Lifelong Learning Mississauga

Reflections in the Hall of Mirrors: American Movies and the Politics of Idealism

Thursdays, April 3 to May 22, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon

Burnhamthorpe Community Centre
1500 Gulleden Drive, Mississauga, ON, L4X 2T7

April 3  Introduction: If History Has Taught Us Anything...The Kennedy Era 1960-1963
The first class introduces students to the overall theme of the course. We begin with an illustration of how American movies act as a tissue sample of the social and political culture of the nation. The idealism of the Kennedy era along and his tragic assassination continues to ripple through the decades.

April 10  You Can't Always Get What You Want: The Johnson Era 1964-1968
Although 1964 began with the virtues of the Civil Rights Act, the Lyndon Johnson age was coloured by the escalation of the war in Vietnam, a conflict that inadvertently added to the increasing racial tensions at home. We delve into movies of varied qualities which absorbed the divisive issues of the period.

April 17  An Offer You Can't Refuse: The Nixon Era 1968-1974
The Nixon era – reactionary and repressive as it was – produced some of the most provocative, controversial, and enduring American films. Included in this lecture are some alluring commentaries on American life.

The holistic Carter period tried to put salve on the country's wounds over the failure of Vietnam and Nixon's resignation after Watergate. We will turn our attention to movies that sought to define the social lassitude of the time rather than shy away from it.

American movies in the Reagan years not only produced retrograde aspects of American life, movie audiences changed as well. The popular movies of the Reagan era were evasive, producing a wilful kind of amnesia in the mass audience. The Bush era, with its kinder, gentler aura, ushered in movies that confounded the nation's grip on reality. The hit movies also presented false glimpses of history.

If the Bush years were about erasing the political reality of its time in order to be 'kinder, gentler," the President himself became reflected in the movies.

The George W. Bush era is divided into two portions. The first part comes before 9/11, when the Cold War was over, and action films reflected a country with superheroes defending the nation against terrorist attacks. The second part, after 9/11, when (for a brief period) American action films lost some of their jingoistic stridency and revealed a country in grief and contemplation.

May 22  Invisible Man: The Barack Obama era 2008-2016
When Barack Obama was elected as the first black President of the United States in November 2008, it was a momentous event in American history. But those hopes have waned somewhat since. in part, it was because Obama, the avatar of another New Frontier, couldn't be found and wasn't allowed to exist.

Course Director: Kevin Courrier, Author and Film Critic

Registration Fee: $40.00 per person/per series

For information or to register, go to www.lifelong-learning-mississauga.com or Phone 647-300-4878
Filmography

1) If History Has Taught Us Anything: The Kennedy Era 1960-1963
   The Godfather, Part II
   The Kennedy Assassination (TV coverage)
   Seven Days in May
   The Manchurian Candidate

2) You Can't Always Get What You Want: The Johnson Era 1964-1968
   Dr. Strangelove
   In the Heat of the Night
   Cool Hand Luke
   Night of the Living Dead
   Bullitt

   Easy Rider
   Alice's Restaurant
   Midnight Cowboy
   Dirty Harry
   Joe
   Billy Jack

   The Deer Hunter
   Coming Home
   The Conversation
   Who'll Stop the Rain
   The Conversation
   Nashville

   Invasion of the Body Snatchers
   Winter Kills
   Blow Out
   excerpts on Reagan era 'feel good' movies from Decade Under the Influences
   Forrest Gump
   Field of Dreams
   True Believer

   Dave
   In the Line of Fire
   Primary Colors
   Wag the Dog

   9/11 television coverage
   We Were Soldiers
   Tears of the Sun
   The 25th Hour
   Charlie Wilson's War

8) Invisible Man: The Barack Obama era 2008-2016
   Rachel Getting Married
   The Visitor
   Unstoppable
   The Butler