

The Department of History, The University of Sheffield

Induction Task - to complete ahead of your personal tutor meeting

Most personal tutor meetings will take place on Thursday 26th September; you will be provided exact details of these meetings on Monday 23rd September.

The task

In preparation for your personal tutor meeting, we would like you to watch a historical film or TV drama. You will have a few minutes in class to discuss the film with your tutor and peers. This will give you a chance to get to know each other, while also introducing a few questions about what makes good history that are likely to recur in the History Workshop module.

What is a historical film, and where do I look for this?

By historical film, we mean a movie or TV show that dramatizes historical events, people, and periods. You should choose your own – you might want to find something related to your own interests or you might want to try something new – but if you are looking for examples here are two lists:

www.imdb.com/list/ls009668055/

www.theguardian.com/film/series/reelhistory

There are plenty of full length historical films/dramas on the likes of Netflix, Amazon, and Youtube, but you can also find many on the University's Box of Broadcast resource:

www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/cdfiles/bob

Questions to consider

Here are a few questions you should think about before the meeting:

How does your chosen film/drama present the past? How does the director convey historical events, ideas, settings and so on?

Is the film accurate? How are you judging accuracy? If the film is inaccurate, does it have any historical merit?

How does history on film differ from written accounts of the past? Does history on film have advantages and disadvantages over its written equivalent?

Can film be 'good history'? What do we mean by 'good history'?

Need some help?

If you want some help in thinking about the questions above, you might find this academic article helpful, as Robert Rosenstone explores the similarities and differences between written and filmic history, categorizes historical films, then considers criteria for judging their merits:

Robert Rosenstone, 'The Historical Film as Real History', *Film-Historia* V (1995), 5-23.

<http://goo.gl/BQV7RB>

You can also read commentary on historical films by past and present members of the department at our 'History Matters' blog:

www.historymatters.group.shef.ac.uk/suffragette-forrest-gump-feminism/

www.historymatters.group.shef.ac.uk/wolf-hall-historical-accuracy-expert/

www.historymatters.group.shef.ac.uk/remembering-draft-riots-scorseses-gangs-york-civil-war-sesquicentennial/