

F301: FILMS OF THE GREAT WAR

World War I arguably set the stage for the remainder of the 20th Century. Its tumultuous impact on our present world even in the 21st Century is significant.

This course is one of a number of OLLI courses covering the centennial of the Great War. War has always attracted serious filmmakers, and World War I is no exception. We will do an historical examination of representative aspects of that war as seen through the medium of film. The class goal is to understand how films produced about the war reflected contemporary reality or perceived reality of the war. Ranging from classics such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Paths of Glory* to more recent productions such as *Regeneration* and *Capitaine Conan*, the films have been chosen for their artistic merit, historical accuracy, and realism.

The theme of significant World War I films has remained overwhelmingly focused on the utter futility and anti-heroic nature of that war for the better part of a century. And indeed the disparate films in this course are linked by their portrayal of World War I in that light. *All Quiet on the Western Front* goes from idealism to futility and disillusionment; *Paths of Glory* looks at ruthlessness, stupidity and opportunism; *Joyeux Noel* offers a ray of humanity; *Regeneration* provides a glimpse at post traumatic stress syndrome; and *Capitaine Conan* explores the brutality and rigidity of war. All take the perspective of looking up from the trenches rather than looking down from the heights of power and authority.

Time constraints and film length limit us to five films. A few class sessions will run 5 to 15 minutes over schedule and there will be some split sessions. There will be historical background commentary and class discussion of the films and the Great War, also dubbed afterwards as the “War to End All Wars”.

Additional course materials, including commentary on the films and the authors of the novels, are posted on the OLLI DocStore for your reading prior to class. You can reach me at boppel1@verizon.net with any questions or comments.

SCHEDULE

March 18: Introduction to Course F301. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (U.S., 1930, 132 minutes) – part 1

March 25: *All Quiet on the Western Front* (part 2). Discussion.

April 1: *Paths of Glory* (U.S., 1957, 87 minutes)

April 8: Discussion. *Joyeux Noel* (French, 2005, 116 minutes, subtitled) – part 1

April 15: *Joyeux Noel* (part 2). Discussion

April 22: *Regeneration* (British, 1997, 96 minutes)

April 29: Discussion. *Capitaine Conan* (French, 1996, 130 minutes, subtitled) – part 1

May 8: *Capitaine Conan* (part 2). Summary and final discussion.