

HST 202: US History W20 (Escobar)

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Hollywood History & Mythology

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Friday, January 24, 2020, 9:38 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Hollywood History & Mythology topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Hollywood History & Mythology

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How Accurately does Hollywood portray History?

by [Ryan Peel](#) - Sunday, January 26, 2020, 2:42 PM

In my experience with Hollywood and history, it seems to me that they mostly actionize it, dramatize it for pure entertainment, which is what Hollywood is known for, but, sometimes, it's better to just retell the story without all the glitz and glamour. The reason for this is because history isn't shining through like a golden sun. It's filled with events that aren't clean and shimmering. The fact that those with knowledge on the movie's subject have to go and correct misconceptions presented in the film says that the producer didn't really do their job all too well. So, the event in Amistad was retold from a Hollywood film, and in the trailer, they had "a true story" at the end. But, how true is their depiction of this grand historical event? How close is it to what really happened? I remember one movie that came out where it depicted the Mayan culture as bloodthirsty, sacrifice-happy animals, which wasn't true at all, and many people were not happy with it portrayed the Mayan culture in the film. So, you have to ask, is it ok for Hollywood to take an event like this and turn it into something it really might not be?

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Re: How Accurately does Hollywood portray History?

by [Cynara Onyemordi](#) - Tuesday, January 28, 2020, 9:54 PM

I completely agree with you, It is scary to see how the media has completely twisted the narrative on history. These directors chop out certain parts because they aren't the most interesting or they don't see the value in adding it to the story until the movies have become so clean cut and so straight forward that they are missing the most important bits. It's almost chilling how in control the media is. These are movies that children are encouraged to watch, they're encouraged to study these things, all the while it's completely inaccurate. These screenwriters need to realize that if they are going to attempt to tell a historical story that they must put aside their preferences and commit to telling the truth of what went on in the past. However, it is easy to just say these things but putting these words into action is on a whole nother plain. Making stories that are both well-informed but also interesting seems impossible. On the other hand, people have a central duty to take everything that is being read and watched with a grain of salt. The media does not hold a gun up to our heads and force us to believe what we see, rather it's a mentality. Researching the truth of what has happened in the historical past is completely in our hands.

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Re: How Accurately does Hollywood portray History?

by [Alexander Brown](#) - Wednesday, January 29, 2020, 10:13 PM

Hi Ryan! I have also seen the dramatization in Hollywood historical movies, as I'm sure most people have. However, I do not share your belief that historical movies are better when retold to total precision. Without the "glitz and glamour" of these movies, all we would see is politicians arguing until they finally decide to call it a draw. If this were the case then there is no way these movies would see the light of day and never make money on the film. I feel as though it's up to the people on what we do with the information provided by historical films, just as we do with political cartoons. We take in the information and based on our predetermined disposition on it, attempt to connect fact with fiction. Sometimes fact and fiction blur because of these dispositions which then are spoken into "fact". As long as we can rely on other sources for the true historical events, it shouldn't matter what is true or untrue in Hollywood movies, all that should matter is the experience you have and if you can understand that all movies are dramatized for the sake of entertainment and/or money.

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Re: How Accurately does Hollywood portray History?

by [Ryan Peel](#) - Friday, January 31, 2020, 6:46 PM

I do understand your viewpoint. It is Hollywood we're talking about. But, if they are going to show an event like this, then they could consult the proper sources for what they do decide to show on screen. I also see Cynara's point on the fact that historical events can be boring, it can just be the politicians talking up and down, left and right, and that be hours of film, and it's very boring, won't disagree with that. What I am saying is that what is glamourized shouldn't be so distorted and inaccurate that key events are either missing, or are just deemed too "minor" to be shown. No, not every single detail for every single minute or moment has to be shown, but what is shown could be as close to the truth as possible, or maybe talk to the historians that know about this event, that have studied it. Consult the proper sources! Don't just go headlong into production without really knowing what event you're trying to show in theaters or on the screen. Not everything has to be spot on. Here, in the present time, that's very hard to do. I understand that. All we can do at this time is get it as close as possible to what really happened. It might be a tall order, but, for me, it would be a better alternative to seeing action scene after action scene after action scene. It doesn't have to be spot on, just as close to what really happened.

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Hollywood and History

by [Riley McQueen](#) - Sunday, January 26, 2020, 5:04 PM

Personally, I think that making these changes gives the movie industry a little wiggle room on how they tell the story. They make these changes to the movie to make it more palatable to the average moviegoer and make more money in the box-office. Academically, I don't agree with how they make movies that are "historically based". One reason is when they do make changes to the actual event they make it further from the truth. This might be the only way that a person learns about the event in the movie, and the facts may be wrong. I think that if you are going to make a movie based on real events then you should make it as accurate as possible, keep it true to the original story.

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Misconstrued History

by [Cynara Onyemordi](#) - Sunday, January 26, 2020, 11:57 PM

It is scary to imagine the fact that people can twist history into a narrative that they would like it to be so as to create a story that will sell. In *Amistad* we are able to see that they change an innumerable amount of things in order to make the movie more interesting. In the movie there is a large amount of non-colored people involved in the race war, when in reality it was a majority of black people fighting for their lives. It is our duty as a people to understand these differences so that the true nature of history can still be revealed and we are not left wondering why there are gaps or holes that don't make sense.

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How One can Change Fiction to Fact

by [Alexander Brown](#) - Monday, January 27, 2020, 10:41 PM

When faced with a historical film I always try to look into the actual story of what happened and why, but more importantly I understand movies as a form of entertainment. If certain facts were not exaggerated to some extent, then the movie becomes boring and full of unnecessary fillers that ruin the historical nature for many people. Because of this, I seek out more of the adventure in Historical movies and not look as much into the historical aspect of it but rather the symbolism of the time being depicted. Although I have found a way in coping with these exaggerations, many people have not and because of this, they choose to ignore the movie or believe that after watching the movie they are now experts on the subject. The latter of the two is what causes Hollywood exaggerations to become supposed fact. It is not the fact that Hollywood movies exaggerate almost everything that upsets me as it is their job to entertain and make money. What truly upsets me is when people are naive enough to believe everything they hear from these movies, then proceed to tell others what they have heard as though it were all complete fact. As for "Historical Sites" and the people claiming to own a historic landmark, there is no true way to determine if someone is lying or not. Too much time has passed to be able to capture the full authenticity of the 1800's which is disappointing yet relieving to know that people can move on from very rough times. The legitimacy of historical sites are up to us, the people, and we are responsible for the true preservation of our ancestors past so that we may learn from their mistakes to make a better world. If advertisement is what drives a person's spirit for revealing a historic landmark, then that person has failed their duty.

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**Re: How One can Change Fiction to Fact**by [Cynara Onyemordi](#) - Thursday, January 30, 2020, 10:29 PM

You have completely and perfectly summed up the mindset that one should have going into a historical film. Hollywood has a great way of dramatizing stories and twisting them until they have little historical value. As educated people it is important to make sure that these films are distinctly separated from the ones that do attempt to provide an interesting narrative on history. In the website presented in class, the writer of the article droned on about how the alamo movie was disinteresting and she even went as far as to say she would take a historically inaccurate yet interesting narrative in contrast to an uninteresting accurate one. While it is hard to get out of this type of mindset, it is key that we do. This type of thinking causes viewers to be satisfied with what they've watched while remaining blissfully ignorant. The fact of the matter is that history isn't always pretty, and it isn't always fascinating. When it boils down to it though, it is those disengaging aspects of the story that contribute to the overall meaning. If we don't take the time to get to the bottom of the story after watching it dramatized then we have to ask ourselves, what are we really learning?

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#) [Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Truth is always masked.**by [Kerry Herring](#) - Wednesday, January 29, 2020, 12:10 AM

The way I see it is that we've been trained to see and learn what the government wants us to see. Take high school for example. The government gets to decide which texts the schools are going to use given the proximity that you live. Like Joe said to me once, he wished he could've chosen his history book when he taught in high school so that his students got the most accurate information about what happened in the U.S. I believe Hollywood is like that as well when it comes to "based on real events" or "true story", I absolutely believe that the federal government has a say in which story within the story to tell, or how they want those stories to be told. Its reminiscent of how spell check works.... you spell something wrong or say something incorrectly and spell check underlines the word or phrase telling us that its not the right way, sometimes it just fixes itself and sometimes it makes us do the work. Very similar to how the government treats our entire life.

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#) [Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Re: Truth is always masked.**by [Melissa Johnson](#) - Saturday, February 1, 2020, 11:25 AM

Hi Kerry,

I do believe that you hit it right on with how and what the Government wants us to see. I didn't truly start thinking about politics until junior year of high school, and before that I would hear about it but not truly care and live my life. Now I am more interested on what is going on and forming my own opinions. I have seen many movies based on true events and stories. Since our teacher Mr. Escobar talked about the Amistad and how it didn't stay true to the facts, I wonder now if those movies stayed true or just didn't add a lot of facts, or were they just to attract money? I do believe that we need to look into facts more than just what people say. Just like when Mr. Escobar said on how we shouldn't just trust him right off the back we need to know for ourselves then find truth in what he says, and to see if what he says are facts. We shouldn't willing expect what someone says. I know I took that to heart.

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**Re: Truth is always masked.**

by [Kerry Herring](#) - Saturday, February 1, 2020, 11:29 PM

Hi Melissa and Ryan ,

I would venture to ask the whole class to look into why and how the federal government has such influence on our elementary and high school education. I've done a little research in finding out the truths and found out some very disturbing things. 1. The need for public school funding requires schools to follow certain guidelines to qualify for federal education funds. 2. Each state has different framework for use in history lessons especially in the books they use. 3. Some frame works refers to slavery as little as 4 times in their framework (Idaho), Some use slavery 104 times in their framework (Massachusetts) So on that point it is very much dependent on what state you call home.

In a Washington Post article Called "Democracy dies in darkness" The writer goes to ask How central was slavery to causing the civil war? One board member on the Texas Board of Education said slavery was "side issue to the Civil War" and now give or take 5 million kids will be taught that in Texas. Sad.... But its our given reality of how people, government and modern simplistic views through social networks, the internet, and movies force us to believe in an issue that has many biased takes on it. We can only look through the lens that is given to us. And for so many Americans this biased take is the wrong lens because they live in a red state or blue state, which is influenced by the amount of money they can get funded by the government based on the stipulations that force them to adhere to "Their Educational Frameworks" which include what books they use, what they are supposed to teach, how they teach these "truths about American history". Like our teachers lecture in our last class about the movie review for me pointed out. People want facts less and need the wow factor more even if its not factually in even the right ball park. My point is that the love of money is the root of all evil.... Money changes everyone and everything even things that most people wouldn't think to associate the need for money with.... Education.

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**Re: Truth is always masked.**

by [Ryan Peel](#) - Saturday, February 1, 2020, 5:20 PM

I like this! So, what I'm getting here is that sometimes the government might not want us to see the more controversial events or topics in history, right? But then, that wouldn't be true to our country's origins. We had to fight a few battles to get away from Great Britain. And at the time, Britain was the leading world power, I believe, they did have the #1 navy, so I don't think it's too far off to believe they had a large amount of power. But, we were still developing our own country, and it took a very, very long time before we got going. There are some things we'd like to forget, such as the timespace that we had practiced slavery. But, it had become a way of life in the South. Also, remember, only the rich owned slaves and the large plantation houses. The 1% of the 19th century. So, yes the current government would like us to forget that ever happened. We as a population, the current residents of the US would like to forget those events happened. But, we can't really do that. It's a part of what made us what we are now. Also, I'll question the "true story" or "based on real events" part myself. How much of it is "based" on the "real events" in history?

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**Re: Truth is always masked.**by [Ryan Peel](#) - Saturday, February 1, 2020, 5:36 PM

I just want to ask one question before we begin. How much have we been trained to see or not see? It's not possible to fully observe historical events unless you have physically lived through them. That being said, these movies are purely for entertainment. I realized it after I had made my first comment in my first post. If we want to have accurate representation of history, then that's what documentaries are for. But, I do believe you are right about the government saying or having a say in what is and is not shown on the movie screen. But, all people want when they see these films are exciting action scenes. Not the boring scenes of the politicians talking up and down and all around for hours on end. While there are events that happened that we'd all like to forget in our lives, we can't really. I'll use the slavery example here. Last term, when the cotton boon was emerging, slavery was on it's way out, actually. Slaves weren't as profitable as before when all the cotton picking, seed separation, and hanging had to be done by hand. So, their value had been going down, as it was a really slow process. But, as I remember as well during this time, the cotton gin had been invented. "Insert sarcastic 'yay, inventions' memory here." But, that invention sped up the process and made the cotton boon even more lucrative, and slavery continued as they had suddenly shot up in profitability tenfold. So, all that to say, yes, I'm pretty sure that if we could forget this ever happened, pretty sure we would. Also, if the government could erase all sources pertaining to any link we had with slavery being practiced in the US, I'm pretty sure they would.

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#) [Permalink](#) [Show parent](#) [Edit](#) [Split](#) [Delete](#) [Reply](#)**Amistad as a Source**by [McKenna Wilson](#) - Wednesday, January 29, 2020, 6:31 PM

I feel like after reading the articles provided, the textbook we use for class, and watching the trailer for the movie Amistad, it is easy to build an opinion on this movie and its historical influence for people who see it or reference it "credibly". In the article written by Eric Foner, he clearly explains that the movie is historically misleading even after being labeled "A True Story" in the trailer. Foner explains that in the film the relationship between the American judiciary system and slavery is "sugarcoated". As a student it is concerning to me that this is the film being connected to being a good show for the explanation of slavery. A lot of people see that a movie is based on a true story and automatically believe that is 100% accurate which is concerning. As for the textbook we use it is hard for me to understand why they wouldn't credit 12 Years A Slave over Amistad seeing as 12 Years has been proven to be much more accurate than the older film.

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Do we know?

by [Melissa Johnson](#) - Thursday, January 30, 2020, 8:21 PM

As I was reading and watching the "Hollywood History and Mythology" I thought it was interesting how in high school, or in school in general that they could state things that are not factually true. For example in class on January 30, our teacher talked about how when he was a high school teacher the "Amistad" movie came out, and how "some of the teachers would show the movie and teach some of its contents to the class". (in class 1/28/20). I for one never heard of "Amistad" until our history class, and I am grateful for that. That is because "Amistad" history facts are not all true facts, or come out as true. Another point that I would like to present is about the textbook authors. I for one would not like or truly trust these authors if they had put in any non-factual facts in a textbook that is to represent true facts. After hearing about how the authors changed some of their content, based on the release of a new Hollywood movie makes me think that they didn't truly know history. Or just wanted a short cut way to tell us about the past. It makes me now truly want to find out the facts for myself and to be able to tell if others are knowledgeable about our past or are just 'talkers'.

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History and Mythology

by [Riley McQueen](#) - Thursday, January 30, 2020, 10:57 PM

I am concerned when historical facts are being kept from me in any way. There are many ways that the facts are altered, movies and the education system are two of the big ones. In movies, they bend the truth in order to make the movie easier for the audience to understand which is what Disney did for the movie Davy Crockett in 1955. For the education system, it is up to the state to give guidelines on what the teachers can teach and which books to use. This can be a bad thing, the materials that the state chooses to provide to the teachers might exclude vital information on a historically important issue and by having poor resources you are teaching students poor history. Giving them only part of the picture isn't helpful to the students or the teachers.

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Re: Hollywood History & Mythology

by [Joshua Dalton](#) - Saturday, February 1, 2020, 11:15 PM

The truth should be presented as the truth regardless as to how cold it may seem. History is subject to interpretation for as long as it does not abstruse the facts. Eric Foners clarifies a couple of compelling facts in his article "The Amistad Case in Fact and Film". First Foners points out the International Treaty in 1840 making International Slave Trade illegal in International waters. While slavery was still very legal in the United States at the time. So for Hollywood to Depict Jon Quincy Adams arguing to the Supreme Court for equal human rights and depicting him as a roll model for the Abolitionist is inaccurate. On a side note since International slave trade was illegal, it makes me call into question whether the Spanish Ship the Amistad was actually coming from Cuba and not further East across the Atlantic Ocean its self. I think the ships ledger and course log should have been presented as evidence to the court. The second fact that stood out to me that Foners points to in his article is the Supreme Court, Dred Scott desision of 1857, prohibiting congress from barring slavery in the Western Territories, proclaiming Black had "no rights, which a white is bound to respect". This is a strong indication of the view and position in the highest court of the land at a time in history after the trial of the Amistad. I feel Hollywood should have reflected actual facts in this movie especially since they partnered with educational authorities to influence the minds of so many youth in this country. Unfortunately this movie "The Amistad" feels more along the lines of propaganda then "Historically Based".

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Were They Part of The Underground Railroad?

by [Riley McQueen](#) - Saturday, February 1, 2020, 11:17 PM

I think that if a town has a claim that they were part of the Underground Railroad we should take it with a grain of salt. As Foner said in the video, "We have appropriated any number of sights and any number of places from churches to farms... that we have come to believe were apart of the underground railroad" (2:23 in video). The Railroad isn't what we were taught in school, it was more of a loosely connected group of African-Americans than a vast interconnected network working to free slaves. Many places think that they have a connection to the Underground Railroad because that's what they were told when in reality they most likely weren't. To believe the towns claim there should be some hard evidence to back it up before anyone makes a definitive ruling.

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