The Course

Myth, Epic, and Romance addresses perhaps the most common way the modern American public is exposed to history through the medium of film. We will take the opportunity to think about the ways that Celtic people understood their own history, and, at least temporarily, to reverse current historical practice. The modern study of history is a scientific enterprise to understand things "as they really were." The various approaches of modern historians -- political history, women's history, social history, or even cultural studies -- all fall into this "let's get to the truth" paradigm. But the "past" that was important to medieval audiences was not the "past as it was" but the "past" as a series of somewhat disconnected explanatory myths, epic stories, legendary figures, and entertaining romances. In some respects, then, just the sort of "past" that thralls modern filmmakers and audiences.

While Hollywood movies must skew the past to meet the demands of drama, spectacle, and interest, and documentaries are sometimes no better, film can also impel a fuller imaginative grasp of a period. Our goal in class then, is to bring critical intelligence to film as medium for understanding and presenting the past.

Class members will view both clips and complete movies while reading original source material and critical commentary. Assessment will be based on class participation, midterm quiz , a study journal, and a final paper.

By the end of the course, students should be able: to assess the different approaches taken to the past by film makers; to establish filmographies on given topics; to defend their own point of view on given films; and most importantly to explain the advantages and disadvantages of film as a way to present pre-modern and modern history.

Class Requirements and Grading

**Short Quiz** - 20% of total grade  
**Study Journal** - 30% of total grade  
**Participation in class discussion** - 20% of total grade  
**Final Paper** - 30% of total grade

Graded Assignments

* **Short Quiz** Based on course work

* **Study Journal**: For each of the full films that we watch and discuss as a class, you must write a one to three page (500-700 word) discussion of the film (typed) based on questions formulated in class along with an evaluation of your own engagement. Base your discussion on the four par: model presented in Thinking About Historical Film or my handout.

* **Class Discussion**: The purpose of the reading in the handouts is to help students discuss the films we see with some real grounding. What I am looking for is real thinking about the issues. You are especially encouraged to comment on my class remarks and other students' comments.

Course Material: Books, Sources, Films and Internet

There is no required text book but the following are recommended:
Shooting To Kill by Brian Mclroy

Scotland, The Movie by David Bruce

Cinema and Ireland by Rockett/Gibson/Hill

Screening Ireland by Lance Pettit

Going to The Pictures: Scottish Memories of Cinema by Andrew Martin

A Knight at the Movies: Medieval History on Film by John Aberth


**Important Web Sites**

- **Film and History**
  Website of the H-Net discussion list focused on movies and history.

- **Internet Movie Database**
  An essential resource for facts about movies. The amateur reviews are sometimes very good, sometimes awful.

- **Rotten Tomatoes**
  A site that links to reviews of movies all over the internet. It is best for recent movies.

- **Movie Review Query Engine**
  A great resource that enables searches for reviews of specific movies.

- **About.com: World Film**
  About.com's guide to sites on films made outside the US.

- **About.com: Oscar® in the Middle Ages**
  Medieval Movies that have won Oscars.