about the past in a way that draws viewers into the experience. Many great history instructors are also great storytellers, and film is simply another way of telling the world's story. Directors may take creative license with the facts and characters, but they often are careful to represent dress, life-style, and culture in a way that texts and even great storytellers have trouble doing. After students finish the course they may never actively try to learn history again, but they are likely to watch movies that represent the past. This assignment will encourage you to be critical thinkers as you analyze a film for class and later films you enjoy.

First, each student will select a movie from a list provided by the instructor to watch. We will draw numbers to see who will select first. Once a movie is selected you may not choose it. The list provides a variety of new and old movies and covers a variety of subjects. While watching the movie, students are to consider these questions:

1. Were there inaccuracies in the movie compared to the material in our course, which covers that time period or person?
2. What did you learn from the movie that you did not already know?
3. Were there any obvious values or opinions being presented by the director in the way they depicted the main theme of the film or the way they portrayed the heroes and villains of the story?
4. How did the depiction of this event or person compare to reading about the same topic in a textbook?
5. Did you have an emotional reaction to the film, why or why not? How do your own history and experiences affect how you perceive the film?
6. Research both a positive and negative review of your film citing it in your paper and give your analysis as to why the reviewer had that interpretation. Do you agree or disagree with the critic's review? Why?
7. Did the film have an impact at the time of release on society's perspective of the event and people involved? Did the film change your perspective about the people or event? (You will have to do some research on this question.)

After watching the film, students write a concise review of the movie that uses the questions above and summarizes the plot. Your full paper needs to be typed and turned in on the day of the final exam. You will also do a short 3-5 minute presentation for the class this day on any two of the questions listed above.

Movie List

Girl with the Pearl Earring (2003)

The White Queen (2013)

Luther (2003)

Elizabeth (1998)

Elizabeth: The Golden Age (2007)

Master and Commander (2003)

Vatel (2000)

Catherine the Great (1996)

To Kill a King (2003)

The Young Victoria (2009)

Gandhi (1982)

Amazing Grace (2006)

The New World (2005)

Valkyrie (2008)

Bridge of Spies (2015)

Schindler's List (1993)

Enemy at the Gates (2001)

The Queen (2006)

Dunkirk (2017)

The Iron Lady (2011)

The Madness of King George (1994)

Rob Roy (1995)

Marie Antoinette (2006)

A Dangerous Method (2011)

Mary Queen of Scots (2018)

The King's Speech (2010)

The Favourite (2018)

The Mission (1986)

The Last of the Mohicans (1992)

The Pianist (2002)

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas (2008)

Gallipoli (1981)

1492: Conquest of Paradise (1992)

The Merchant of Venice (2004)

Joyeux Noel (2005)

Suffragette (2015)

Darkest Hour (2017)

Chariots of Fire (1981)

Amadeus (1984)

Nicholas and Alexandra (1971)

Doctor Zhivago (1965)

A Passage to India (1984)

Les Misérables (1998)

