Masculinity in Literature and Cinematic Adaptations

Teaching: 2 hours/week seminar; 2 hrs/week film screenings

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Consultation Hours: Mon 10-12 and by appointment

Assessment: 1 assessed essay, 5,000 words (100% of final mark)

Course Description: The course investigates, on the basis of some film and gender theory, the portrayal of masculinity in literature and Hollywood movie adaptations. Consideration of male ‘types’ with a long literary and cinematic history, such as male monsters, creators, truth-seekers (detectives), rebels, victims, self-mythologizing men (e.g. cowboys) and ‘man’s men’, will enable a comparative investigation of traditions of representation and established clichés surrounding masculinity (the ruggedness of individualism, the justifiability of violence, the naturalness of compulsory heterosexuality; narcissistic and masochistic identification; mythologization and self-mythologization).

The course seeks to investigate the following related questions: 1. Which kind(s) of relationships are envisioned between Man and his World (society)? 2. is there a ‘crisis’ of masculinity, and if so, how is it addressed? 3. which historical developments can be noted in the portrayal of masculinities? 4. how does the move from text to screen affect the representation of masculinities? 5. Which roles have been assigned to masculinity in literary and particularly film theory?

Course Materials: All texts will be provided on UCL Moodle. All films for film screenings will be provided by the library, although students are free to purchase these films, most of which can be purchased from Amazon at minimal cost, themselves, or stream them via the university’s streaming system. Please note that while it is perfectly legitimate to rely on online versions of texts for the purpose of classroom discussions, you must use a proper book version of all texts for essay writing (i.e. the text you write about must be verifiable, meaning citeable by page and complete bibliographic reference).
**Attendance:** Attendance at seminars is mandatory and will be taken at each seminar. Students with more than 3 unexcused absences will not be allowed to proceed to assessment. Attendance at film screenings is voluntary, so long as you make sure you see each film before the seminar in which it is discussed.

**Sequencing:** Since the literary texts are the ‘originals’ and the films the adaptations of these texts, you should make every effort to read each text before viewing the film based on it (films viewed before the text is read have a way of ‘overlaying’ the text and leading to misunderstandings, confusion and misreadings).

**Weekly Syllabus:**

**Week 1**
Introduction

**Week 2**
*The Creation of Man: Man as Monster and Creator*
  - Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818)*

**Week 3**
*Manly Justice I: The Discovery of the Truth*
  - Washington Irving, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820)*

**Week 4**
*Manly Justice II: The Defence of Male Rights*
  - Heinrich von Kleist, *Michael Kohlhaas* (1811)*

**Week 5**
*Man and (vs.) Society I: Men as Victims of Society*
  - George Orwell, *1984* (1948)*

**READING WEEK**

**Week 6**
*Man and (vs.) Society II: Men as Victims of Government*
  - Annie Proulx, ‘Brokeback Mountain’ (1997)*

**Week 7**
*Men and Myth I: Turning a Man into a Myth*
  - Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902)*
Weeks 8-9

*Men and Myth II: (Un)Manning the Manly Man*
Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep* (1939)*
film: Howard Hawks, *The Big Sleep* (1946)

Week 10
discussion of student projects

Bibliography


