

**AMERICAN MOVIES IN THEIR MOMENT:
THE SILVER AGE, 1968-1980**

History 277A/FMS 245
Spring 2020
MW 11.50-13.05
Morey 525



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Hours: W 1.30-2.30
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Is a dream a lie if it don't come true/Or is it something worse?
--Bruce Springsteen, "The River" (1980).

This course, one of two movie courses I offer, considers feature films as evidence for the cultural historian of modern America by considering the role of movies in the social imaginary of distinct moments in the nation's history. That moment for this iteration of the course is the "Seventies" (1968-1980).

FILMS AND READINGS

The films can all be found on reserve in the Art and Music Library, on line, or for purchase as DVDs. Some of them will be streamed via Blackboard. There is one book required for the course: Beth Bailey and David Farber, eds., *America in the Seventies*. I have ordered copies at the UR Bookstore, and it is available at Amazon and other on-line vendors (often at reduced prices). It is also on 2-hour reserve in Rush Rhees Library. Other short readings will be available on Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation: All students are expected to attend each class and actively participate in the discussions of the films.

Papers: There will be no examinations in the course. Each student will write four papers, three short (1500-2000 word) essays and one longer (3000-3500 word) paper, requiring some modest research. The first of the short papers will be an analysis of what you regard as a pivotal scene from one of the assigned films. This paper is due by **24 February**. The second of the short papers will be an analysis of the use of music in another of the assigned films. This paper is due by **1 April**. The third of the short papers will be a response to a review of one of the assigned films by the leading film critic of the time, Pauline Kael. This paper is due by **22 April**. The final, longer paper will be devoted to an examination of the seventies films of **one** of the following directors (or another, with my approval): Woody Allen, Robert Altman, Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, Paul Mazursky, Alan Pakula, or Martin Scorsese. This paper is due by **8 May**. Further details on these papers will be forthcoming.

Grading: Grading in the course will be weighted as follows: short papers (15% each); longer paper (35%); class participation (20%).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and will be treated as such. Anyone who engages in such activities will be turned over to the College Board on Academic Honesty for disciplinary action, as outlined at <http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/>. For a helpful discussion of plagiarism (including subtle instances), see the American Historical Association's 'Defining Plagiarism,' <https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/teaching-resources-for-historians/plagiarism-curricular-materials-for-history-instructors/defining-plagiarism>.

Disability Services: The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: disability@rochester.edu; (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall.

SCHEDULE

I will lecture once in each segment of the course, providing a historical context for our movies, and the other two classes of each segment will consist of a discussion of the relevant films. Reading assignments should be completed at the beginning of each segment. The College's credit hour policy on undergraduate courses is to award four credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of three periods of 50 minutes each week. Students enrolled in this course are expected to devote at least one hour each week, working alone or with others, to preparing questions and arguments for class discussions and to research for the final paper.

15 January Introduction: Movies and the Social Imaginary

20 January Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. No class.

Farewell to the Sixties

22 January Lecture

27 January *Easy Rider*

29 January *Gimme Shelter*

Reading: Marshall Berman, "Sympathy for the Devil"

Nixonland

3 February Lecture

5 February *All the President's Men*

10 February *Godfather Part II* (*Part I* recommended)

Reading: Mark Feeney, "The Conversation" (*Nixon at the Movies*).

Good Evening, Vietnam

12 February Lecture

17 February *Deer Hunter*

19 February *Apocalypse Now*

Reading: Michael Herr, "Breathing In" (*Dispatches*).

Market Failure

24 February Lecture

First Short Paper Due

26 February *Network*

2 March *Blue Collar*

Reading: Jefferson Cowie, "Vigorously Left, Right, and Center" in Bailey and Farber, *America in the Seventies*; Jefferson Cowie, "A Collective Sadness" (*Stayin' Alive*).

Fear City

4 March Lecture

9 and 11 March Spring Break

16 March *Taxi Driver*

18 March *Manhattan*

Reading: Mark Jacobson, "What Everyone Gets Wrong about '70s New York" <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2015/09/what-everyone-gets-wrong-about-70s-new-york.html>; Christopher Lasch, "The Narcissistic Personality of Our Time" (*The Culture of Narcissism*).

The Color Line

23 March Lecture

25 March *Shaft*

30 March *Cooley High*

Eric Porter, "Affirming and Disaffirming Actions" in Bailey and Farber, *America in the Seventies*.

New New South

1 April Lecture

Second Short Paper Due

6 April *Nashville*

8 April *Norma Rae*

Reading: Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt*, "Conclusion: Place Over People"

The Feminine Mystique

13 April Lecture

15 April *An Unmarried Woman*

20 April *9 to 5*

Reading: Beth Bailey, "She 'Can Bring Home the Bacon,'" in Bailey and Farber, *America in the Seventies*

Blockbusting: The Empire Strikes Back

22 April Lecture
Third Short Paper Due

27 April *Rocky*
29 April *Star Wars*

Reading: Christopher Capozzala, "It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country," in Bailey and Farber, *America in the Seventies*

8 May **Final Paper Due**

