Swords and Scandals: Ancient History in Films, Documentaries, and Online

Meets Wednesdays 6:30-8:40

Films such as Gladiator, The Passion of the Christ, and 300, documentaries such as The Last Stand of the 300, and internet courses such as “Was Alexander Great?” perhaps influence how the majority of people now understand antiquity. But are these visual media historically reliable representations of the past? Or do they rather primarily reflect changing artistic and societal concerns? How has the use of digital back-lots, blue screens, and other technical innovations affected how the past is being represented and understood? In this course we will examine the representation of the ancient world in films, documentaries, and online media from the “Sword and Sandal” classics of the past such as Ben-Hur to the present, within the scholarly frameworks of ancient history and modern historiography.

Professor Rogers  Spring 2015