

RYERSON UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
**History Through the Movies II**

HST 219

Winter 2010

**PLEASE READ THIS COURSE OUTLINE CAREFULLY!**

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The twentieth century witnessed the culmination and decline of the "new imperialism", the historical process whereby European nation states renewed their efforts at colonial conquest starting in the mid-nineteenth century. This course uses film as another device through which to examine this fascinating period in world history. We will pay attention to how twentieth century colonialism has been portrayed on film, using a selection of works produced by colonisers and colonised alike. We are able to do this for twentieth century cinema because it was in this period that former colonial subjects were able to appropriate the tools of the colonisers and turn these against them.

Our study begins with the Australian-produced film *Breaker Morant* (1980) which examines the plight of a group of Australian soldiers, themselves colonial subjects, embroiled in a war not of their making - the Boer War fought in South Africa at the turn of the century. The next film, *Le Grand Blanc de Lambaréné* (1994), interrogates colonialism and racism by looking at the activities of medical missionary Albert Schweitzer who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. Schweitzer is widely remembered as a compassionate humanitarian and philosopher and head of the famed medical mission at Lambaréné in Gabon West Africa. Cameroonian director, Bassek ba Kobhio, paints a complex portrait of his life as one episode in colonial encounter.

Of the films chosen for the important post 1945 period when colonised peoples throughout the world were beginning to exert their independence from colonial rule we will screen two films which deal with the partition of India and Pakistan. The first is Indo Canadian director, Deepa Mehta's 1998 film, *Earth*. The second in a recently completed trilogy of films (see also *Fire and Water*), this film is a microhistory of partition and how it affected the lives of a group of "ordinary people" living in Lahore in 1947. *Earth* is twinned with *Jinnah*, also released in 1998, directed by Pakistani Jamil Delhavi. It is a "life and times" piece of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, founder of the state of Pakistan. We will examine how these two very different films approach similar historical subject matter.

Next up is Gillo Pontecorvo's 1965 film, *The Battle of Algiers*. This film is a classic in the canon of historical filmmaking. This picture, shot in neo-realist style contains not a single frame of news footage, yet its reconstructed images, ironically, are often used to illustrate histories of this remarkable period in Algeria.

As we began, we will conclude with the Australians and the film *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002). Directed by Philip Noyce, this film is based on the true story of Molly Craig, a “mixed race” woman who as a child was removed from her family in Jigalong, Western Australia and was sent to live in the Moore River Native Settlement. There, she and children like were trained to be domestics and farm labourers in the hopes that they could become better assimilated to “white” culture. She, her younger sister and cousin fled the institution and embarked on a 1500 kilometre journey along “the rabbit proof fence” to return home. The film is a powerful examination of Australian aboriginal policy, the social and cultural effects of it and race relations in a post-colonial setting.

### Course Readings

Students are required to use the library reserve system to access course readings. Some are electronic sources on line and some are “reprints” which you must go in to the Library to borrow/photocopy. Just go to the library catalogue and click on “course readings” and look up HST219 under my name and you will find readings (and essay films) listed there.

### Teaching Modes

The course will employ a number of different teaching modes. Each film will be introduced by a number of lecture hours pertaining to the historical period. After in-class viewing of the films, we will meet in small group "tutorial" sessions to discuss the films in conjunction with lecture material and assigned tutorial readings. Tutorial assignment sheets and readings are all contained in the course packet.

### Method of Evaluation and Marking Scheme

**Essay (30%):** Essay topics, deadline, and length requirements will be handed out in class within the first three weeks.

**Mid-Term Test (20%):** There will be an in class test during the one hour class held on Friday, 3 March 2006. The last day to drop a one term course without academic penalty is **10 March 2006** therefore, the mid-terms will be returned to students at the end of class on 9 March 2006.

**Final Examination (35%):** The exam will be held during examination period at the end of term. Don't make travel plans until the final exam schedule is posted.

**Tutorials (15%): IF YOU FAIL TO ATTEND AT LEAST THREE TUTORIAL SESSIONS YOU WILL GET AN AUTOMATIC ZERO FOR THAT PORTION OF THE MARK (15%).**

### Grades

The following is an explanation of the grading scheme followed by the History Department. Your marks will be based on these standards.

A+ A A-

An outstanding performance. A student must demonstrate a full knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, show a good ability to analyze and to criticize the analyses of others, organize material well and explain issues clearly, be able to discuss issues in their broader context, and demonstrate some originality.

B+ B B-

A good, above average performance. A student must demonstrate quite a full knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, show a good ability to analyze issues, and some ability to be critical of the analyses of others, organize material and explain issues reasonably clearly and be able to discuss issues in a broader context.

C+ C C-

An adequate, average performance. A student must demonstrate a fair understanding and knowledge of the subject matter, organize material and explain issues fairly clearly, and show some ability to analyze issues involved in the material under study.

D+ D D-

A minimum passing grade. A student must be able to demonstrate some knowledge of the subject matter, some ability to organize material and explain issues, and some realization of what aspects of the subject under study are relevant to the questions asked.

F

A failing grade. The student has failed to meet the minimum standards outlined above, has failed to complete/submit a piece of work or has submitted a piece of work which bears little relation to the task assigned.

### **Text and Other Readings**

Tutorial readings will be available in your course packet. This course packet also includes all tutorial handouts, a sample “film summary form”, a copy of the course outline should you misplace this one, the essay assignment and a handout on how to go about writing a history essay. The course packet is available for purchase in the Ryerson Bookstore and is produced by Canadian Scholars Press. Please be sure to check the packet against the course code and instructor name.

### **Lectures, Film Presentations and Tutorial Schedule**

The way it works ...

Since the sections are too large for small group discussion, tutorials will be held in the one hour time blocks on alternate weeks (you will either be a Group A or a Group B). I will lead some groups, and a Teaching Assistant will lead others. I will draw up tutorial lists as soon as we have settled in and will announce these in class. The same lists will also be posted outside my office and I will send copies to you all via e-mail. PLEASE REMEMBER TO ACTIVATE YOUR RYERSON E-MAIL ACCOUNT. So, everyone must attend the two hour blocks (either lectures or films) every week, and attend the one hour session every other week. YOU ARE EXPECTED TO DO THE READINGS ASSIGNED IN ADVANCE OF THE TUTORIALS. THESE AND THE FILMS FORM THE BASIS FOR DISCUSSION. The following is a tentative schedule of films lectures and tutorials. Tutorial readings will be listed on separate tutorial handout sheets.

### The Schedule

Week One: January 7 - Introduction to the course. Lecture all three hours.

**Readings for the first couple of weeks. NOTE: these readings will form the basis for your mid-term test. You are advised, therefore, to take special care to read them.** They are available as on-line readings through the Ryerson Library Reserve System. They are:

Robert Brent Toplin, "Cinematic History: Where Do We Go From Here?", *The Public Historian*, 25,3 (2003), 79-91; Robert Rosenstone, "Does a Filmic Writing of History Exist?", *History and Theory*, 41 (December 2002), 134-144; Robert Rosenstone, "The Reel Joan of Arc: Reflections on the Theory and Practice of the Historical Film", *The Public Historian*, 25,3(Summer, 2003), 61-77.

**NOTE: HEREAFTER, PLEASE FOLLOW THE TUTORIAL READINGS AS INDICATED ON THE TUTORIAL ASSIGNMENT SHEETS FOR EACH FILM.**

Week Two: January 14,15 Lectures in all three hours – Breaker Morant lecture

Week Three: January 21,22 Film: *Breaker Morant* -to be screened in two hour block  
Third hour - Group A Tutorials on *Breaker Morant*  
Readings for this and all other films are available through the Ryerson Library reserve system.

Week Four: January 28, 29 Lecture on *Le Grand Blanc de Lambarene* in two hour slot  
One hour slot - Group B Tutorials on *Breaker Morant*

Week Five: February 4,5 Film: *Le Grand Blanc de Lambarene*  
Group A Tutorials on *Le Grand Blanc*

Week Six: February 11,12 Lecture on India/Pakistan – *Earth* and *Jinnah*  
Group B Tutorials on *Le Grand Blanc*

**I will also hand out the mid-term test questions this week**

READING WEEK FROM 15 FEBRUARY TO 19 FEBRUARY

Week Seven: February 25 Film: *Earth*

***MID-TERM IN ONE HOUR BLOCK ON FRIDAY, February 26th***

Week Eight: March 4, 5 Film: *Jinnah*

Group A Tutorials on *Earth* and *Jinnah*

Week Nine: March 11,12 Lecture on *Battle of Algiers*

Group B Tutorials on *Earth* and *Jinnah*

PLEASE NOTE, TUESDAY, MARCH 16 IS THE LAST DAY TO DROP A WINTER TERM CLASS IN GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING

Week Ten: March 18, 19 Film: *Battle of Algiers*

Group A Tutorials on *Battle of Algiers*

Week Eleven: March 25,26 Lecture on *Rabbit Proof Fence*

Group B Tutorials on *Battle of Algiers*

Week Twelve: April 1 Film *Rabbit Proof Fence*

NO CLASSES ON FRIDAY

Week Thirteen: April 8, 9: Exam Review

**Groups A and B combined Tutorial on *Rabbit Proof Fence***

#### Additional Information

Students are advised that any alterations to the course assignments, tests, marking or evaluation scheme as noted in this course outline will be announced in class prior to implementation. Faculty Course Surveys will be administered after announcement in class in the period from Wednesday March 31 – Tuesday April 13, 2010.

Should a student miss a midterm test or final exam, make-up tests and/or exams will be arranged according to Ryerson University Course Management Policy (Policy 145 – Fall 2009). Please refer to <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol145.pdf>

**Finally, you are reminded NOT to make travel or employment plans until after posting of the final examination schedule.**

Tutorial on *Breaker Morant* (1980)

**Before** viewing the film, *Breaker Morant*, please read the following which are on reserve in the Ryerson library as reprints:

*Extracts from the Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 March 1902 reprint 06059  
*Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 March 1902 reprint 06056  
*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 April 1902 reprint 06052

AND extracts from Lieut. George Witton, "Origins of the Carbineers" and others readings from *Scapegoats of the Empire. The True Story of Breaker Morant's Bushveldt Carbineers* (Harwich Port, Cape Cod, Clock and Rose Press: 2003), first published 1907: Melbourne, D.E.W. Patterson & Co). On reserve as reprint 06190 and should include pp. 43-67; 141-144; 152-155.

You might wish to consider the following questions as you read and view the film.

1. What attitudes did members of the British military have to Boer combatants and non-combatants? What attitudes did British folk exhibit toward Australians?
2. Why did Breaker Morant and others "sign up" to fight in South Africa?
3. What are "rules of war"?
4. How do we treat newspapers as historical sources? How did the "angle" of the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the Breaker Morant controversy differ from that of the *London Times*, paraphrased in the second *Herald* extract? How might you account for the difference?
5. Witton's account was first published in 1907. What kind of concerns might we have about these extracts as an historical source?

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Tutorial on *Le Grand Blanc de Lambarene* (1994)

**Before** viewing the film, *Le Grand Blanc de Lambaréné*, please read the following:

Megan Vaughan, "Hippo Happenings", from *Curing Their Ills, Colonial Power and African Illness* (Stanford, 1991), pp. 155-166 on reserve as reprint 06094

Albert Schweitzer, "Social Problems in the Forest" from *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest, Experiences and Observations of a Doctor in Equatorial Africa* (London, 1948) first published 1922, pp. 75-91 on reserve as reprint 06158.

You might wish to consider the following questions as you read and view the film.

1. Megan Vaughan tries to outline some of the general typical characteristics of "Jungle Doctor" memoirs. Are her conclusions born out by the Schweitzer reading?
2. What were Albert Schweitzer's attitudes towards Africans as revealed by his own writing and in the film? Do these portrayals differ? For that matter, what attitudes did Schweitzer hold with respect to white folk?
3. What was the attitude of the Africans in the film toward white people? Does this match Schweitzer's ideas about African attitudes toward whites?
4. How might we treat memoirs as historical sources? What sorts of considerations might we have in using them?

Supplementary Reading for the film:

Christopher Gray, "Lambarene, Okoume and the Transformation of Labor along the Middle Ogooue (Gabon), 1870-1945", *Journal of African History*, 40(1999),. 87-107.

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### Tutorial on *Earth* and *Jinnah*

**Before** viewing the films, *Earth* and *Jinnah*, please read the following:

Christina Lamb, "Don't Mention the Savile Row Suit", *New Statesman* September 1998, p.58 on reserve on line; Akbar Ahmed, "Jinnah and the Quest for Muslim Identity", *History Today* 44, 9(1994), 34-40 on reserve on line; Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence, Voices from the Partition of India* (Duke University Press: Durham, 2000) 12 pp. on reserve as reprint 06084; and "Cracking Sidhwa" Interview with Bapsi Sidhwa by Julie Rajan in *Monsoon Magazine*, Issue 3 (2000) on line at [http://www.monsoonmag.com/interviews/i3inter\\_sidhwa.html](http://www.monsoonmag.com/interviews/i3inter_sidhwa.html)

### Questions:

1. *Earth* (or *Earth, 1947* as released in India) is based on the novel, *Cracking India (Ice Candy Man* in India) written by Bapsi Sidhwa. By her own admission, the novel is somewhat autobiographical. She was also used as a consultant in the making of the film. What special challenges does this type of film adaptation pose? Akbar Ahmed, a professional historian, was instrumental in the making of *Jinnah*. Does the film bear the hallmark of the professional historian?
2. Is it useful to use people's personal memories as part of historical reconstruction?
3. In *Earth* we see history told through the "eyes of a child". How effective a tool is this for film-making and for understanding history?
4. *Jinnah* as autobiography uses the life of an important politician to tell the story of partition. *Earth* uses a fictional microhistory to do the same thing. Which is most effective in explaining the causes and consequences of partition?

### Useful websites:

On Partition: <http://www.cc.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Part.html>

On *Earth*, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* and Deepa Mehta:

<http://directorsnet.com/mehta/>

<http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Sidhwa.html>

[http://hometown.aol.com/bsidhwa/rev\\_ralph\\_crane.html](http://hometown.aol.com/bsidhwa/rev_ralph_crane.html)

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### Tutorial on *Rabbit Proof Fence*

**Before** viewing the film, please read:

Chapter Ten “Children’s Experiences” which is part of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report, *Bringing them Home, Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Australia, 1997. The entire report is available on line but you should read Chapter 10 found at: [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social\\_Justice/bth\\_report/report/ch10\\_part3.html#Heading63](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_Justice/bth_report/report/ch10_part3.html#Heading63)

Supplementary Reading: available online. Gregory D.B. Smithers, “Reassuring ‘White Australia’: a Review of the Fabrication of Aboriginal History,” *Journal of Social History*, 37,2 (2003): 493-505.

1. Why were aboriginal or “mixed race” children subject to removal from their families? What was the intention of this government policy?
2. Why were children placed in missions or foster homes forbidden to speak in their mother tongues?
3. What elements of the *Bringing them Home* report extracts correspond to the film?
4. Why assimilation?