New or Revised Course Proposal

Proposed Field of Study: Literary Studies

1. Course number: Classics 329

2. Full course title: The Ancient World in Cinema

How “The Ancient World in Cinema” fulfills the field of study literary studies (FSLT) requirement.

Over the span of our course, students will attend to questions of literary form through close reading and visual and close analysis of the primary sources. In the first half of the course, students will develop their own critical voices and their own alertness to how different literary and cinematic genres and forms of adaptation affect how the audience reacts. In the second half of the course, students will meet selected examples of ancient and contemporary literary theories and analyses that represent ways of looking and ways of reading, such as Aristotelian, historicist, feminist, and post-colonial. In this course then, students will attend not only to what the texts (literary and cinematic) say in and of themselves, but to how they say them and to how the historical and cultural contexts in which they were created and received color what we hear and read.

3. Catalog description:
This course examines cinematic representations of the ancient Greek and Roman Mediterranean, viewed through a variety of literary and cinematic genres in European and American cinema of the 20th and 21st Centuries. The films offer an opportunity to reflect on how our various modern visions of (and desires for) the ancient world illuminate the present as much as they animate the past. Students will read selections from Greek and Roman history and poetry (in translation) in conjunction with weekly viewings and written assignments; secondary readings will be drawn from contemporary film criticism and theory.

4. Prerequisites (if any): none

5. Units of credit and justification: 1 unit

6. Estimate of student enrollment: 20

7. By whom and when the course will be offered (e.g., whether every year, alternate years, summer session): Erika Zimmermann Damer, alternate years

8. Effective Term: Spring 2014
Erika Zimmermann Damer,
Proposal for Classical Studies 329: The Ancient World in Cinema, request to be approved as FSLT.

9. Staffing implications (regarding any need for additional staff, overloads, reassignments, and changes in the staffing of general education and other courses):
no implications

10. Adequacy of library, technology, and other resources (to be previewed and certified by the appropriate staff members from the library, computer services, etc.):
Marcia Whitehead and Paul Porterfield have noted that resources are adequate

11. Lab needs (type of lab needed and estimated time per week):
Viewing Space for weekly film screenings, preferably in the MRC, 3 hours / week.

12. Purpose and rationale for the course (including evidence of student interest, and how the course relates to the department or program curriculum):
Students have frequently expressed an interest in a film course that looks at the representations of the ancient world in 20th and 21st C European and American cinema. Moreover, film studies has been one of the chief means to open the field of classical reception studies to students, and this course will complement our department’s existing course on the Classical Tradition. This course offers students the chance to address why texts from the Classical world continue to appeal to contemporary film makers and audiences, and what makes these films worth watching.

13. Relation to existing courses and curricula in other departments, programs, and schools (to be discussed with these units prior to submission). Specifically, does the course fulfill major requirements or replace courses? How does it relate to interdisciplinary programs (does it fulfill major requirements in those programs)?
This course will count towards the classical studies major and minor, and will also be of interest to students in Art History, English, Film Studies, MLC, Religious Studies, Rhetoric and Communication Studies, Theater, and WGSS.

14. Will the course be cross-listed with other departments (please list rationale)?
Yes, I will request that the course be cross-listed with film studies, and I will seek a special cross-list with WGSS for at least the first iteration of the course. This course will cover European and American cinema of the 20th century, and incorporate English, Italian, and Greek language cinema. Our course readings and discussions will focus for at least two units on the intersections between race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class as represented in film on antiquity. Additionally, our course will examine how cinematic techniques, cinematic genres (i.e sword-and-sandal epics), and the multi-sensory experience of film (vision, sound, narrative) have colored our contemporary expectations and stereotypes about the Greeks and Romans.

15. Indication of approval and date by department or program:
Clasical Studies approval—Jan 31, 2013
Film Studies approval—Jan 31, 2013

16. Sign-offs for items 9 &10 (changes in title or number do not require sign-offs, but they do require submission to Academic Council. These changes should be indicated in a revised
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course proposal and sent to the associate dean's office for inclusion in the next available Academic Council agenda:
Library resources (your department’s library liaison) –Sign off Jan 31, 2013
Classroom technology (Kevin Creamer)—Sign-off Jan 31, 2013
Classrooms & course numbers (Leah Nelson)
Staffing (Scott Johnson)

Contact Person: Erika Zimmermann Damer

17. Brief outline of the course (detailing the topics to be covered):
This description offers an overview of the weeks and films list. The syllabus will be built from a selection of the readings listed in each unit.

Course Description:
This course examines cinematic representations of the ancient Greek and Roman Mediterranean, viewed through a variety of literary and cinematic genres in European and American cinema of the 20th Century. The films offer an opportunity to reflect on how our various modern visions of (and desires for) the ancient world illuminate the present as much as they animate the past. Students will read selections from Greek and Roman history and poetry (in translation) in conjunction with weekly viewings and written assignments; secondary readings will be drawn from contemporary film criticism and theory. As active viewers and readers of multiple media, students will learn to react to the ways that films and written narratives are constructed, attending to editing and the composition of scenes, and to how a director uses the process of adaptation and the opportunities of film as a medium to create a multi-sensory representation of a written text.

Course Design:

Student Work will include some or all of the following assessments:

Course Participation
Midterm and Final Exam
Bi-weekly Response Blogs on films, readings
Required Commenting on the Blogs
Literary/ Film Analysis Interpretive or Research Paper (8-10 pgs)

How The Ancient World in Cinema fulfills the field of study literary studies (FSLT) requirement. (This is repeated from earlier in the proposal)

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different literary and cinematic genres and forms of adaptation affect how the audience reacts. In the second half of the course, students will meet selected examples of ancient and contemporary literary theories and analyses that represent ways of looking and ways of reading, such as Aristotelian, historicist, feminist, and post-colonial. In this course then, students will attend not only to what the texts (literary and cinematic) say in and of themselves, but to how they say them and to how the historical and cultural contexts in which they were created and received color what we hear and read.

Readings on Blackboard, with full bibliographic information listed below.

**Unit I: Introduction to the Classical World in Cinema**

*Week 1: L’Odyssea* (1921, Italian)
Lecture: Introduction to the Ancient World on Cinema, Introduction to the many ancient literary genres adapted by film and television makers, Introductions to the course, each other

Lecture 2: the Mythical Paradigm (travels into an unknown ancient world), the persistence of the Odysseus Paradigm, Why film the classics / Adaptation Theory?
Optional Viewing: Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?

**Reading:**
Introduction to Film criticism (in Cyrino 2005, pages 1-6),
Introduction to the Ancient World in Cinema (in Soloman, Bb);
Dudley Andrew. "The Well Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory." (Bb)

**Unit II: The Sword-and-Sandal Epic, Cecil B. deMille and his influence**

*Week 2: Quo Vadis* (1951), selections*
You may view the entire film, but we will screen only selected scenes during the screening period.

**Reading:**
Cyrino 2005: chapter 1; Pliny’s Letters on the Christians (Roman literary letters) + Perpetua’s Passion (a martyr text, cinematic in its literary representation ?)

*Week 3: Ben-Hur* (1959)

**Reading:**
Cyrino 2005 Chapter 3

**Unit III: Roman History, the Rise of the Roman Empire**

*Week 4: Cleopatra* (1934), selected scenes; Cleopatra (1963)
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Week 5: Cleopatra (1963), continued + HBO Rome’s Cleopatra (select episodes)

Readings: Maria Wyke on ancient and modern Cleopatras
Plutarch’s Life of Antony, selections from Roman historians and poets on Cleopatra
Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975)

Week 6: Intermission. The Romans on Television.
Selected episodes from: HBO’s Rome, BBC’s I, Claudius


Unit IV: And the Collapse of Empire: The Roman Empire as Metaphor for American Imperialism

Week 7: The Fall of the Roman Empire (1964)


Week 8: Gladiator (2000) + Intertextuality

Cyrino chapter 9, selections from Futrell (1997) (for historical context on Roman gladiators).

Unit V: Aesthetic Experimentation: Post-colonial Imperialism + Post modern Antiquity

Week 9: 300

Readings:
Selections from Herodotus’ Histories (a defining literary text about the ideas of the Greek West and the Eastern Other),
Selections from Said’s Orientalism (a defining theoretical text for post-colonial literary criticism)

Week 10: Titus (1999)
Readings from Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Fredrick (2008), a post-modern literary reading of Taymore’s Titus against Ovid’s Roman epic poem
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**Unit VI: Greek Tragedy on the Screen**

Week 11: Electra (1962)
Readings: Aristotle’s *Poetics (a central ancient literary theory of the tragic)*, Euripides’ *Electra (the tragedy that Cacogiannis adapts)* + selections from Aeschylus’s *Oresteia (the tragedy that Euripides adapts in his own Electra)*

**Unit VII: Roman Comedy and Satire: Roman Comedy and the 1960s**
Week 12: A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum (1966)

**Reading:**
Selections from Plautus’ *Pseudolus (one of many Plautine comedies that “A Funny Thing Happened” adapts)*
Aristotle and Cicero on the Comic (more central ancient literary theories)

Week 13: Fellini *Satyricon* (1969)

**Readings:**
selections from Petronius’ *Cena Trimalchionis*
J. Paul (2010) on Fellini’s *Satyricon*

Week 14: Monty Python’s Life of Brian (1979)
Theme: Satire as super-genre

**Reading** Bakhtin on parody, from *the Dialogic Imagination*, p. 333 – 338.

Readings on the Syllabus are drawn from:

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