

HSUR

Oct. 2005

Research Project: History and Film

You can learn a lot about history by watching movies, but that doesn't mean everything you see in a movie really happened that way. So maybe it's a good idea to learn how to tell what is and what isn't reliable information. This wouldn't be hard if you were already an expert on the history of whatever the movie was about, but what if you aren't?

If you can't *be* the expert, the next best thing is to *ask* an expert. And that's what you're going to do in this assignment. (And asking an expert is the first step on the way to becoming one yourself.) Here's what you are going to do for this project:

1. Pick an historical movie from the list on the back.
2. Obtain from me a copy of a short essay on your movie written by an historian who is an expert on this topic.
3. Read the expert essay and use e-mail to ask Dr. H. any questions you may have about it [chanson@menloschool.org].
4. Find a copy of the movie (VHS or, preferably, DVD) and watch it, keeping in mind what the essay has told you to look for.
5. Prepare a 10-15 minute in-class presentation in which you:
 - a. use a one-page handout to outline what is and what isn't historically accurate in the movie*
[Think of it as answering this question: "If you watched this movie but never read anything about the topic, what would you get right? what would you miss or get wrong?"]
 - b. show a clip with a major example of what is historically *accurate* in the movie
[The expert essay will give you an idea of what counts as "major."]
 - c. show another clip with a major example of what is *not* historically accurate.
6. Come see me for a short meeting to convince me you are ready to give your presentation.
7. Give your presentation.

*Include in your handout the correct Chicago-style bibliographic citations for your expert essay and the film itself. That way someone who wants to read it or see it can look them up. For tips, go to <http://library.menloschool.org/citation.html> and click on the links to "Chicago Style guide" and then "bibliography guide."

Black Robe
Last of the Mohicans
1776
Drums Along the Mohawk
The Alamo
Young Lincoln
Glory
Gone With the Wind
Birth of a Nation
The Molly Maguires
They Died with their Boots On
Fort Apache
Hester Street
Matewan
Bonny and Clyde
The Grapes of Wrath [essay is by Brinkley!]
PT 109
The Longest Day
Patton
Fat Man and Little Boy
Tea and Sympathy
The Long Walk Home
Dr. Strangelove
JFK
Mississippi Burning
Malcolm X
Apollo 13
Apocalypse Now
All the President's Men
Nixon