

U.S. History through Film

Course Syllabus

For many people watching a Hollywood film on America is their only way of getting to know their history, no matter how accurate the film. The films we will be watching for this class are Hollywood films rather than documentaries so they are reenactments of historical events not a documentary record of events.

This elective course is not simply a movie-watching class. The goal of this course is ***to better understand American History through watching movies***. This class work will be divided into three different areas.

- The first area will be the introduction. At this point we will introduce the time period and what the film is about.
- The second area will be the actual watching of the movie with discussion, as necessary.
- The third and final area will be the post work which may include discussion/reflection questions, work sheets, film reviews, tests and/or essays.

Being gone for the actual watching of the film will cause problems with comprehension of the overall message, so arrangements will have to be made for viewing the missed scenes.

Permission Slip

When choosing films for class, I tried my best to choose films that were of an appropriate nature, however, as we will learn... history is not always “appropriate”. ***For that reason, a parent/guardian permission slip must be signed before you can participate in class.***

Supplies:

- **Paper/pencil**
- **Folder**
- **iPad – charged and brought to class every day**

Course Objectives:

To be able to answer the following questions:

1. Is film a legitimate historical source?
2. Is film evidence ever better than traditional historical sources?
3. Can Hollywood films be used to teach history?

Class Rules

- **NO SLEEPING.** Even if you do not find the film interesting – this is the #1 rule. You can not learn from a film if you are asleep. Failure to follow this rule will result in dismissal from the class.
- **NO CELL PHONES.** This is school policy, but also creates a distraction for you and your classmates.
- **PAY ATTENTION** to the film. No working on other assignments, playing on iPad, etc.
- **Respect every one and every thing in the classroom.** This course will have us explore topics that are generally sensitive in nature. It is imperative that you act with maturity and appropriateness. If you are unable to act in a respectful manner, you will be dismissed from the class.

Grading Policy:

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	Below 60

Attendance

Tardiness: Students are expected to arrive on time and prepared for class. A student who has been tardy to class for a third time in a grading period will receive a lunch detention and will be reported to the office. The fourth tardy receives a Wednesday detention. A fifth tardy in a grading period receives a referral to the office for a Saturday School, In-School Suspension, or Suspension.

Absences: Make up work due to an excused absence must be made up promptly. Students will be given the same amount of days they are absent to complete make-up work. **It is the responsibility of the student to arrange for and to complete the necessary work.** Work missed through truancy or unexcused absence will be accepted for a maximum 50% credit.

Cheating

- A. Cheating includes: plagiarism, copying someone else's work or allowing someone to copy your work. *Cheating includes sending photos of your work to someone else via cell phone, iPad or other technology*
1. First offense receives a zero on the assignment, quiz or test and a Wednesday or Saturday Detention.
 2. Second offense receives a zero, out-of-school suspension and failure of course for the 9 weeks grading period.

Denial of Credit Policy

Any student who accumulates more than four (4) absences per class, per nine weeks of non-professional absence - excused or unexcused will receive a zero (0) for that class period, for that day and every day in excess of the four (4) days. Each new nine weeks starts a new count.

The following is a list of films we will plan to watch this semester. Time constraints may require alterations to be made.

- **The Patriot (2000)**

Rated: R for violence

Set during the American Revolution, Benjamin Martin, a French & Indian War hero, finds himself living peacefully on his plantation. When news of revolutionary action arrives, Benjamin wants nothing to do with it, but his two oldest sons can't wait to enlist. Benjamin quickly finds himself torn between protecting his family, and seeking revenge along with being a part of the birth of a new, young, and ambitious nation.

- **Dances with Wolves (1990)**

Rated: PG-13, 2 hours 21 minutes

Story of American soldier who is posted to the frontier, alone. While there, he makes contact with the Sioux tribe and they eventually trust him as one of their own.

- **12 Years a Slave - (2013)**

Rated: R for violence/cruelty – language with strong use of derogatory racial terms.

Based on the true story and novel of Solomon Northrup who was a free man, kidnapped and sold in to slavery.

- **Glory – (1989)**

Rated: R for war violence

Formed during the American Civil War, the 54th Massachusetts was the first African-American unit in the US Army. We see the formation of the regiment, its first volunteers, their training, disputes, their first operations in South Carolina and, finally, their moment of glory - the attack on Fort Wagner.

- **1917 (2019)**

Rated: R for violence, some disturbing images, and language

April 6, 1917: As an infantry battalion assembles to wage war deep in enemy territory, two soldiers are assigned to race against time and deliver a message that will stop 1,600 men from walking straight into a deadly trap.

- **Hacksaw Ridge (2016)**

Rated: R, 2 hours 19 minutes

The true story of Pfc. Desmond T. Doss (Andrew Garfield), who won the Congressional Medal of Honor despite refusing to bear arms during WWII on religious grounds.

- **Bridge of Spies (2015)**

Rated: PG-13, 2 hours 22 minutes

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union captures U.S. pilot Francis Gary Powers after shooting down his U-2 spy plane. New York lawyer James Donovan is recruited by the CIA to negotiate his release through a prisoner exchange.

- **Mississippi Burning (1988)**

Rated: R for violence, profanity and racial tension

In 1964, three civil rights workers go missing in Mississippi while organizing a voter registry for African Americans. The FBI sends two agents, Alan Ward and Rupert Anderson to investigate who are met with hostility by the town's residents, local police and Ku Klux Klan.

- **Platoon (1986)**

Rated: R for adult situations/language/violence

A young soldier in Vietnam faces a moral crisis when confronted with the horrors of war and the duality of man.

- **Ghosts of Mississippi (2002)**

Rated: PG-13 131 minutes

Story of the Murder of Medgar Evers and 30 years of failed justice

- **Zero Dark Thirty (2012)**

Rated: R for strong violence including brutal disturbing images, and for language

A chronicle of the decade-long hunt for al-Qaeda terrorist leader [Osama bin Laden](#) after the September 2001 attacks, and his death at the hands of the Navy S.E.A.L.s Team 6 in May 2011.

Dear parent(s) / guardian(s),

Your child has signed up to take History Through Film, an elective course I have designed to explore history outside of the textbook. I believe using film in history class can be an excellent tool to bring our learning to a new level, while keeping the students interested and engaged. When choosing films for class, I tried my best to choose films that were of an appropriate nature; however, historical events are often marred with violence and tragedy. We are currently planning to watch the following films that have an R rating.

- **The Patriot – Rated R for violence**
- **12 Years a Slave – Rated R for Violence/Cruelty** – I will skip all scenes in this movie that show brief nudity of slaves. There are, however, many uses of derogatory racial terms.
- **Glory – Rated R for violent scenes of war**
- **1917 – Rated R for violence, some disturbing images and language**
- **Hacksaw Ridge – Rated R for intense prolonged realistically graphic sequences of war violence**
- **Mississippi Burning – Rated R for violence, profanity and racial tension**
- **Platoon – Rated R for adult situations/language/violence** aside from the violence of war, language is the biggest issue with this movie.
- **Zero Dark Thirty – R for strong violence including brutal disturbing images, and for language.** Scenes of torture, including waterboarding, are shown in the film, as well as adult language.

If you would like more detail on any /all the films, I find the following website to be very helpful for parents: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org>. There you can search for the movies to find a more detailed description and other parent and student reviews. I am also happy to discuss the films with you at any time.

Since this elective course is centered on films, your child viewing the movies is a vital aspect of this class. However, if you prefer your child not watch a certain film, alternative arrangements can be made. Please note below if there is a movie you do not wish them to see. If the viewings are fine, please sign and date the bottom of this sheet. ***Your student will not be able to take this course without this signed permission form.***

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at alange@northfork.k12.oh.us.

Thank You,

Ashley Lange

I give my child permission to watch the films listed in Mrs. Lange's syllabus for *History through Film*.

PARENT SIGNATURE: _____

STUDENT NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Please list below if there is a particular movie you **DO NOT** want your child watching: