

# HISTORY 395/495 – Remembering World War II in European Cinema

Spring 2007

McMurrin Hall 102

W 7:00-10:00PM

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The Second World War in Europe constituted six years of battle, deprivation, suffering, and hardship for the people of the continent. There was, however, no single wartime experience – the French, Germans, Italians, British, Poles, Czechs, and Russians all had their own memories of the conflict. This course will examine how Europeans have remembered their World War II experiences in the six decades since the war ended.

Specifically, we will use postwar films to analyze the influences the war has had on memory and national identity in several European countries.

## **Objectives:**

This course will help you better understand the World War II experiences of several European nations. Specific objectives for this semester include:

-- cultivating your critical thinking, reasoning, and speaking skills. We will discuss every film we view in our class meetings. In order to understand the film not only as a piece of cinema but also as a primary source, you will need to analyze it in order to determine bias, audience, and message. Our classroom discussions will require you to interpret what you see, speak about your findings, consider the ideas of others, and evaluate how these observations relate to broader course themes.

-- strengthening your writing capabilities. Through authoring several film critiques, a comparative paper, and a challenging final exam essay, this course will improve your ability to organize and develop your ideas, analyze sources, and interpret visual material.

-- contextualizing and historicizing key historical developments. This is not merely the memorization of facts. Our course requires that you understand cause and effect relationships, various factors propelling change, and the broader social environment in which events transpire.

-- understanding the power of memory as a force in the creation of national identity. These films will present a depiction of a national wartime experience as remembered at a certain moment in time. We will explore the factors that influenced this particular memory, the evolution of that representation, and the current debates in each national context as to how the war shapes identities today.

## **Requirements:**

Course requirements are as follows:

Regular Film Critiques (4 worth 10% each)	40%
Comparative Paper	25%
Discussion and Attendance	15%
Final Exam	20%

There are four areas upon which your final course grade will be based: film critiques, a comparative paper, attendance and classroom participation, and a final examination.

**Film Critiques.** This course will require you to write regularly about the films that we view. I am not interested in your retelling of the plot. Your analysis should concentrate on the film's biases, approach, intended audience, message, meaning, style, and cinematography. You will write a total of **FOUR** 3-4 page film critiques over the

course of the semester. You are free to choose the films on which you will write critiques. My only rule related to this is that you **MUST** complete a minimum of TWO critiques on or before March 14 (the class after Spring Break) The remaining two critiques will thus be completed on or before April 25 (our final class meeting). Please make note of this requirement, as I will not be able to grant exceptions to this rule during the semester.

**Comparative Paper.** The final paper for the course will require you to compare a film you have seen for this course with at least one other film of your choice (you can use more if you prefer) to explore more fully the evolution of historical memory in a particular country. Three weeks before the paper is due, you will be required to turn in a one-page overview of your paper, in which you briefly introduce your topic, outline issues you will explore in the assignment, and state which outside film(s) you will incorporate into your analysis. Failure to complete this requirement will result in a one-letter grade deduction on the final assignment. This analytical paper should be 7-8 pages in length and is due April 18. Note: You may **not** write your comparative paper on the United States.

**Discussion and Attendance.** Attendance at every class and active participation in discussions is required. Because our course covers so much material every week, attendance will be required. Unless excused prior to class for medical, athletic, or personal reasons, there will be a 2 percent penalty on the final course grade for each unexcused absence. Participating in the course means more than attending class. For the course to be successful, students need to share their interpretations of films and engage the ideas of others. Your contributions to class discussions will determine your participation grade.

**Final Examination.** The course will conclude with a final examination in which you will answer a choice of essay questions on major course themes. This examination will be cumulative and will concentrate on the films we view together and our classroom discussions.

#### **Course Policies:**

-- In order to succeed in the course, you will need to attend class every week. Likewise, your participation in discussions will factor into your final evaluation. So, prepare before class and contribute when you're here.

-- Please be considerate of others at all times. Arrive for class on time and please do not leave early. If special circumstances exist, let me know in advance. Turn off cellular phones before class begins.

-- Plagiarism occurs when a student, with intent to deceive or with reckless disregard for proper scholarly procedures, presents any information, ideas or phrasing of another as if they were his or her own and does not give appropriate credit to the original source. All cases of academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) will result in a zero for the assignment and will be reported to the Academic Hearing Board. If there are ever any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please contact me.

-- Extensions can only be given if the original class meeting is missed because of an excused absence. Students may only be excused for required attendance at a university-sponsored event; illness or accident; a death or emergency in their immediate family; or similar conditions. In such an event, please provide written verification (doctor's note, letter from dean) of the absence to me as soon as possible.

-- If you believe you have a disability, you should make an appointment to see me to discuss your needs. In order to receive accommodation, your disability must be on record with Disability Services at the Academic Advising Center in Room 3125, Student Union, telephone: 594-8763.

#### **Office Hours:**

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:00am-11:30am in my office; Monday and Wednesday from 2-2:50pm in the Student Center, and by appointment. My office is in Commonwealth Hall 18 (across Warwick Avenue behind the restaurant). The best way to reach me is via email: ([bpuaca@cnu.edu](mailto:bpuaca@cnu.edu)). I can also be contacted by phone (594-7225).

**Required Texts:**

Martin Kitchen, *A World in Flames: A Short History of the Second World War in Europe and Asia, 1939-1945* (London: Longman, 1990). ISBN: 0582034086

Marcia Landy, ed., *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 2000). ISBN: 0813528569.

**Please note:** There are additional **REQUIRED** readings on electronic reserve. All readings not in the Landy or Kitchen book are available both electronically and as a hard copy at the Library Services Desk inside the Old Student Center. You must complete these assignments **before the week for which they are due**.

**Course Schedule****Jan 17: Course Introduction/Themes/World War II Overview**

Showing: None.

Reading: None.

**Jan 24: Basics of Film Studies/"Reading" a Film/Writing a Critique**

Showing: *Night and Fog* (France, 1955)

Reading:

Marcia Landy, "Introduction," in Landy, 1-22.

Pierre Sorlin, "How to Look at an Historical Film," in Landy, 25-49.

Robert A. Rosenstone, "The Historical Film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age," in Landy, 50-66.

Andrew Hebard, "Disruptive Histories: Toward a Radical Politics of Remembrance in Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*," *New German Critique* 71 (Spring-Summer 1997): 87-113.

**Jan 31: The Allies I (Britain): Childhood and the Homefront**

Showing: *Hope and Glory* (1987)

Reading:

Martin Kitchen, *A World In Flames*, Chapters 1-2, Chapter 9 (207-218).

Geoff Eley, "Finding the People's War: Film, British Collective Memory, and World War II," *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (June 2001): 818-838.

**Feb 7: The Allies II (Soviet Union): Heroism, War, and Youth**

Showing: *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959)

Reading:

Kitchen, Chapters 3, 10, and 12.

Denise Youngblood, "A War Remembered: Soviet Films of the Great Patriotic War," *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (June 2001): 839-856.

## **Feb 14: The Allies III (The United States): The Good War?**

Showing: Selections from *Band of Brothers* (2001)

Reading:

Kitchen, Chapter 7.

John Bodnar, "Saving Private Ryan and Postwar Memory in America," *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (June 2001): 805-817.

Jay Winter, "Film and the Matrix of Memory," *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (June 2001): 857-864.

## **Feb 21: The Axis I (Germany): The Death of Nazi Germany**

Showing: *Downfall* (2005)

Reading:

Kitchen, Chapter 9 (218-227), Chapter 13.

Michael Geyer, "The Place of the Second World War in German Memory and History," *New German Critique* 71 (Spring-Summer 1997): 5-40.

Stephen Lamb, "Re-presenting the German Past in 2005: Culture's Contribution in the New Berlin Republic. A Personal Account," *Debatte* 13 (December 2005): 265-281.

## **Feb 28: The Axis II (Italy): Courageous Resistance and the Enemy**

Showing: *Rome Open City* (1945)

Reading:

Kitchen, Chapter 11.

Millicent Marcus, "Rossellini's *Open City*: The Founding" in *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, pp. 33-53.

Sidney Gottlieb, "Rossellini, *Open City*, and Neorealism" in *Roberto Rossellini's Rome Open City*, ed. Sidney Gottlieb, 31-42.

Peter Bondanella, "The Making of *Roma città aperta*: The Legacy of Fascism and the Birth of Neorealism," in *Roberto Rossellini's Rome Open City*, ed. Sidney Gottlieb, 43-66.

## **Mar 7: SPRING BREAK**

## **Mar 14: Discussion of Changing Postwar Memories in Axis and Allied Countries**

Showing: None.

Reading: Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (December 1997): 1386-1403.

## **Mar 21: The Occupied I (France): Occupation and Collaboration**

Showing: *Lacombe Lucien* (1974)

Reading:

Kitchen, Chapter 1.

Paul Jankowski, "In Defense of Fiction: Resistance, Collaboration, and *Lacombe, Lucien*," *The Journal of Modern History* 63, no. 3 (September 1991): 457-482.

Leah D. Hewitt, "Salubrious Scandals/Effective Provocations: Identity Politics Surrounding *Lacombe Lucien*," *South Central Review* 17, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 71-87.

## **Mar 28: The Occupied II (Czechoslovakia): The Face of the Holocaust // PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**

Showing: *The Shop on Main Street* (1965)

Reading:

Kitchen, Chapter 8.

Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Schindler's List Is Not Shoah: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory," in Landy, 201-217.

## **Apr 4: The Occupied III (Poland): From External Threat to Internal Enemy**

Showing: *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958)

Reading:

Marek Haltof, *Polish National Cinema* (Berghahn: New York, 2002): 44-109.

## **Apr 11: Transitioning From War to Peace: German Trauma**

Showing: *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1979)

Reading:

Anton Kaes, "The Presence of the Past: Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun*," in Landy, 173-200.

Thomas Elsaesser, "Historicizing the Subject: A Body of Work?," *New German Critique* 63 (Autumn 1994): 10-33.

## **Apr 18: Remembering the War: The Unmasterable Past // COMPARATIVE PAPER DUE**

Showing: *The Nasty Girl* (1990)

Reading:

Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004) pages 144-174.

Robert Moeller, "War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October 1996): 1008-1048.

## **Apr 25: Closing Discussion/Conclusions**

Showing: None.

Reading:

Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* (Spring 1989): 7-24.

## **FINAL EXAMINATION**