**ENGL 5330: Film and Political Ideology**

**Instructor:** Dr. P. Ingram **Semester:** Summer II 2013

**Office** 203c Carlisle **Class Time:** T/R 1:00-5:00

**Office Hours:** T/R 10:00-12:00

**Office Phone:** 2-0466 C**lassroom:** PH 302

**Email:** pingram@uta.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will examine the variety of ways that Hollywood shapes the politics of war and peace. We will investigate the influence that political agencies like the Pentagon and the CIA exert on films dealing with war and politics and how Hollywood responds to political pressure for financial gain. We will also examine the ways that Hollywood rewrites history, often depicting a more hawkish or more humane military in order to promote a particularly American form of heroism. Along the way we will examine the response by individual filmmakers who refuse the Pentagon purse and strike out on their own.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

**By the end of the course you will have:**

* become an acute reader of film and developed an understanding of the ways film engages with various ideologies to represent people and things.
* developed a capacity for critical thinking. You will be equipped with the tools to perform critical analyses of film, as well as social, cultural, and historical texts.
* appreciated the role that film plays in the construction of US cultural norms, the maintenance of cultural hegemony, and the production and contestation of ideologies of the center.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

The textbooks are available at the bookstore. You need to purchase the exact edition specified below. I expect you to bring the appropriate text to each class. If you cannot find the text at one of the local bookstores you should buy it from an online vendor, such as Amazon or Barnes and Noble. **Everybody MUST have their books by week 2 of class. Failure to bring the appropriate text to class may result in an absence.**

**Textbooks:**

Boggs, Carl and Tom Pollard. *The Hollywood War Machine: US Militarism and Popular*

*Culture*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007.

Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*. Seventh Edition. Pearson

Longman, 2009.

Jenkins, Tricia. *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television.* The

University of Texas Press, 2012.

**Blackboard Readings**

Bernardi, “Integrating Race into the Narrator System” (pdf)

*Essential Cinema,* 2-1 (pdf)

**Films (in order they are to be viewed)**

These are to be watched outside of class. All films are available through Netflix or Blockbuster or another movie rental company of your choice.

**Vietnam**

*Platoon* (Stone 1986)

**Civil War**

*Glory* (Zwick 1989)

**WWII**

*Saving Private Ryan* (Spielberg 1998)

*Flags of Our Fathers* (Eastwood 2006)

**Iraq Wars**

*Hurt Locker* (Bigelow 2008)

**CIA**

*Sum of all Fears* (Robinson 2002)

*Syriana* (Gaghan 2005)

*Zero Dark Thirty* (Bigelow 2012)

**Your Grade:** This course requires active and consistent participation from all members of the class. The breakdown of your final grade is as follows.

* Screening Responses (7 of these) **35%**

## Presentation& paper **35%**

* Final Exam **30%**

**SCREENING RESPONSE**

The screening response is like a reader response paper, but it examines elements that are specific to film. You should follow the guidelines in chapters 1, 2 & 3 of *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* (Corrigan).

Primarily you are undertaking a preliminary analysis of the film, which can include an examination of the **narrative elements** (story, characters, point of view, etc), the **elements of composition** (shot, costumes, editing, etc.), and the **ideological elements** (the politics or vision of the movie; how it represents its characters, etc. see Corrigan p. 92). You will not be able to cover all of these elements in each response, so pick the elements that are most interesting to you. Be sure to vary your focus on subsequent responses. In other words don’t write about the same topic (narrative or composition, etc.) every time.

* This is a formal piece of writing. It is **NOT a journal or diary entry.** **Do not** just explain why you do or don’t like the film.
* You are required to complete one of these for every film watched outside of class (six in total), except the film you present on (see presentation guidelines).
* **These should be uploaded to BB before class, under the appropriate assignment name**, **be prepared** **in Times New Roman 10 or 12pt. font, single-spaced, and one page.**
* **No** **late papers, except in the case of documented illness, will be accepted.**

**PRESENTATION (One Hour)**

Each of you will be assigned one film from our list and you will have one hour to present/teach the film to the class. (Remember everyone in the class has already watched the film and written a screening response on it, so discussion should be lively ☺.)

One of the key components of this course is examining the cultural work that films do. You should examine the kind of social and cultural messages that your chosen film imparts and think about the influence that the film might have had or seeks to have on public discourse or perception about the issue being presented. Is this influence shaped by corporate/political/military interests? Is the film critiquing or affirming dominant views of the war or the CIA? Most critics agree that all texts utilize a specific ideological perspective. Is propaganda just a form of ideology?

In the case of the type of films we are looking at, it’s important to contextualize the film in terms of its cultural moment. How have the events of 9/11 and its aftermath shaped production and reception of films about war and politics? How is the film informed by the period in which it is produced and released? Are the events being depicted referring to current events or is the film attempting a veiled critique of earlier events? For example, films about the Vietnam War produced in the 80s and 90s were far different in emphasis than those produced in the 60s and 70s. In other words, think about the current social and political climate of the time the film is written and produced. Why did we see a rise of films about WWII in the late 90s and early 2000s? What wars or political problems might those filmmakers have been responding to in highlighting the heroism and victory of the US in WWII?

Look at the **list of recurring motifs** that Boggs and Pollard identify on 13-15 as central to films produced by the “Hollywood War Machine.” Does the film you’re examining abide by these conventions or deviate from them? To what ends? Think about how representations of specific groups of people on film affect the way they are treated and viewed by other groups in real life? For example, if US soldiers or spies are represented in the movies as good and righteous and their enemies as immoral and barbaric, might such representations attempt to reinforce a prevailing view of Americans as morally and culturally superior? And how might such a view shape the geopolitical landscape?

**In you presentation you must do all of the following:**

1. Present an analysis of the film, discussing the various ways the film **represents** a specific war, or US policy, or worldview (depending on your film) and the kind of ideological work it seems to be doing. (You will need to do some historical and cultural research into the period.) This is where you should present an argument and take a position in relation to the film, using clips from the film as evidence. It is possible that the film has conflicting messages; it’s fine to explore these too.
2. Discuss how the formal elements of the film (shot, mise-en-scene, montage, music, lighting, costumes, etc) help to drive the narrative and promote a particular viewpoint.
3. **Prepare discussion questions for the class.**
4. Write up your analysis in a formal paper, which will be handed in after your presentation. **DO NOT read your presentation from the paper**. The paper is a formalized version of the material covered in the presentation. You may include a paper version of your power-point presentation as an addendum to your paper, but it should not comprise the whole paper.

**It is VITAL that you have your film clips queued and ready to go. Make a list of the chapter and scenes of your clips so that you can refer to them easily. I will not be impressed if you spend half of your presentation looking for a scene.**

**FINAL EXAM**

The work for the course will culminate in a final exam on Monday **7/08**. The first part of the exam will cover technical terms and concepts and the second part will consist of a formal analysis of a film shown during the exam period.

**General Policies**

**Attendance:**

I will take roll every day. As this is an intensive five- week course, only absences due to documented medical illness or unforeseen emergencies will be permitted. (A doctor’s appointment or elective surgery does not count.) **If you are sick for the day of your presentation you will not be able to reschedule your presentation. You may hand in the paper, but you will receive only half credit.**

**Tardiness:**

You must arrive to class on time. Tardiness to class may result in your being counted as absent.

**Classroom/email etiquette:**

I expect each member of the class to behave respectfully towards each other and towards me. Some of you may find the material we will discuss in class to be controversial, but not everyone will share your opinion. Please be mindful of this fact during discussions and in email correspondence.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another person’s work and passing it off as your own. *It includes direct lifting of another’s words or ideas as well as PARAPHRASING another’s words or ideas.* Please complete the online tutorial offered by the library: **<<library.uta.edu/tutorials/Plagiarism.>>** This tutorial will teach you when you need to cite a source and how to do it correctly. Plagiarism is a serious offense and carries serious consequences, including failure and/or expulsion from the University. Faculty members are required to report incidences of plagiarism and cheating to Student Judicial Affairs.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

Students who need accommodations are asked to arrange a meeting during office hours the first weekof classes, or earlier if accommodations are needed immediately. Please bring a copy of all relevant paperwork to the meeting. If you do not have a notification for accommodations but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office of Students with Disabilities, 102 University Hall, 2-3364.

**Student Support Services Available:** The University of Texas at Arlington has established a variety of programs to help students meet the challenges of college life. Support to students includes advising, counseling, mentoring, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and writing assistance. For a complete list of academic support services, visit the Academic Assistance resource page of the Office of Student Success Programs, [www.uta.edu/uac/studentsuccess/academic-assistance](http://www.uta.edu/uac/studentsuccess/academic-assistance). To help students address personal, academic and career concerns, individual counseling is also available. For more information, students are encouraged to contact Counseling Services [www.counseling.uta.edu](http://www.counseling.uta.edu/) at (817) 272-3671 or visit a counselor in 216 Davis Hall.

**Electronic Communication Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. ***Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.*** Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/>. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.

**Tentative Assignment Schedule (subject to change)**

Readings/viewings are due on the date recorded and should therefore be completed BEFORE the corresponding class day. Though we might devote more than one class period to discussion of a particular text you should COMPLETE the reading by the date noted below. Assignments may change at my discretion.

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| **DATE** | **CLASS DISCUSSION/ READINGS DUE** |
| Week 1**T 7/9** | **VIETNAM WAR****Read:** Boggs and Pollard, Introduction, Chapter One, Chapter Two*Green Berets* (in-class) |
| **R 7/11** | **Watch**: *Platoon* (Stone 1986) (outside of class) **Read**: Boggs and Pollard, Ch. Three**Read**: *Short Guide* (Corrigan) chapters 1, 2 & 3, pp. 1-81.  |
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| **Week 2****T 7/16** | **CIVIL WAR****Watch:** *Glory* (Zwick 1989) (outside of class). **Write:** **Screening Response** (see above for guidelines). **Read:** Bernardi, “Integrating Race into the Narrator System” (Blackboard pdf)*Birth of a Nation* (Griffiths 1915) clips (in-class) |
| **R 7/18** | **WWII****Watch:***Saving Private Ryan* (Spielberg 1998) (outside of class)**Read:** Boggs and Pollard, ch. 4**Write: Screening Response**  |
| Week 3**T 7/23** | **Watch:** *Flags of Our Fathers* (Eastwood 2006) (outside of class). **Read:** *Essential Cinema* 2-1 (blackboard pdf)**Write: Screening Response**  |
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| **R 7/25** | **IRAQ WARS****Watch:** *Hurt Locker* (Bigelow 2008) (outside of class)**Read:** Boggs and Pollard ch.5**Write: Screening Response** |
| Week 4**T 7/30** | **CIA****Read:** Jenkins, chs. 1, 2 and 4.**Watch:** *Sum of All Fears* (Robinson 2002)(outside of class)**Write: Screening Response** |
| **R 8/01** |  **Read:** Jenkins, chs. 5&6**Watch**: *Syriana* (Gaghan 2005) (Watch outside of class)**Write: Screening Response** |
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| **Week 5****T 8/06** | **Read:** Boggs and Pollard, ch. 6**Watch:** *Zero Dark Thirty* (Bigelow 2012) (outside of class).**Write: Screening Response**Guest Speaker: Dr. Tricia Jenkins, author of *The CIA in Hollywood* |
| **R 8/08** | Final Exam |
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