

## The Reel World: Contemporary Issues on Screen

### Required Films:

- “Before the Rain” (1994)
- “L’America” (Italy/Albania 1994)
- “Burnt by the Sun” (Russia 1994)
- “Forgotten Melody for a Flute” (Russia 1988)
- “Earth” (India 1998)
- “Indochine” (France/Vietnam 1992)
- “Xiu-Xiu the Sent Down Girl” (China 1999)
- “Zinat” (Iran 1994)
- “Paradise Now” (Palestine 2005)
- “Hotel Rwanda” (Rwanda 2004)
- “A Dry White Season” (South Africa 1989)
- “Patrice Lumumba” (Zaire 2000)
- “Missing” (Chile 1982)
- “Men With Guns” (Guatemala 1997)
- “Motorcycle Diaries” (South America 2004)
- “Official Story” (Argentina 1985)

### Required Books:

- *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* by Philip Gourevitch
- *A Dry White Season* by André Brink

### Course Goals

There are several specific goals to achieve for the course:

- Students will learn to view films *historically* as one of a number of sources offering an *interpretation* of the past
- Students will acquire a knowledge of the key terms, facts, and events in contemporary world history and thereby gain an informed historical perspective
- Students will take from the class the skills to critically appraise varying historical arguments based on film and to clearly express their own interpretations
- Students will develop the ability to synthesize and integrate information and ideas as well as to distinguish between fact and opinion
- Students will be encouraged to develop an openness to new ideas and, most importantly, the capacity to think critically

### Course Requirements and Procedures

This course is taught in conjunction with “The Contemporary World,” although that course is *not* a prerequisite for this one. We will, however, use some of the lessons for that course as background for the films we will see in this course. For students who have already taken “The Contemporary World,” they can review those lessons to refresh their memories before watching the relevant films listed above. Students who have not had

“The Contemporary World” will need to read the lessons that correspond to the film titles above (which will be made clear as we move through the course) for background and historical context to the films. You will be required to read roughly a chapter of text for each of the relevant lessons. As a complement to this reading, there are a number of video clips, some original source material, and some web sites for you to visit as designated in the lessons.

We will *not* emphasize issues of art, cinematography, or the directing involved in making the films we view. Rather, we will use film as our window unto the world, examining the historical context of the films themselves as well as reviews and articles about our selected films to emphasize and critique the varying interpretations of history as presented on the big screen.

To begin your course work, click on “Lesson 1” from the navigation bar once you have read this home page and received all your materials. This will take you to the first lesson. Ideally, you should complete the lessons in order; however, the availability of some films may be limited, so students may have to view and complete lessons according to when they can obtain the relevant titles. Each lesson will have instructions on how to proceed. You may also e-mail your instructor any time with questions, comments, or problems.

### **Assignments**

Course work is comprised of online discussions and reactions to the films, three written assignments (3-4 pages), an Internet Assignment, and a Final Paper (5-7 pages) that ties the themes of the various films viewed for the course together.

3 Written Assignments worth 15 points each	45 points
1 Internet Assignment worth 5 points	5 points
16 Discussion Prompts, 2 points each, up to	30 points
Final Paper	20 points
TOTAL	100 points