

Ancient Worlds on Film

Humanities Goals:

- historically informed critical thinking
- cultivated powers of thought and expression
- effective analysis of information
- self-knowledge in line with past understandings

Course Goals:

- Evaluate films in terms of historical accuracy, compared to primary historical sources
- Appreciate and analyze film as a creative medium, with attention to aspects of production, directors' and screenwriters' artistic goals, use of set design, music, script, genre conventions, etc.
- Interpret films and historical sources for their relevance to their time of production, and to today

Films:

- Zack Snyder's *300* (2006)
- Oliver Stone's *Alexander: Director's Cut* (2004)
- Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* (1960)
- Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000)
- Alejandro Amenábar's *Agora* (2009)

Grades:

- Preparation and Participation (10%)
- 3 short (5-10 minute) quizzes. Two of these are map quizzes. (15%)
- 3 Essays (60%)
- Final Research Project on a Roman film (15%)

Books (required):

James Romm, ed. *Herodotus on the War for Greek Freedom*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003. 978-0-87220-667-0

James Romm, ed. *Alexander the Great: Selections from Arrian, Diodorus, Plutarch, and Quintus Curtius*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005. 978-0-87220-727-1

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*. Gregory Hays, trans. New York: Modern Library, 2002. 978-0812968255.

Preparation, Participation, Attendance:

To do well you will need to do the reading and watch the films carefully, attend class, and take notes, both from the readings and films, and in class. I value your input during discussions. The homework

discussion/reading worksheets are intended to help you take notes on the reading and films, and to participate thoughtfully in discussions. For logistical reasons I cannot collect and grade these every day, but I will do so occasionally. I send around an attendance sheet to keep a record of who is in class, and tally up the number of absences for each person at the end of the semester. I understand that sickness and important commitments such as job interviews, field trips, or athletics can mean you occasionally miss a class. I appreciate it when you let me know in advance. Those who are absent more often will see their preparation and participation grade suffer. Those who contribute thoughtfully and regularly to discussions will see it go up.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities:

Dickinson values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded an equal opportunity to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment– that would impact your educational experience in this class, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to schedule a meeting with Director Marni Jones. She will confidentially discuss your needs, review your documentation, and determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to www.dickinson.edu/ODS, email DisabilityServices@dickinson.edu, call (717) 245-1734, or go to ODS in 106 Dana Hall.

Viewing of films:

The films are on reserve in the library, and will be shown at optional screenings at 7:30 p.m. the evening before they are listed on the syllabus for in-class discussion (venue TBA). If you can't access the film in the library, or come to the showing, you will need to use one of the commercial streaming services.

Schedule

THE PERSIANS AND GREEKS

- M Jan 22 Introduction [goals of the course; final research paper as end goal]
- W Jan 24 Read Jon Solomon, *The Ancient World in the Cinema* (revised ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 37–47, and Derek Elley, *The Epic Film: Myth and History* (London: Routledge, 1984), pp. 67–75. Which films do these critics admire, and why? [the genre]
- F Jan 26 Read Herodotus, *Histories* pp. 1–27. Fill out discussion worksheet on Moodle. [Herodotus and the Greco-Persian wars]
- M Jan 29 Read Herodotus, *Histories* pp. 39–40, and 67–69. **Quiz** on geography of the Persian Empire and Greco-Persian Wars. See maps and study guide on Moodle.
- W Jan 31 Read Herodotus, pp. 75–118 (ed. Romm), fill out discussion worksheet
- F Feb 2 Watch *300*

- M Feb 5 Read Paul Cartledge, *The Spartans* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 67–76, and Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, focusing especially on chapters 8–19, with discussion worksheet
- W Feb 7 Read Herodotus, pp. 119–151 (ed. Romm), with discussion worksheet
- F Feb 9 Read Herodotus, pp. 152–187 (ed. Romm), with discussion worksheet
- M Feb 12 [wrap-up of discussion of 300]
- W Feb 14 **Essay on Zack Snyder's 300 due**
- F Feb 16 [Macedonia and Alexander the Great]
- M Feb 19 Read Romm, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 1–32; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, sections 11–14, with discussion worksheet.
- W Feb 21 Read Romm, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 33–69; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, sections 15–17 and 21–23, with discussion worksheet.
- F Feb 23 Watch Oliver Stone's *Alexander: Director's Cut*
- M Feb 26 Read Romm, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 70–93; Plutarch sections 27–28, 33–34, 36–40, and 42–43, with discussion worksheet.
- W Feb 28 Read Romm, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 94–113; Plutarch sections 45 and 47, with discussion worksheet.
- F March 2 Read Romm, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 114–148; Plutarch, sections 64–67, with discussion worksheet.
- M Mar 5 Read Romm, *Alexander the Great*, pp. 149–173, with discussion worksheet.
- W Mar 7 [wrap-up of discussion about *Alexander*]
- F Mar 9 **Essay on Oliver Stone's Alexander due.**

Spring Break

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

M Mar 19 Read Jon Solomon, *The Ancient World in the Cinema* (revised ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 47–99.

W Mar 21 no assignment

F Mar 23 Read ancient sources on Spartacus (Moodle)

M Mar 26 Watch *Spartacus*. **Quiz** on *Spartacus*.

W Mar 28 no assignment

F Mar 30 Read Monica Cyrino, “Spartacus,” in *Big Screen Rome* pp. 89–120.

M Apr 2 Read Pat Southern, “Emperors and Usurpers,” from *The Roman Empire: From Severus to Constantine* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 18–31, with discussion worksheet.

W Apr 4 Read Cassius Dio on Marcus Aurelius and Commodus (13 pp., on Moodle), and Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Books 1–2 (Hays translation), with discussion worksheet.

F Apr 6 Watch Ridley Scott’s *Gladiator*

M Apr 9 Read Life of Commodus from the *Augustan History* (8 pp., on Moodle), and Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* Books 3–4, with discussion worksheet.

W Apr 11 Read Monica Cyrino, “Gladiator (2000),” *Big Screen Rome* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 207–256.

F Apr 13 **Plan for research paper due.**

M Apr 16 Keith Hopkins, “Murderous Games,” in *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1–30.

W Apr 18 M.J. Carter, “Gladiatorial Combat: The Rules of Engagement,” *Classical Journal* 102.2 (2006/2007): 97-114.

F Apr 20 Read Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Book 5–6.

M Apr 23 **Essay on *Spartacus* or *Gladiator* due.**

W April 25 Read Michael Deakin, “Hypatia and Her Mathematics,” *American Mathematical Monthly* 101.3 (1994), 234–243.

F April 27 Watch *Agora*

M April 30 Read ancient sources on Hypatia (Moodle)

W May 2 Read Alex McAuley, "Hypatia's Hijab: Visual Echoes of 9/11 in Alejandro Almenábar's *Agora*." *Mouseion*, Series III, Vol. 13 (2016): 131–152. Donald Viney, "Remembering and Misremembering Hypatia: The Lessons of *Agora*," *Midwest Quarterly* 54.4 (2013), 352–369.

F May 4 **Quiz** on *Agora*

Final research paper due Friday, May 11, 2018.