
Issues of both production (the growing dominance of the American film industry) and reception (by both British and American audiences). The transatlantic migration of British actors and directors; what “performing Britishness” might have (differently) meant for émigré British actors and for American actors; the empire history genre as big-studio adventure epic but also as patriotic propaganda in an era of economic depression, threat of war, and growing colonial protest and decolonization. How ideologies of gender and race were both confirmed and (sometimes) subverted.


Course requirements will include active participation in discussion, three short (5pp) papers on selected films, and a longer paper (ca. 10pp) on a, perhaps comparative, topic approved by the instructor. A number of readings on film interpretation and history will be placed on Reserve and/or Trunk.

Tentative Syllabus:

Jan. 21 Introduction; film as historical source material
Jan. 26 The Anglo-American politics of Empire, race, and gender
Feb. 2 Film-making in the Anglo-American world
Feb. 9 Saunders of the River
Feb. 19 Lives of a Bengal Lancer
Feb. 23 Mutiny on the Bounty
Mar. 2 Charge of the Light Brigade
Mar. 9 General Discussion
Mar. 23 Drum
Mar. 30 Gunga Din
Apr. 6 Four Feathers
Apr. 13 T.B.A.
Apr. 27 Doing Film History: General Discussion