'Nation, Genre and the Past in British and American Cinema' analyses:

i) an influential (nation-defining?) film genre from the mainstream of Hollywood production - the Western, in its endlessly mutating instantiations; and ii) British cinema's narrating of the present through the past.

It invites reflection on:

- the idea of a national cinema
- the workings of genres: adherence, resistance, evolution, expansion, revision, subversion & pastiche
- the uses of the past to narrate and interrogate the present
- cinematic landscape and myth-making
- iconographies of individual and societal identity and aspiration
- the shifting and revealing relationships between stories and histories
- the meanings of stylistic containment and excess
- the effects of casting and of screen performance on the ways in which a film is understood
- evolving reception histories
- the processes and effects of literary adaptation
- the construction of gendered identities within particular film genres

Emerging from a prevalent literary culture of a distinctive and popular hue, the Western film has spun and interrogated myth about selfhood and society through explorations of character in relation to environment. The films have traded upon many of the same characters, narrative tropes, patterns of retrospective idealizing and the same strategically selective view of history as Western novels and frontier tales serialised in pulp magazines – including from authors Owen Wister, Zane Grey, Louis L’Amour and Max Brand. But as the genre developed, cinema also established its own stylistic, narrative and ideological conventional frameworks through which to narrate the settling of the West. The Western was one of the earliest cinematic genres to find a narrative and thematic shape, and thus a market, in the silent era. Cinematic Westerns studied on this module will extend from some of the earliest silent shorts to some of the latest revisionist Westerns that attempt to rewrite the myth in less sentimental, heroic or gender-limiting forms.

The module pits the American cinematic Western against a series of British films that summon a real or imaginary past as a mechanism for narrating and reflecting upon the
present. These include *Henry V* (1944 and 1989), *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), *Brief Encounter* (1945) and *Howard's End* (1992). It examines the idea of a ‘national cinema’ by individual case-study, considers a range of films as emerging from, and contributing to, broader cultural and historical impetuses, analyses the range of literary influences, analogues and legatees associated with these cinematic releases and studies the films themselves both as cultural documents and evolving examples of cinematic art.

All films will be considered firmly in the context of their moment of production and release, as illustrative of, and contributing to broader social, cultural and political imperatives. As a necessary part of the evolving investigation, we will ask what is a national cinema, and how does it play to (and against) questions of national identity. What visions of Englishness, Britishness and Americanness have been peddled to the world through cinematic export? How has the industry both supported and challenged the idea of a stable national identity?

Central case study films are:

- *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956)
- *Man of the West* (Anthony Mann, 1958)
- *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, ‘52)
- *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, ’53)
- *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (Ford, ‘62)
- *The Magnificent Seven* (John Sturges, ’60)
- *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Leone, ‘69)
- *Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood, 1992)
- *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1945)
- *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1949)
- *Went the Day Well?* (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942)
- *The Silent Village* (Humphrey Jennings, 1943)
- *A Canterbury Tale* (Powell and Pressburger, 1944)
- *Henry V* (Laurence Olivier, 1944)
- *Henry V* (Kenneth Branagh, 1989)
- *Howards End* (Merchant/Ivory, 1992)

Please could you each acquire (or share between two if economically preferable in relation to the first three titles) a copy of the following books:

- **Owen Wister, The Virginian** The World Classics edition (which includes 'The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher’ as an appendix) - although this appendix can be accessed online if preferred.
- **Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman, eds., The Western Reader** (1998)
- **Lee Clark Mitchell, Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film** (1996)
- **Graham Greene, The Third Man**
- **Shakespeare, Henry V** (Arden or Cambridge edition)
- **E.M.Forster, Howards End**
- **Kazuo Ishiguro, The Remains of the Day**

If time allows, start reading your way selectively into *The Western Reader* and the Lee Clark Mitchell in preparation for the first half of term and into novels and the Shakespeare play for the second half of term.
Organisation
The module will be taught by two-hour weekly seminars and two film screenings per week. The thoughtful completion of all required reading and viewing is assumed for each seminar. Incursions into the recommended supplementary viewing and reading lists provided will always be in the interests of both the individual and the group.

Assessment
One 4500-word essay for formal assessment by the beginning of Summer Term 2017 (deadlines in line with instructions in the Graduate Handbook, to which all MA students are referred).
‘When I go out of the house for a walk, uncertain as yet whither I will bend my steps, and submit my self to my instinct to decide for me, I find, strange and whimsical as it may seem, that I finally and inevitably settle southwest, toward some particular wood or meadow or deserted pasture or hill in that direction. My needle is slow to settle -- varies a few degrees and does not always point due southwest, it is true, and it has good authority for this variation, but it always settles between west and south-southwest. The future lies that way to me, and the earth seems more unexhausted and richer on that side. The outline which would bound my walks would be, not a circle, but a parabola, or rather like one of those cometary orbits which have been thought to be non-returning curves, in this case opening westward, in which my house occupies the place of the sun. I turn round and round irresolute sometimes for a quarter of an hour, until I decide, for the thousandth time, that I will walk into the southwest or west. Eastward I go only by force; but westward I go free. Thither no business leads me. It is hard for me to believe that I shall find fair landscapes or sufficient wildness and freedom behind the eastern horizon. I am not excited by the prospect of a walk thither; but I believe that the forest which I see in the western horizon stretches uninterruptedly toward the setting sun, and there are no towns nor cities in it of enough consequence to disturb me. Let me live where I will, on this side is the city, on that the wilderness, and ever I am leaving the city more and more and withdrawing into the wilderness. I should not lay so much stress on this fact if I did not believe that something like this is the prevailing tendency of my countrymen. I must walk toward Oregon, and not toward Europe.’

Henry Thoreau
**Week 2: The Man of the West**

*The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956)*

*Man of the West* (Anthony Mann, 1958)*

What is a national cinema (and what is a nation?)? What role has the western played in nurturing a view of American history, nationhood and national character? What are the iconographies of the man of the west? What societal values have been ascribed to this figure? What is his relationship to the community of settlers whose life he has to some extent made possible? How has his role and person been mythicised in popular culture and the cinema?

**Supplementary viewing:**

- [Western Union](Fritz Lang, 1941)
- [Stagecoach](Ford, ‘39)
- [My Darling Clementine](Ford, 1946)
- [She Wore a Yellow Ribbon](Ford, 1949)
- [Bend of the River](Howard Hawks, ‘53)
- [Cheyenne Autumn](Ford, 1964)
- [The Man from the Alamo](Boetticher, 1953)
- [Seven Men from Now](Boetticher, 1956)

**Required reading:**

Owen Wister, ‘The Evolution of the Cow-Puncher’. Reproduced in the appendix to the World Classics edition of *The Virginian*

*Or* available online at, for example: [http://gaslight.mtroyal.ca/gaslight/evolcowp.htm](http://gaslight.mtroyal.ca/gaslight/evolcowp.htm). [One way or another, bring a copy of this essay to class with you.]


**Recommended reading:**


McGee, pp.94-108.


Andre Bazin, ‘The Western: or the American Film Par Excellence’ in Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Vol. II.


For useful and varied backgrounds, do browse on: http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/HNS/home.htm

If you are interested in viewing an early John Ford film (*Bucking Broadway* 1917 starring Harry Carey about a frontiersman who is propelled to travel to NYC), visit: http://www.europafilmtreasures.eu/PY/246/see-the-film-bucking_broadway

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**Week 3: the Western as Contemporary Political Allegory**

*High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, ‘52)*

*Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, ‘53)*

How do allegories work? How have westerns been used as the conduit through which to allegorise contemporary American political concerns? Is the genre able to accommodate such political appropriations?

**Supplementary viewing:**

[The Tin Star (Anthony Mann, ’57)]

**Required reading:**

John W. Cunningham, ‘The Tin Star’ (first published in *Colliers Magazine*, 1947) [pdf]. [Bring a copy to class with you.] 

Kristin Thompson, ‘The Concept of Cinematic Excess’ in *Film Theory and Criticism* pp.513-524. [Bring a copy to class with you.]

Anthony Smith, ‘Images of the Nation: Cinema, art and national identity’, Ch. 3 in Mette Hjort and Scott MacKensie, eds., *Cinema and Nation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 45-59. [pdf] [Bring a copy to class with you.] 

Susan Sontag, ‘Notes on camp’ in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (1964). Sontag is credited with bringing the term ‘camp’ into the mainstream repertoire of aesthetic judgments. Also available online.

eg: http://interglacial.com/~sburke/pub/prose/Susan_Sontag_-_Notes_on_Camp.html

Jennifer Peterson, ‘The Competing Tunes of Johnny Guitar: Liberalism, Sexuality, Masquerade’, in

Recommended reading:
McGee, pp.68-77 (*Johnny Guitar*).
Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks* (Exeter University Press, 1997)

*Week 4: ‘What kinda man are you?’: styling the initiate and interrogating the myth-making*

*The Magnificent Seven* (John Sturges, ’60)*
*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (Ford, ‘62)*

What is the relationship of the pioneering gunslinger or western hero both to language and to literacy? In what does his own power reside? How do westerns mediate between the past and the future, and what is the meaning and nature of the cinematic present in which these stories play out? How do they evoke, configure and/or reflect upon the implicitly or explicitly summoned past?

Required reading:
Robin Wood, ‘Shall we gather at the river?; the late films of John Ford’ *Film Comment* v.7, n. 3 (Fall, 1971), reprinted in Caughie, *Theories of Authorship* pp.83-93 – key texts.

Recommended reading:
McGee, pp.133-140 (*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*).

Supplementary viewing:
[Winchester '73 (Anthony Mann, 1950)]
[The Man from Laramie (Anthony Mann, 1955)]
[The Left Handed Gun (Arthur Penn, 1958)]
[The Shootist (Don Seigel, 1976)]

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**Week 5: Generic hyperboles and revisionism**

*Once Upon a Time in the West* (Leone, ‘69)*
*Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood, 1992)*

What implicit discourses of the genre become explicit in these films? What is the meaning of the heroic in these cinematic contexts? How do these films negotiate their own ironies and earnestnesses? What narratives of nationhood are here dramatized and suppressed?

How does *Unforgiven* operate intertextually? What generic, iconographic and star conventions are referenced and how are these references then employed? How do women, and the looks of women, ‘speak’ in this film? How is manhood valued and competitively assessed? How does the film both narrate and more broadly reflect upon the processes of western myth-making?

[If time allows, get hold of a copy of and view the delightful *Rango* (dir. Gore Verbinski) voices of Johnny Depp and Isla Fisher. (This just for fun.)]

[The Leone dollars trilogy – see previous week’s list]
[The Left Handed Gun (Arthur Penn, 1958)]
[High Plains Drifter (Clint Eastwood, 1973)]
[Pale Rider (Clint Eastwood, 1985)]
[Dead Man (Jim Jarmusch, 1995)]
Required reading:
Marcia Landy, ‘He Went Thataway: The Form and Style of Leone’s Italian Westerns’ in Kitses and Rickman, pp.213-222.
Jane Tompkins, West of Everything: the inner life of westerns (1992), Ch. 1, pp.23-45. [pdf]
Lee Clark Mitchell, ‘Last Rites’ in Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film (1996), pp. 257-264 – key texts. [Bring a copy to class with you.]
Kenneth Turan, ‘A Fistful of Memories: Interview with Clint’ in Kitses and Rickman, pp. 245-29.

Supplementary reading:
Roland Barthes, ‘Myth Today’ (etexts available online)

And if you’ve a few idle minutes available, after you’ve seen OUATITW feel free to indulge briefly in: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyUSHOW92I4

[A Fistful of Dollars (Leone, ‘64)] [Seven Samurai (Akira Kurosawa,1954)]
[For a Few Dollars More (Leone, ‘65)] [Bad Day at Black Rock (Sturges, ‘55)]
[The Good, the Bad and the Ugly (Sergio Leone, ‘66)] [The Ballad of Little Jo (Maggie Greenwald, 1993)]

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WEEK 6

No screenings or seminar
Part II - British Cinema: Negotiations with the Past and Present

WEEK 7:

Village Invasions: Landscape and Identity in British Wartime Films

*For The Silent Village, watch whole film online (35 minutes)*

Went the Day Well? (Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942)
The Silent Village (Humphrey Jennings, 1943)*
A Canterbury Tale (Powell and Pressburger, 1944)

Writers, artists, and filmmakers for generations have used the village as site and symbol of British national identity. In this seminar we discuss wartime evocations of the nation-as-village through films that offer different interpretations of this theme. Wartime propaganda insisted on national solidarity and the image of the diverse but united community was a readymade model for filmmakers and others to exploit. We focus on three films. Went the Day Well? is an eerie take on a Graham Greene short story in which Germans take over an English village; The Silent Village transposes a story of invasion onto a Welsh mining village; and A Canterbury Tale presents the tensions between old and new, rural and urban as a village endures the invasion of British and American soldiers and other wartime workers. All three can help us think about the aims of propaganda efforts and the anxieties they evoke as well as the enduring image of the village as symbol of community, eccentricity, and opposition.

Required reading:


Supplementary reading:

Kevin Jackson, The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader (Manchester: Carcanet, 2004).

Supplementary viewing:

The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (Powell and Pressburger, 1943)
A Matter of Life and Death (Powell and Pressburger, 1946)
Listen to Britain (Humphrey Jennings, 1942)
Fires Were Started (Humphrey Jennings, 1943)
The Wicker Man (Robin Hardy, 1973)
The 2nd World War changed social structures and gender relations in Britain as elsewhere. A raft of films released near or after the end of the war made it their project explicitly to reflect on the role of women in both private and public space. How do these films narrate the story of their central female protagonist and in what ways do the preoccupations or social needs of their moment find narratively encoded expression within these tales?

Alongside Brief Encounter, we place another post-war British film The Third Man which represents a collaborative engagement between director Carol Reed and writer Graham Greene. We look at the detail of Greene's writing, of Carol's direction, at the performances this elicited, at the film's cultural-historical roots in, and reflections on, its moment, and at its evolving reception since.

Supplementary viewing:
- The Seventh Veil (Compton Bennett, 1945)
- The Wicked Lady (Leslie Arliss, 1945)
- Fanny by Gaslight (Anthony Asquith, 1944)
- Black Narcissus (Powell and Pressburger, 1946)
- The Red Shoes (Powell and Pressburger, 1948)
- The Fallen Idol (Carol Reed, 1948)
- Odd Man Out (Carol Reed, 1947)
- Brighton Rock (John Boulting, 1947)
- Our Man in Havana (Carol Reed, 1957)
- The End of the Affair (Neil Jordan, 1999)

Required reading:

Graham Greene, The Third Man – bring copy to seminar

[Bring copy to seminar.]


Charles Dazin, In Search of the Third Man (Methuen, 1999) [sample generously according to
taste] (key texts and other copies in library).
Orson Welles and Peter Bogdanovich, *This is Orson Welles* (New York, 1998), pp.219-222 (on key texts and a couple of other copies in library).

**Supplementary reading:**
Either: *Masterworks of the British Cinema* (includes screenplay of *Brief Encounter*)
Or: Noel Coward, *Brief Encounter* (screenplay)
Sue Harper, *Women in British Cinema: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know* (Continuum, 2000), Ch. 2, pp.30-51 (key texts).
Chapman, pp. 201-215 (key texts).
Peter William Evans, *Carol Reed* (Manchester University Press, 2005), Ch. 4, pp.80-105 (key texts).
Sue Harper, *Picturing the past: The Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film* (BFI, 1994), pp. 128-131
LP 4.30942 HAR (on costume in *The Wicked Lady*)
Noel Coward, *Collected Plays* (Methuen, 1983-2003), v.3 includes the play ‘Still Life’ from which *Brief Encounter* was adapted.
André Bazin, ‘In Defense of Mixed Cinema’, in *What is Cinema?* vol.1., pp.53-75. (NB: I see that the majority of this essay is currently available via Google books online. And there are, of course, multiple copies in library.)
Brenda Davies, ed., *Carol Reed* (London: BFI, 1978)
Jim Gribble, ‘*The Third Man: Graham Greene and Carol Reed*’, *Literature/Film Quarterly*, v.26, n.3 (1998): 235-239
Kevin Jackson, *Graham Greene Film Reader* (Carcanet, 1993)
Brian Diemert, *Graham Greene’s Thriller and the 1930s* (McGill- Queen’s University Press, 1997)

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**WEEK 9**

‘Within this wooden O’:

*Henry V*, theatrical self-consciousness and questions of transmediation
How does this play reflect upon performance possibilities in its moment of first production? How does it emerge discernibly from some of the political imperatives of its first moment of production? How is spectacle treated in the play? What is the role of the Chorus? In what causes has the play been appropriated in performance over the past hundred years? How have editorial decisions been employed to support those performance interpretive decisions? How has the play been used to fashion the nation and an idea of national identity and national character?

**Required reading:**
- Shakespeare, *Henry V* [Bring copy to seminar.]
- And then at least 2 of the following 4 (any 2, as suits):

**Supplementary reading:**
- *Masterworks of the British Cinema* (Faber and Faber, 1990) - includes screenplay of Olivier’s *Henry V*.
- Richard Burt and Linda Boose, eds., *Shakespeare the movie: popularizing the plays on film, tv and video* (London: Routledge, 1997)

**Supplementary viewing:**
- *That Hamilton Woman* (Alexander Korda, 1941) – starring Olivier
- *This Happy Breed* (David Lean, 1944) – with Olivier v/o
- *Henry V* (Bogdanov/Pennington, 1990)
- *Silent Shakespeare DVD*
- *Hamlet* (Olivier, 1948)
- *Much Ado About Nothing* (Branagh, 1993)
- *Hamlet* (Branagh, 1996)
WEEK 10

The costume drama and English heritage film of the 1990s

Howards End (Merchant/Ivory, 1992)
The Remains of the Day (Merchant/Ivory, 1993)

Is costume drama tepid cinema, or this that too easy, or too generic a dismissal? Do such films support François Truffaut’s much cited claim that there is “a certain incompatibility between the terms ‘cinema’ and ‘Britain’” (and what did he even mean by that?)? How do we account for the lavish attention to set, costume, period properties etc in these films? What role do things play in them? What versions of Englishness do these films peddle and to/for whom? How would you account for the narrational style of Ishiguro’s The Remains of the Day? What is at stake, materially and symbolically, in Howards End?

Supplementary viewing:
Room with a View (Merchant/Ivory, 1985)
Room with a View (Nicholas Renton, 2007)
Atonement (Joe Wright, 2007)

Required Reading:
E.M. Forster, Howards End – bring copy to seminar.
Andrew Higson, English heritage, English cinema (OUP, 2003), Chs 2, 5, pp.46-85, 146-193 [pdfs].

Supplementary reading:
Glen Cavaliero, A Reading of E.M. Forster (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979) MA183.9 FOR/C
Pam Cook, Fashioning the Nation: Costume and Identity in British Cinema (BFI, 1996) LP4.30942 COO
David Dowling, Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf (London: Macmillan, 1985) MA 183.3 DOW

B. Lewis, Kazuo Ishiguro (Manchester: MUP, 2000) MA 193.9 ISH/L
Claire Monk, ‘Sexuality and the Heritage Film’, *Sight and Sound*, v.5, n.10 (October 1995)
Cynthia E. Wong, Kazuo Ishiguro (Tavistock: Northcote, 2000). MA 193.9 ISH/W
André Bazin, ‘In Defense of Mixed Cinema’, in *What is Cinema?* vol.1., pp.53-75. (NB: a large chunk of this is currently available via Google books online.)