

History 168  
Peter N. Carroll

U.S. History in Film

Summer 2013

I. This course is designed to fulfill two related purposes: first, to analyze the major historical issues in U.S. society since World War II; second, to analyze a series of motion pictures as historical documents of that period. Classroom time will be devoted to lectures, discussions of specific readings, and viewing of selected films from the period. Students are expected to complete reading assignments prior to each class meeting and to be prepared to discuss readings and films in historical context. Classroom participation is an integral part of the course and may affect final grades.

II. Written work:

1. Short paper (2 pages) due **July 9**. This paper, based on the movie ON THE WATERFRONT (1954), is required but will not receive a letter grade. The assignment is described on page 4 of this syllabus.

2. Two papers (5-6 pp. 3 Credits; 8-10 pp. 4 Credits). The first is due **July 16**; the second is due **August 13**. These papers represent about 50 percent of course grade and are intended to integrate course readings with films seen for this course.

The first paper (July 16) should provide a comparative analysis of Salt of the Earth and Imitation of Life (1959). Based on the readings, discussions, and the movies, this paper should examine how these films reflect significant historical issues of the 1950s. How, in other words, are these films “dated” within the specific time period in which they were made, and what do they tell us about U.S. society and culture during this era?

The second paper is due August 13. After watching Never Forever in class, write an essay that compares and contrasts the social and political issues addressed in that film with the social, cultural, and political issues of The Graduate (1967). Focusing on the specific historical content of both films, the essay should examine changes and continuities in American society and culture in the late twentieth century. In your paper, consider, where appropriate, political and legal changes as well as related shifts in cultural values.

3. A final essay examination (about 50% of course grade)

III. My office: Bldg 200; Room 234 . Office hours Tuesday & Thursday, 6:30 pm, and by appointment. Office phone: 723-3431 (no messages); home phone 650-591-3623.  
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IV. Readings: Books are available at the bookstore and reserve room of the library. Other required readings are available online (see below).

Joshua Freeman, AMERICAN EMPIRE: 1945-2000 (Viking, 2012)

Michael Wilson, SALT OF THE EARTH (Feminist Press)

Lucy Fischer, IMITATION OF LIFE (Rutgers)

Lorraine Hansberry, A RAISIN IN THE SUN (Vintage)

## V. Schedule

- June 25 Introduction; DESTINATION MOON
- June 27 BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES  
Read: Freeman, pp. 27-62; “Casablanca” At the Movies:  
[http://www.wadsworth.com/history\\_d/special\\_features/at\\_the\\_movies/index.html](http://www.wadsworth.com/history_d/special_features/at_the_movies/index.html)
- July 2 Home Front: 1946  
Read: Freeman, pp. 62-109; Truman Doctrine speech, 1947:  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/trudoc.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp)
- July 4 NO CLASS
- July 9 Cold War Culture: **SHORT PAPER DUE**  
ON THE WATERFRONT (See attached assignment)  
Read: Victor Navasky, Naming Names: “Elia Kazan and the Case for Silence”; “Degradation Ceremonies”; “The Social Costs”  
<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/navasky-main.html>  
Wilson, pp. 1-90, 126-54
- July 11 Social Issues of the 1950s; Selected scenes to be screened (Man in the Gray Flannel Suit; Rebel Without A Cause)  
Read: Freeman, ch. 5-6; Fischer, pp. 39-156.  
Martin Luther King “Rediscovering Lost Values, 1954”:  
<http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Vol2/540228RediscoveringLostValues.pdf>
- July 16 **FIRST PAPER DUE**  
THE GRADUATE  
Read: Freeman, ch. 7; Hansberry, Raisin.
- July 18 Crisis of the 1960s  
Read: 1. Freeman, chapter 8-9;  
2. Betty Friedan, “Problem with No Name”:  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2920960/>  
3. King, “Beyond Vietnam”:  
<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/058.html>  
4. Nixon inauguration speech,  
<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/rn37/speeches/nixon1.htm>
- July 23 KRAMER V. KRAMER  
Read: 1. Freeman, chapters 10-13;  
2. Jimmy Carter’s “Malaise” speech, 1979  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carter/filmmore/ps\\_crisis.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/carter/filmmore/ps_crisis.html)

- July 25 Conservative Politics, Cultural Backlash  
Read: 1. Freeman, chapters 14-15;  
2. Reagan, "Inauguration Speech, 1981"  
<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/rr40/speeches/reagan1.htm>
- July 30 FALLING DOWN  
Read: Freeman, ch. 17.
- August 1 1990s: Ethnicity, Race, Gender & Class  
Read: 1. Freeman, ch. 18;  
2. Dean Alger, "The Public and the Development of Candidates' Images in the 1992 Presidential Election, pp. 1-11."  
[http://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/r14\\_alger.pdf](http://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/r14_alger.pdf)  
3. Clinton inauguration speech, <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres64.html>  
4. Angelou poem, <http://poetry.eserver.org/angelou.html>
- August 6 WAG THE DOG  
Read: 1. Freeman, ch. 19  
2. Robert Fulford, "How Bill Clinton Changed Political Movies,"  
<http://www.robertfulford.com/BillClinton.html>
- August 8 NEVER FOREVER (2007)  
Read: 1. Freeman, pp. 466-80;  
2. "America's Family & Living Arrangements, 2007":  
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/p20-561.pdf>  
Maps of 2008 electoral votes: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mejn/election/2008/>
- August 13 SECOND PAPER DUE  
The American Family in Film
- August 15 Final Examination

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Paper #1 Due July 9.

Watch the movie **On The Waterfront** (1954). Read Navasky as indicated in syllabus.

Write a 2 page paper (approx. 500-600 words) addressing the following question:

**How does On The Waterfront reflect the historical issues associated with McCarthyism?**

**This paper is required but will not receive a letter grade.**

You should consider these related questions (though not necessarily for the paper):

How does the film portray labor unions and the labor issues of the 1950s? How does this portrayal compare/contrast with the film Salt of the Earth?

How does the film treat working class people?

How does the film express issues of class and ethnicity?

How does the film depict women?

On The Waterfront:

Director: Elia Kazan (Academy Award)

Screenplay: Budd Schulberg (Academy Award)

Starring:

Marlon Brando (Academy Award)

Eva Marie Saint (Academy Award)

Karl Malden

Lee J. Cobb

Rod Steiger

Music: Leonard Bernstein