

Issues in American History
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SCHEDULE

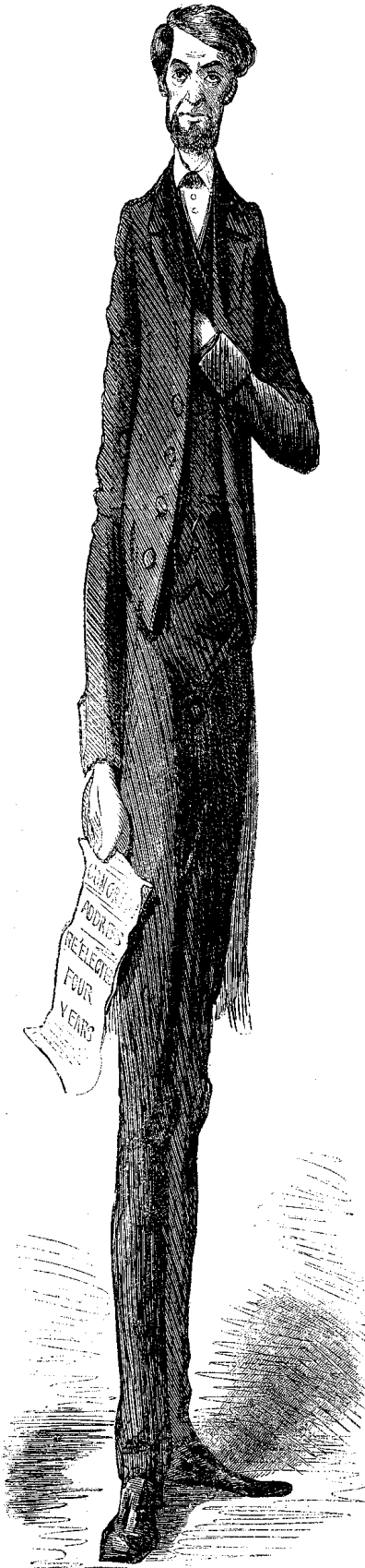
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|--------------------------|---|---|
| Tuesday, January 20 | — | Housekeeping Details and Introduction |
| Thursday, January 22 | — | Lecture: “TypePad Orientation” Discussion: “Top Ten History Makers” |
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| Tuesday, January 27 | — | Lecture: “Evidence: Moving Images” Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chaps. 1–3 Discussion: Movies In-Class Exercise: Reading a Movie Movie: <i>Black Robe & Last of the Mohicans</i> |
| Wednesday, January 28 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #1 DUE: “Movie Response” |
| Thursday, January 29 | — | Reading: “Leonard Crow Dog, Remaking the World...” “Origins of Ottawa Society” “The Indians of New Netherlands...” Discussion: “Creation Stories” |
| Friday January 30 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #2 DUE: “Creation Stories” |
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| Tuesday, February 3 | — | Lecture: “Evidence: Images” Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chaps. 4–6 Discussion: Movies In-class Exercise: Defining Freedom Movie: <i>The Patriot & A Midwife’s Tale</i> |
| Wednesday, February 4 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #3 DUE: “Movie Response” |
| Thursday, February 5 | — | Lecture: “What Happened to Paul Revere” In-Class Exercise: <i>Boston Massacre</i> |
| Friday, February 6 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #4 DUE: “Patriotic Ladies of Edenton” |

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| Tuesday, February 10 | — | Lecture: "A Nation with a Short History" Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chaps. 7–9 <i>Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin</i> Discussion: Movies In-Class Exercise: Ghostly Images Movie: Ken Burns' <i>Lewis & Clark</i> , Pt. 1 |
| Wednesday, February 11 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #5 DUE: "Movie Response" |
| Thursday, February 12 | — | Lecture: "The Election of 1800" In-Class Exercise: Lists of Virtues |
| Friday, February 13 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #6 DUE: "George Catlin's Indians" |
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| Tuesday, February 17 | — | Lecture: "Jacksonian America" Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chap. 10–12 <i>Narrative of Frederick Douglass</i> Discussion: Movie/Book In-Class Exercise: Suffrage & Abolitionists Movie: <i>Gangs of New York</i> |
| Wednesday, February 18 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #7 DUE: "Book/Movie Response" |
| Thursday, February 19 | — | Lecture: "Evidence: Maps" In-Class Exercise: Hygeia |
| Friday, February 20 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #8 DUE: "SimUtopia" |
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| Tuesday, February 24 | — | Lecture: "Up at the Big House, Down in the Quarters" Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chap. 13–16 <i>Celia: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> Discussion: Movie/Celia In-Class Exercise: Family Memories Movie: <i>Beloved</i> |
| Wednesday, February 25 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #9 DUE: "Book/Movie Response" |
| Thursday, February 26 | — | Lecture: "Civil War" In-Class Exercise: The Camera Goes to War |
| Friday, February 27 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #10 DUE: "Civil War Exhibit" |
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| Tuesday, March 2 | — | Lecture: “Evidence: Numbers” Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chaps. 17–18 Discussion: Movie In-Class Exercise: TBA Movie: <i>McCabe and Mrs. Miller</i> |
| Wednesday, March 3 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #11 DUE: “Movie Response” |
| Thursday, March 4 | — | Discussion: Museum Exhibit Field Trip In-Class Exercise: A Look at the US Census |
| Friday, March 5 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #12 DUE: “Museum Exhibit, Pt. 1” |
| Tuesday, March 9 | — | SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS |
| Thursday, March 11 | — | SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS |
| Tuesday, March 16 | — | Lecture: Evidence: Things Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chaps. 19–20 Discussion: Movie In-Class Exercise: Selling History Movie: <i>Age of Innocence</i> |
| Wednesday, March 17 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #13 DUE: “Movie Response” |
| Thursday, March 18 | — | Discussion: Museum Exhibit Field Trip, Pt.2 In-Class Exercise: The Checkered Game of Life |
| Friday, March 19 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #14 DUE: “Museum Exhibit, Pt. 2” |
| Tuesday, March 23 | — | Lecture: “The Intimate Life” Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chaps. 21-22 <i>State v. Rehberg</i> Discussion: Movie In-Class Exercise: KKK as the Hero? Movie: <i>Birth of a Nation</i> |
| Wednesday, March 24 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #15 DUE: “Movie Response” |
| Thursday, March 25 | — | Lecture: “Populism/Progressivism” Discussion: <i>State v. Rehberg</i> |
| Friday, March 26 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #16 DUE: “We, the Jury” |

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| Tuesday, March 30 | — | Lecture: "WWI & the Homefront" Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chaps. 23-24 <i>Out of This Furnace</i> Discussion: Movie/Book In-class Exercise: <i>Struggles in Steel</i> Movie: <i>Public Enemy</i> |
| Wednesday, March 31 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #17 DUE: "Book/Movie Response" |
| Thursday, April 1 | — | Lecture: "The 1920s" In-Class Exercise: Selling Stuff |
| Friday, April 2 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #18 DUE: "Comment" |
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| Tuesday, April 6 | — | Lecture: "Happy Days Are Here Again" Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chap. 25 Discussion: Movie In-Class Exercise: That's Entertainment Movies: <i>Sullivan's Travels</i> |
| Wednesday, April 7 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #19 DUE: "Movie Response" |
| Thursday, April 8 | — | Lecture: "WWII" In-Class Exercise: <i>Reefer Madness</i> |
| Friday, April 9 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #20 DUE: "Comment" |
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| Tuesday, April 13 | — | Lecture: "The Cold War" Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chaps. 26 Discussion: Movie In-Class Exercise: Family Revisited Movies: <i>All That Heaven Allows</i> |
| Wednesday, April 14 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #21 DUE: "Movie Response" |
| Thursday, April 15 | — | Lecture: "The Fabulous 50s" In-Class Exercise: Father Know Best |
| Friday, April 16 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #22 DUE: 50s Exhibit |
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| Tuesday, April 20 | — | Lecture: Evidence: Sound Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chaps. 27-29 <i>Coming of Age in Mississippi</i> Discussion: Book/Movie In-Class Exercise: Politics of Identity Movie: <i>Coming Home</i> |
| Wednesday April 21 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #23 DUE: Book/Movie Response |
| Thursday, April 22 | — | Lecture: “Woodstock Nation” In-Class Exercise: Party On |
| Friday April 23 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #24 DUE: “Top Ten in the 1970s” |
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| Tuesday, April 27 | — | Lecture: “Greed is Good: 1980s” Reading: <i>Out of Many</i> , Chaps. 30-31 Discussion: Movie In-Class Exercise: Heroes: Race/Class/Gender Summary Movie: <i>Independence Day</i> |
| Wednesday, April 28 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #25 DUE: “Movie Response” |
| Thursday, April 29 | — | Lecture: “Getting to 9/11” CLASS EVALUATION |
| Friday, April 30 | | TYPEPAD ENTRY #26 DUE: “Telling Your Story” |
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| Thursday, May 6 | — | SELF-EVALUATION DUE |



COURSE

This course is designed as an introduction to the major themes and arguments in U.S. history from the colonial period to the present. It is also an exploration of the different kinds of evidence that are available to historians and representation in history. Most important, it is a 6-credit course—not a 3-hour course that meets for a long time. This is not an easy course; it is, rather, a reading and writing course that will provide you with the general knowledge and skills commonly identified as appropriate to a one-semester introductory course. Unlike upper division courses this course tends to be a bit more fact oriented but not entirely so. You may or may not improve your Jeopardy performance but will, I hope, learn the usefulness and pleasures of history. To get the most from the course, therefore, the reading assignments and movie screenings must be completed before the date they are due so that you will have time to digest the material thoroughly in preparation for discussion and subsequent writing assignments. You will have to use your time wisely.

BOOKS

The following books are required for the course. They are available in the Campus Bookstore.

Faragher et al., *Out of Many*

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
& Harriet A., *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Louis P. Masur, ed., *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

Thomas Bell, *Out of the Furnace*

Ann Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*

TYPEPAD

You are required to obtain a Plus-level subscription to TypePad, a blog. All of your writing assignments and projects will be posted to your TypePad blog. The cost is \$8.95 per month or roughly \$27.00 for the semester (the cost of a modest textbook). The best thing to do is sign up for a free trial; this will furnish you with a month's free service. At the end of the semester, you can cancel your subscription. Or, you may discover that you like blogging so much that you retain your subscription. Alternatively, you can obtain the MovableType software. It is free, but the installation of the software is challenging and you will need to contact your ISP to ensure that the necessary software—CGI or MySQL—is in place. MovableType will install the application for you for a \$40.00 fee, but you will need to arrange for the other software apps. Be aware that most free web page areas do not support CGI or MySQL or charge extra. I do not recommend this option unless you have some solid computer skills and access to a sophisticated ISP, but there may be some in the class who can avail themselves of this MT.

MOVIES

The movies are scheduled for screening over the weekend (from Thursday evening through Monday evening) so that you will be prepared for discussion on Tuesday and your TypePad entry on Wednesday. You are responsible for obtaining the films on video or DVD. All of the films are available from local video rental stores, through NetFlix, or in the library. Get some microwave popcorn and invite a few friends. One caveat: do not depend on the Internet for plot synopses or other "helpful" reviews for your class preparation.

POLICIES

We are explaining and stating these policies now, in the clearest possible terms, so there can be no dispute over what we expect. If you have questions about my expectations, please raise them. But whenever you ask us to modify my expectations because you failed to plan and use your time efficiently, you put us as well as the rest of the class in the ethically difficult position of applying different standards to different people. We ask that you accept responsibility for your actions rather than put us all in an uncomfortable position.

Attendance

At this point in your intellectual development, you should have some sense of personal responsibility. Class attendance, therefore, will be up to you. It will be very difficult, however, to pass the course without attending class because the assignments are the focus of many of the class discussions. In fact, failure to attend class on many occasions will have grave consequences. A word to the wise, in short, should be sufficient.

A Note on Computer Use

Computers are a great boon to the student writer. But, as with any technology, you must take steps to minimize the problems that computers inevitably cause. Do not expect to get through the semester without having at least one computer crisis. Prepare for this well in advance. Back up your work constantly and have alternative plans for obtaining computer use, if your primary options fail you. We will never accept computer problems as excuses for missed assignments. You must also keep backup copies of submitted assignments—either in electronic form or hard copy.

Similarly, computers and email permit around-the-clock communication. If you have questions or need to apprise the instructor of an emergency situation, contact me via email. Should you need to discuss an issue with the instructor, contact me via email or by phone. Do not, however, expect an immediate response. Many of your questions can be answered by consulting the web site at:

<http://www.archiva.net>

The site contains a duplicate of the syllabus, including the schedule and writing assignments. Since the course makes use of the Internet, you might find it more convenient to use the Web version of the syllabus to make use of the links.

Non-Sexist Language

George Mason University has also pledged itself to the use of non-sexist language in the classroom. We will support that effort by using both the masculine and feminine forms in our discussions and writing rather than masculine generic terms. For example, we will use instead of simply “men,” men and women; instead of “mankind,” humankind and so on. Such an effort may seem awkward initially, but the effort is well repaid by the gain in the content of class discussion and class writing.

Grades

Grades, including +s and -s, will be assigned in the following manner. REMEMBER THEY REPRESENT AN EVALUATION, NOT A REWARD. To rephrase Solomon, Smith-Barney, the investment folk, we do grades the old-fashioned way—earn them.

A—Outstanding work, complete mastery of the material presented, combined with some originality.

B—A solid command of the material with some gaps or mistakes in a basically sound essay or discussion.

C—Some knowledge of the material; mistakes and confusion are acceptable if mixed with some understanding. Not a reward for attendance or effort.

D—An incomplete and minimal knowledge of the material, major confusions and errors.

F—A failure to present the material in a reasonably accurate and comprehensible manner.

I—There are no “incompletes” given in this course except in cases of bona fide and documented instances in accordance with the regulations of the university.

P—For a “pass” a “C” average is required.

The nature of the course suggests that breaches of academic integrity will be difficult to accomplish. If, however, a class member engages in plagiarism or other forms of cheating, he or she will receive a zero for that assignment and be reported to the Honor Board for further academic action.

If you receive a grade or criticism that seems unfair or if you desire further explanation, see me. If you come to argue for a better grade, come prepared to present your case in the most coherent and organized manner possible.

REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for the course are as follows: (1) 26 TypePad entries (50 pts. Each=1300 pts.); (2) a self-evaluation (1 page, typed, single-spaced) assessing your performance in the course (not graded but required.).

TypePad Entries

There are 26 web exercises required for the course. They are due in class on the date stated on the syllabus schedule. Points or partial points will be awarded for the following:

1. Promptness (10 pts)
2. A competent introduction (5 pts)
3. Statement of a competent thesis (5 pts)
4. Organization of argument (10 pts)
5. Acceptable grammar and diction (10 pts)
6. Originality & Interest (10pts)

Although the TypePad entries result in rather short writing pieces, a good deal of thinking and drafting are necessary to prepare a good entry.

TYPEPAD ENTRY #1: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #2: *Creation Stories*

How do the creation stories change over time? What influences seem to affect the stories?

TYPEPAD ENTRY #3: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #4: *Patriotic Ladies of Edenton*

How did the British view the Patriots’ activism in the period leading up to the Revolutionary War? Carefully examine the Society of Patriotic Women, Edenton, North Carolina, Use the questions accompanying the online materials to help develop your thesis and organize your evidence.

TYPEPAD ENTRY #5: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #6: *George Catlin’s Indians*

What is Catlin’s view of Native Americans and their culture?

TYPEPAD ENTRY #7: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #8: *SimUtopia*

How do the spatial arrangements of your Utopia reflect Jacksonian democracy? What were your reasons for arranging your community as you did? Before you begin, make sure you have considered the following possibilities. Will your utopia be: A religious community, where all share the same beliefs? What will those beliefs be? A socialist community, with all property owned in common and all work shared equally? A combination of both? Will it be purely a commercial enterprise, designed to make money? Or a non profit experiment? Or an experiment in radical equality? Your community must be able to support itself—will it be agricultural, industrial, or a mix of both? Will it be closed to the rest of the world, or open? Will it be rural in character, or urban? Will there be slavery? Remember, your community must address the concerns of the day—about the excesses of industrialization, about immorality in commercial life, about the changing relations of men and women, about the potential or danger of democratic politics. To design your own utopian community, go online to SimUtopia. Drag the icons at the top of the next page into the “map” space. When you are finished, take a screenshot of your image and

include it in a photo album in your blog. On a Wintel machine, press the PRINT SCREEN or PRNT SCN key. On a Macintosh, press COMMAND + SHIFT + 3. You may have to reduce the size and dimensions of your image with an image editing program.

TYPEPAD ENTRY #9: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #10: *Civil War Exhibit*

How do the images reflect a particular Civil War theme? Select 6–8 images around a particular theme from American Memory at the Library of Congress and download them. Once you have your images in hand, create a photo album and arrange the images to illustrate your theme. Choose a design that includes an introduction and a cover picture. Write an introduction for your album and captions for your images. The captions, although they can be short, should indicate how the image illustrates your theme and call attention to pertinent details.

TYPEPAD ENTRY #11: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #12: *Museum Exhibit, Pt 1*

What are the reviewers criteria for a good history museum exhibit? What are your criteria for an effective history museum exhibit? Begin this exercise by using the electronic databases available online through the GMU library system. To do so, log on to the GMU site > Libraries & Research > University Libraries Databases > H > History Cooperative. If you are accessing the library databases from off-campus, be sure to click the “Click for EZ off-campus access.” You may also need to click on both the “Important Announcement” and “Test JAH” to gain access to the database. Go the Journal of American History > List of Available Journal Issues > June 2002 (Vol. 89, No. 1). Once inside the journal, scroll down to “Exhibition Reviews” and read the review of “1699: When Virginia Was the Wild West!” and “Within These Walls.” These will furnish you with examples of exhibition reviews. How do the reviewers judge an exhibit? What are their criteria? Develop your own criteria based on those of the reviewers.

TYPEPAD ENTRY #13: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #14: *Museum Exhibit, Part 2*

How well does the exhibit that you chose meet the criteria that you developed? Time to get on the Metro. Go the National Museum of American History and, armed with your exhibition criteria, visit one of the following exhibits: “The Information Age,” “Field to Factory,” “From Parlor to Politics,” or “G.I.: World War II.” (You may also elect to visit an exhibit not on the list with the instructor’s permission.) Even if you have already visited these exhibits, go again because you will see the exhibit from a new perspective. Once you have gone through the exhibit and taken notes, complete two tasks: complete the online survey and write a review of the exhibit that answers the question posed at the beginning of this paragraph. Do not use secondary sources, especially Internet or web resources to answer the question. I want you to grapple with the question on your own.

TYPEPAD ENTRY #15: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #16: *We, the Jury*

Based on the evidence available in *State v. Rehberg*, how would you have voted “guilty” or not “guilty?” Why? What verdict do you believe did the nineteenth-century jury reached? Why?

TYPEPAD ENTRY #17: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #18: *Comment*

Select three entries from three different class participants and comment on their entries. The comments should be about a paragraph in length and may address any aspect of the entry. Once you’ve made your comments, write a line or two in your own entry with links to your comment. (If you have already been commenting, link to your earlier comments.)

TYPEPAD ENTRY #19: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #20: *Comment*

Select three entries from three different class participants and comment on their entries. The comments should be about a paragraph in length and may address any aspect of the entry. Once you’ve made your comments, write a line or two in your own entry with links to your comment.

TYPEPAD ENTRY #21: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #22: 50s Exhibit

How do the images reflect a particular theme or trope in the 1950s? Select 6–8 images around a particular theme from American Memory at the Library of Congress or any other public domain collection and download them. Once you have your images in hand, create a photo album and arrange the images to illustrate your theme. Choose a design that includes an introduction and a cover picture. Write an introduction for your album and captions for your images. The captions, although they can be short, should indicate how the image illustrates your theme and call attention to pertinent details.

TYPEPAD ENTRY #23: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #24: Top Ten in the 1970s

What were the top ten movies in 1970? How would you categorize them by genre or type? Are there any differences between the “Top Ten Songs” from 1970? How would you account for those differences? You will need to use search engines on the Internet or the library to develop your list of top ten movies that were the most popular by some measure—box office receipts, highest gross, and so forth. Beware of using someone’s personal list. Alternatively, you can use the top ten bestsellers (fiction and non-fiction) from the *New York Times* Bestseller lists. Lists will vary, so you should provide the source for your list.

TYPEPAD ENTRY #25: *Movie Response*

TYPEPAD ENTRY #26: *Telling Your Story*

Where were you when the planes hit the Twin Towers? Each generation has its historical moments. For one generation, it is the answer to the question: “Where were you when Kennedy was shot?” For another, it is: “Where were you when *Challenger* blew up? For still another generation, it is 9/11. For this assignment, go to the September 11 Digital Archive and write your story. Once you’ve added your story to the archive, make a copy for your TypePad entry. You might want to read a few of the entries to get a sense of how people remember the events and their reactions. One of most interesting is Don Mercy’s, a former GMU student and Fedex driver.

WRITING

George Mason University has made a commitment to improve students’ writing. Toward that end, instruction in writing will be a part of this course. Effective writing is a major component of effective thinking, and, as such, is the foundation for history. (The word, history, comes from the Latin, *historia*, meaning story or chronicle.) Although it is impossible to teach the whole of composition in a semester, it is possible to impart several useful techniques and develop a writing discipline via a continuous schedule of writing exercises.

READING A MOVIE (Adapted from a Jennifer Gauthier handout)

Watching a film is similar to reading a novel. A novel introduces us to a different reality, complete with new settings, unfamiliar characters and unique messages. As we read the novel, we look for clues to help us understand this new reality. We may find symbols that emphasize the theme of the novel, techniques such as foreshadowing and flashback that give us a sense of time, and descriptions and actions that help us understand the characters. Each of these literary devices and the words the author chooses to use establish the tone of the novel.

Films use many of the same techniques, but they do it all with visuals. The novel creates an imaginary world through a selected set of words, and film creates that world through carefully crafted sets of images. Below is a list of some issues to think about while you watch a film. By asking and answering these questions as you watch a film, you will begin to recognize what kind of visual impact the director trying to achieve. These activities also will help you learn to analyze the techniques used by the director.

- **Genre/Audience:** Within what genre does this film fall (drama, comedy, romance, suspense, class, foreign, children’s, etc.)
- **Plot/Theme:** What is the basic premise of the film? What drives the action? What is the overall theme of the film? Are certain images repeated or exaggerated to help convey the theme? Look for mythical elements in the film (heroes, villains, damsels in distress). Does the film follow any so-called universal story patterns?

- **Structure:** How is the film structured in terms of time and space? Does it follow a logical sequence or is there manipulation? Remember that inherent in the medium of film is an artificial construction of time and space. Investigate how the film uses both of these elements to reinforce its theme or themes.
- **Characterization:** Are we being introduced to a new group of people, or perhaps to people whom we know a little bit about already? How does the film create these personalities? What visual techniques are employed to make the characters seem real?
- **Camera:** Watch what the director has chosen for us to focus on—he or she is directing your eye. Look at the speed of various shots and the angles and points of view from which the action is seen. Also notice when the director uses establishing shots, long shots, close-ups and extreme close-ups.
- **Sound:** Is music used? If so, how does it contribute to the mood, the theme, the character development? Listen carefully to the other sounds in the film. How does the director use various sounds to reinforce the plot, theme and characters in the film?
- **Context:** Is there a larger context for the film? Is it based on a book or an historical event? If so, how does it differ from the original source?

THE GOOD BLOG ENTRY

Students often ask about writing a good blog entry. Although we will discuss the elements of a good TypePad entry and TypePad comment extensively in class, these paragraphs are offered as modest reference. Essentially, a TypePad entry should be three to four paragraph—roughly 400-500 words or the equivalent of 1–2 double-spaced pages. You might want to draft your entry in a word processing program first and copy and paste after you have finished. Use a plain text editor, such as Notepad on a Wintel platform or Tex-Edit on a Mac, to avoid pasting in all sorts of weird characters.

Title & Introductory Paragraph

A good paper begins with a good title. A good title gets the reader’s attention immediately and sets the tone for the rest of the entry. A title, such as “Entry #1,” is not particularly effective or even interesting. Since this is a class, it might be a good idea to number the entries so that the reader knows which assignment you are addressing. Examples might include: “#1: Movie-Black Robe & Last of the Mohicans” or “No. 8: SimUtopia: Pleasantville.” You can be much more creative, but you must have a number. If you use a catchy title, be sure that the assignment is indicated in the first paragraph.

Once you’ve decided on an interesting title, the next step is framing an introductory paragraph. An introductory paragraph can take many forms, but in a short entry, two strategies are usually successful: the brief anecdote or narrative or the quotation. How might these work? Here are two examples.

The New Yorker magazine observed, “We believe that the truth can turn up in a cartoon, in one of the magazine’s covers, in a poem, in a short story,…” The New Yorker statement might well apply to the British and Patriot reactions to events preceding the Revolutionary War depicted in early cartoons from both sides of the Atlantic. [The quotation]

In 1770, Boston citizens skirmished with a small band of British soldiers in front of the Customs House. Although witnesses to the event differed on who was responsible for the starting the altercation, the results were not in dispute—five dead Bostonians. Four years later, the women of Edenton decided to oppose the British Tea Act by boycotting tea. Both these events were memorialized in print. [The short anecdote or narrative]

The last sentence of the introductory paragraph should be the thesis. You should be aware that it is acceptable (and often necessary because of time constraints) to skip the introductory sentences in an essay examination question and begin immediately with a thesis statement.

Thesis

A thesis is a proposition or statement of an argument. It is not “stage direction” (e.g., “In this entry I will tell you about the British and American attitudes toward pre-revolutionary activism,

and then I'll show...). An adequate thesis is a clear, precise, declarative statement: "The British cartoon lampooning the women of Edenton, North Carolina, suggest that the British attitude toward patriot activism was _____ and." Obviously, your interpretation of the source will determine what you put in the blanks. Note, too, that this statement identifies the two sources.

Body

The body of your entry follows the terms of your thesis, beginning with a transitional sentence. (The easiest way to frame a transitional sentence is to take an important word or phrase from the sentence in the preceding paragraph and build on it.) In the Edenton example, the next paragraph would discuss the first "blank" and include the supporting evidence. The second paragraph would follow with a discussion of the second "blank" (usually its best to put the most compelling evidence last) and its evidence.

Conclusion

A conclusion not only summarizes your argument—usually in a sentence or two—but also discusses its historical significance. The last is the most critical. A conclusion puts your argument into "the big picture," as Richard Nixon was fond of saying. It is an effort to relate your findings to a broader theme in the course. Does Edenton cartoon say something about how the British viewed patriot seriousness of purpose? Does the images offer any insights into British on gender and politics? Et le voilà—your entry is finished, and you have a nicely ordered 3-4 paragraph entry.

Movie Responses

The movie responses are an exercise in critical thinking. We want to encourage you to experiment with ideas and theses in these responses. Be creative. Be bold. Be daring. However, you must also have a clear thesis and use supporting evidence from the films, lecture, readings and/or exercises. In general, you should be thinking about questions of historical representation, of collective memory, of narrative, of historical processes and of authenticity. We expect the students to engage with concepts like freedom, individualism, equality, standardization, technological innovation, family, race, gender, class, mass media and nationalism. There are a variety of approaches you can take when writing about these films. Some of you may chose to pick a theme and carry it throughout the semester. For example, you can write about the ways in which race, class and/or gender are portrayed in the films and books. Another option is the "big picture" approach where you elaborate the themes of the film/books and relate those to the history of the time period.

We will have an opportunity to discuss these films in class before the entry is due. Come prepared with opinions and ideas. But do not rely on our class discussion for your entry. They should be original ideas/arguments and clearly demonstrate that you have seen the film. As a side note, we are NOT looking for plot summary or narrative descriptions of the films. We have seen them and know the story. In this same vein, we are NOT looking for responses that point out the specific historical inaccuracies in the film, like whether particular battlefield scenes are "accurately" portrayed.

Grammar for Historians & Others

Here are some common grammatical problems that arise in history papers, listed with the correction mark for each and a solution to the problem. You will find these abbreviations used on your papers, so it is a good idea to look these over. Grammar for Historians can be found online.

SELF-EVALUATION GUIDELINES

Oftentimes, a letter grade does not reflect the effort that students put into a course, the amount a student has learned, or the skills that a student has acquired. A self-evaluation is one way of remedying this deficiency by illustrating and documenting your participation in the course from your perspective. This is the time to argue for yourself and put your best foot forward. In fact, it is in your interest to do the best job that you can on this assignment. The self-evaluation should be a one-page, typed single-spaced paper in which you address the following topics:

- I. Evaluation of your participation in the class
 - A. attendance
 - B. Time devoted to the materials
 1. Assigned reading
 2. Movie Viewing
 3. Blog entries
 - C. Class participation

1. In-class contributions
 - D. The ways in which you think you improved or not
 - E. The problems you encountered in your effort to complete the class assignments to your satisfaction.
 - F. What you would have done differently
 - G. Some of the skills or knowledge that you acquired
- II. A general assessment of how you will apply what you have gained (or not) from the class in the future
- III. Other activities of a historical nature that you participated in