

History/HRS 169 – Essay Question for Exam #3

Spring 2018

On the final exam you will be asked to write an essay of at least 250 words on the following question. Be sure to make reference to relevant films to back up your point of view.

Although American society and culture in the 1950s is often portrayed as static and conformist, Hollywood films in the period show a dynamic culture in transition from the end of World War II in 1945 to the upheavals of the 1960s.

What do the films 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers' 1955, 'My Darling Clementine' 1947, 'The Searchers' 1955, 'The Seven Year Itch' 1955, 'Rebel without a Cause' 1955, 'Inherit the Wind' 1960, and 'The Imitation of Life' 1959 tell us about American society and culture in the 1950s. You might include conflict between old and new ideas, patriotic confidence, paranoia about external threats, the image of American women (Marilyn Monroe) held by American men, attitudes of men and women toward sexuality, teenage rebellion, relations between parents and children, the easing of racist attitudes ('Imitation of Life' and 'The Searchers' 1955), etc.

Choose five films. Don't try to depict all aspects of 50s culture (way too much), but just selected, interesting features from the films you have chosen. Don't just list observations, but make an attempt to organize them into a coherent whole.