

A yellow box of Kodachrome 8mm movie film is positioned at the top center. The box features the text "KODACHROME MOVIE FILM 8mm" and the Kodak logo. Below the box, several film reels are visible. On the left, a white reel is partially shown. On the right, a grey reel is partially shown. In the foreground, a large, light brown reel is prominently displayed, showing its central hub and the film's sprocket holes.

**Real to Reel:  
Introduction to Film Studies**

**Spring Semester**

**Dr. Darren-Jon Ashmore.**

**Spring 2010**

**Timetable: TBC**

**Classroom: TBC**

**Instructor: Dr. Darren Ashmore**

**Office Hours: TBC**

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

A comparative survey of world cinema that focuses primarily on independent and art-house masterpieces rather than on Hollywood glitz and glamour films. The course will focus on directors, actors, and studios that are leaving a lasting mark on cinema history, though it will also focus on how regional cinema aesthetics differ from what we now know and the Hollywood Norm. The aim of this course is not only to introduce students to thinking about motion pictures as more than just entertainment and, as such, will also to use cinema as a window into the culture and sensibilities of their creators. We will be viewing one feature film per week in the main. Much of the class will revolve around in-class discussions of the works viewed and the books read.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- To provide an introduction and an overview of World Cinema, focusing primarily on the works of recent directors.
- To acquire a greater aesthetic understanding of the differences between the different 'cultures of film' which are represented in the course.
- To come to a greater understanding of the cultures that are depicted in the films (and that produced them into the bargain).
- To develop a critical sense and appreciation for cinema as a social/historical tool.
- To develop student's analytical skills and ability to think critically about the use of history in developing an understanding of modern Japan.



## STUDY MATERIALS:

### <Core Textbook>

- Kolker, Robert. P. Film, Form, and Culture. McGraw-Hill. 2005. ISBN-10: 0073123617. ISBN-13: 978-0073123615

<Other Readings> (The following can be found in the AIU library – the electronic version of the course outline has hyperlinks to the OPAC section on the AIU intranet)

- [Alien zone : cultural theory and contemporary science fiction cinema / edited by Annette Kuhn. -- : pbk. -- Verso, 1990.](#)
- [Cinema and history / Marc Ferro ; translated by Naomi Greene. -- alk.paper, pbk. : alk. paper. -- Wayne State University Press, 1988. -- \(Contemporary film studies\).](#)
- [Cinema anime : critical engagements with Japanese animation / edited by Steven T. Brown. -- Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.](#)
- [Film and the working class : the feature film in British and American society / Peter Stead. -- Routledge, 1989. -- \(Cinema and society\).](#)
- [The haunted screen : expressionism in the German cinema and the influence of Max Reinhardt / by Lotte H. Eisner ; \[translated from the French by Roger Greaves\]. -- : pbk. -- 1st California paperback ed. -- University of California Press, 1973.](#)
- [The Oxford history of world cinema / edited by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. -- Oxford University Press, 1996.](#)
- [Unspeakable images : ethnicity and the American cinema / edited by Lester D. Friedman. -- : cl. -- University of Illinois Press, 1991.](#)

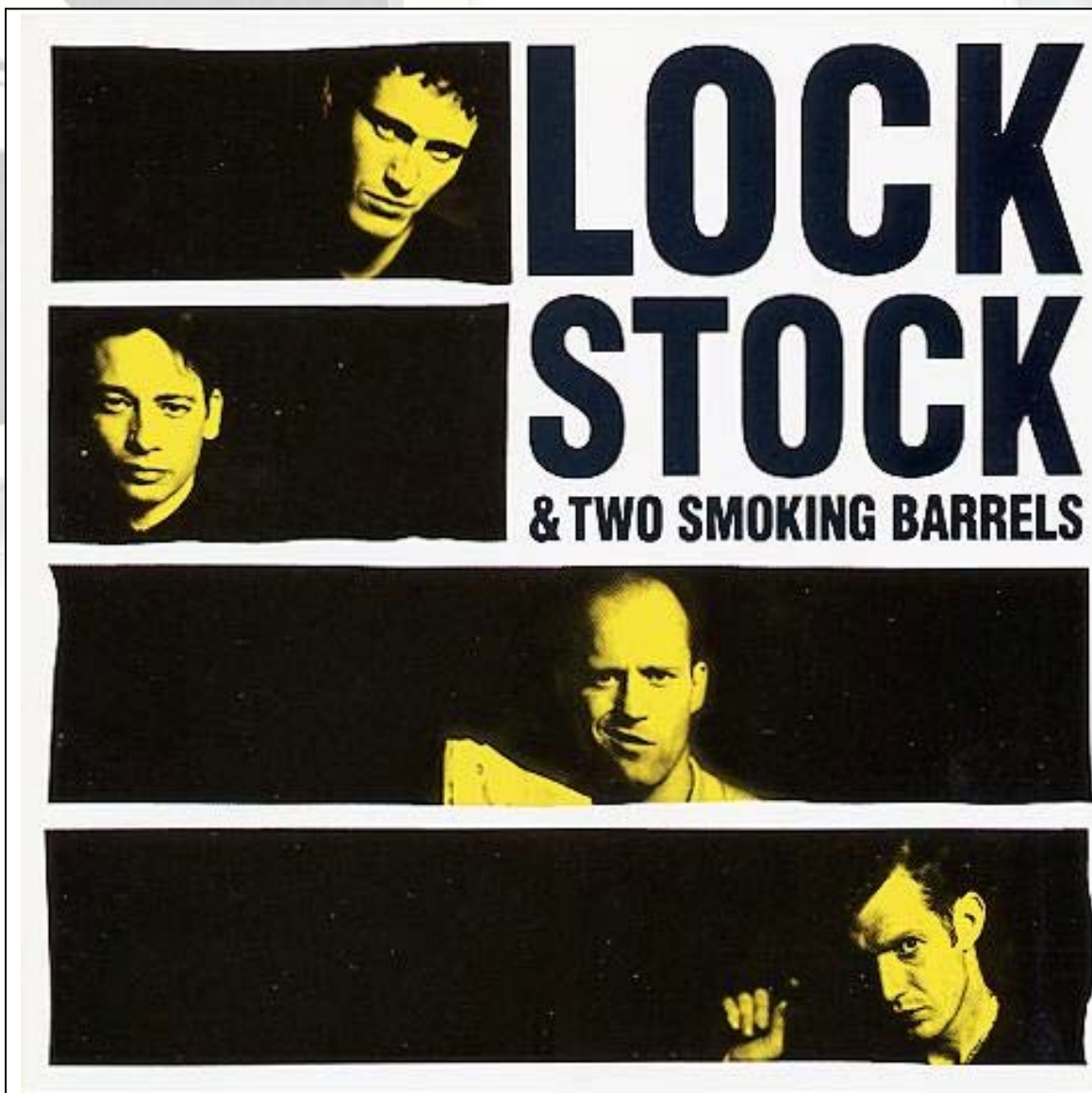
Other readings will be mandated in the course materials – these will either be available from the library, or provided for you at the appropriate time.



**ASSESSMENT:** Students' achievement of the stated course objectives will be measured in terms of their performance in the following three areas:

- (1) essay (60%)
- (2) Class participation and presentation (20%)
- (3) Mid-term exam (20%).

**NOTE:** As you can see, class discussions will earn you a good percentage of your final mark. Therefore you must be willing and ready to communicate in our reviews of each film.



## Essay Questions

Any of the Seminar questions may be selected, and expanded upon, as your essay topic for this course. However, essay titles ***MUST*** be submitted to me ***before the end of week three.***

**POLICIES:** All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for this course. Acts of plagiarism or other forms academic dishonesty will be dealt with harshly.

See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism> for more information. To this end, an electronic copy of the essay will also be collected to check using plagiarism software.

## COURSE FORMAT AND ACTIVITIES:

**CLASS FORMAT:** Each week will be divided into a Lecture and an open seminar session. The lecture will present the main views on each subject area and provide the students with a starting point for their own thought. The follow-up seminar will require the students to discuss and/or make presentations on their understanding of the material.

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**THE FILMS:** *It is the responsibility of each student to make sure that they have seen each film before appointed week, as dictated in the syllabus. Some films will be in the library or the LDIC on DVD format. Other may be rentable commercially. However, all films will be available in an electronic format (either Mp4 or AVI) from my office (please bring along a USB pen, or drive).*

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**NOTE:** All films where possible will be subtitled in Japanese, however in some cases it will only be possible to provide English subtitles and in others no subtitles at all.

**NOTE:** Attendance is compulsory: The course is popular and places are limited. Please respect this rule.

## SCHEDULE:

### Part One: Cultural rewriting

**Theme:** *The Art of the Silver Screen: An Introduction to Critical Analysis*

**Lecture:** Introducing the subject of Comparative Film Studies with a series of short films and discussions on the nature of the 'silver screen' and the social impact of film as a medium.

**Seminar Question:** NA

**Readings:** NA

**Theme:** Rewriting History: *Downfall*.

**Lecture:** Based on Joachim Fest's book, "Inside Hitler's Bunker", Bernd Eichinger paints a bloody portrait of the deteriorating state of the sanity of the Nazi elite as their dreams of a 'Thousand Year Reich' come crashing down amid allied shells. The first film in post-war German history to even attempt to paint Adolf Hitler as anything other than a pathologically deranged monster, this film has won equal praise and revulsion for its moral stance and honest appreciation of these events.

**Seminar Question:** "Where is the dividing line between art and morality? When should German film makers stop apologizing for the past?"

**Readings:** As provided.

**Theme:** Rewriting History: *Rashomon*.

**Lecture:** Based on a couple of Akutagawa short stories, "Rashomon" paints a painful picture of the historical process stripped bare. Kurosawa rips the refined heart out of Heian Japan and exposes the personal motivations – and warped points of view – which underpinned this "golden age".

**Seminar Question:** "Why does it not matter that we never know is telling the truth?"

**Readings:** As provided.

**Theme:** Rewriting History: *Enemy at The Gates*.

**Lecture:** The story of the famed Russian Sniper-Ace Vasily Grigorevich Zaytsev, this film is an excellent example of the Hollywood Effect – in which material, history, even reality itself is bent into shape to serve the purposes of the 'formulaic tradition' which Hollywood's finest work to serve.

**Seminar Question:** "Is history being served by such films, and what will happen to a generation who has more contact with the past through such material than with any other sources?"

**Readings:** As provided.

**Theme:** *Schindler's List*.

**Lecture:** A harrowing story of salvation and hope amid the destruction of WWII. Similar in scope to both 'Downfall' and 'Enemy at the Gates', this film has drawn mountains of praise and criticism for its handling of both the Holocaust and its renovation of the character of Oskar Schindler.

**Seminar Question:** “Whether he was a good man or not in life, Oskar Schindler will – thanks to this film – forever be remembered as one of the Righteous. Would the real Oskar be ashamed of how great a man he has become since his death, in the hands of Stephen Spielberg?”

**Readings:** As provided.

**Theme:** *Dreams and Desires: A Matter of Life and Death.*

**Lecture:** Celebrating the work of Emeric Pressburger and Michael Powell – Britain’s greatest film makers, this film explores the issues of friendship, love and loss against the backdrop of World War Two. Considered to be the finest example of English Cinema.

**Seminar Question:** “Are we dealing with a complete illusion or reality”? how do Powell and Pressburger weave ambiguity into their narrative?”

**Theme:** *Dreams and Desires: Metropolis.*

**Lecture:** *Metropolis* is an anime movie released in Japan in 2001 and based on the *Metropolis* manga created by the late Osamu Tezuka. Written and directed by Rintaro and Katsuhiro Otomo, the film is essentially a reworking of Fritz Lang’s masterwork of the same name, but with a decidedly modern Japanese slant.

**Seminar Question:** “Technology, and the fear of technology, seems to be the overwhelming theme of this film. However, if that is truly the case, then what is the purpose of Tima’s ultimate redemption?”

**Readings:** As provided.

**Theme:** *Dreams and Desires: Lost Horizons.*

**Lecture:** Frank Capra’s masterpiece of unreality, in which the crew of a crashed airliner discover the valley of Shangrila and must make some very difficult decisions as to what to do with their lives and the opportunities which the accident affords them.

**Seminar Question:** “Immortality is often used as a tool of moral incision in film-making; what imperatives are being discussed here in such a device as Shangrila?”

**Readings:** As provided.

**Theme:** *Dreams and Desires: Tokyo Story.*

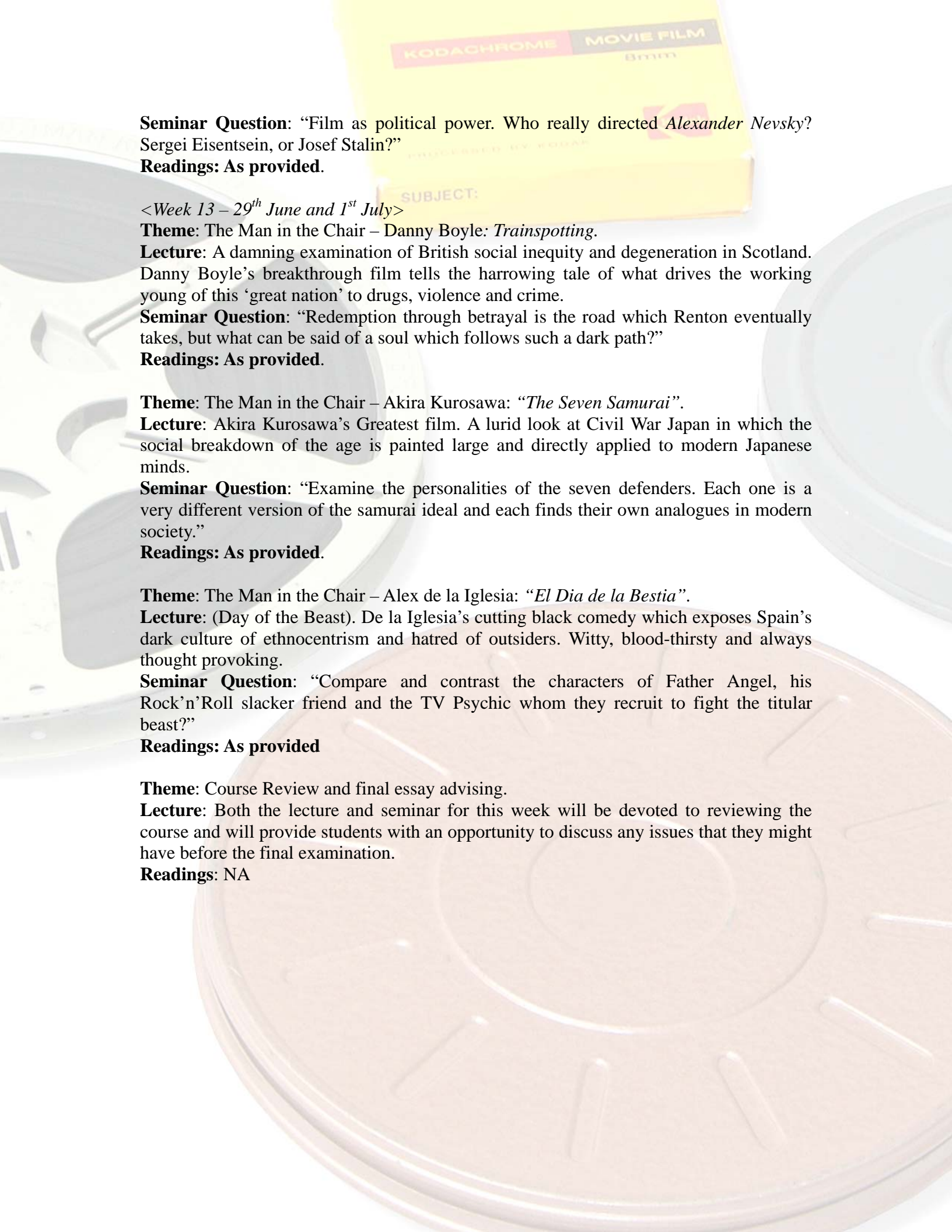
**Lecture:** Starring Ozu regulars Chishu Ryu and Setsuko Hara, the film reprises one of the director’s favorite themes that of generational conflict in a way that is quintessentially Japanese and yet so universal in its appeal that it continues to resonate as one of cinema’s greatest masterpieces.

**Seminar Question:** “More than simply a parable of an aging society, this quiet film whispers a tornado into our ears as filmgoers. How can such a placid vehicle be so profound?”

**Readings:** As provided.

**Theme:** *The Man in the Chair – Sergei Eisenstein: Alexander Nevsky.*

**Lecture:** One of the great masterpieces of World Cinema, this retelling of the 1236-1242 invasion of Russia by Teutonic and Swedish forces and their defeat at the hands of the eponymous hero. Directed by Eisenstein at a time of great ill will between Germany and Russia, this film is both a triumph of art and a masterpiece of political propaganda.



**Seminar Question:** “Film as political power. Who really directed *Alexander Nevsky*? Sergei Eisentsein, or Josef Stalin?”

**Readings:** As provided.

<Week 13 – 29<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July>

**Theme:** The Man in the Chair – Danny Boyle: *Trainspotting*.

**Lecture:** A damning examination of British social inequity and degeneration in Scotland. Danny Boyle’s breakthrough film tells the harrowing tale of what drives the working young of this ‘great nation’ to drugs, violence and crime.

**Seminar Question:** “Redemption through betrayal is the road which Renton eventually takes, but what can be said of a soul which follows such a dark path?”

**Readings:** As provided.

**Theme:** The Man in the Chair – Akira Kurosawa: “*The Seven Samurai*”.

**Lecture:** Akira Kurosawa’s Greatest film. A lurid look at Civil War Japan in which the social breakdown of the age is painted large and directly applied to modern Japanese minds.

**Seminar Question:** “Examine the personalities of the seven defenders. Each one is a very different version of the samurai ideal and each finds their own analogues in modern society.”

**Readings:** As provided.

**Theme:** The Man in the Chair – Alex de la Iglesia: “*El Dia de la Bestia*”.

**Lecture:** (Day of the Beast). De la Iglesia’s cutting black comedy which exposes Spain’s dark culture of ethnocentrism and hatred of outsiders. Witty, blood-thirsty and always thought provoking.

**Seminar Question:** “Compare and contrast the characters of Father Angel, his Rock’n’Roll slacker friend and the TV Psychic whom they recruit to fight the titular beast?”

**Readings:** As provided

**Theme:** Course Review and final essay advising.

**Lecture:** Both the lecture and seminar for this week will be devoted to reviewing the course and will provide students with an opportunity to discuss any issues that they might have before the final examination.

**Readings:** NA