History 116
Studies in Narrative: history, fiction and storytelling

This course examines the fraught relationship between historical and literary narratives, two inter-dependent but often opposed forms of story-telling. It will look at works that raise the issue of veracity and story-telling, including fictions like Graham Swift's Waterland, films such as Kurasawa's Rashomon and Simon Schama's Dead Certainties. It will also investigate in some detail the works of American, French and Italian historians who have tried to solve this problem by turning to so-called micro-history.

Winter 2008
Professor John Brewer
Office: 313 Dabney
Email address: jbrewer@hss.caltech.edu; jbcaltech@yahoo.com
Class times: Wednesdays, 7-10pm
Secretary Sabrina Boschetti sabrina@hss.caltech.edu

Requirements:
2 take-home examinations, one at mid-term and one due at the end of classes.
The mid-terms will consist of two essay answers to a number of questions. Each essay should be eight to ten pages.
Students can substitute a paper for one of the examinations with the consent of the instructor

Week 1
9 January
Introduction
Screening: Kurasawa, Rashomon

Week 2
16 January
Discussion – Rashomon
http://www.willamette.edu/~rloftus/film/rashoreview.html

Discussion: *Graham Swift, Waterland
Vintage, 1992
ISBN 0679739793

Week 3
23 January
Discussion: Swift, Waterland.
Screening: Roberto Rossellini, Paisa

Week 4
30 January
Rossellini, Paisa and Realism
Discussion: Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History
Week 5
6 February
Screening: Dead Certainties
Discussion: Simon Schama, Dead Certainties, (Unwarranted Speculations) Vintage Books; Reprint edition (June 1992)

Week 6
13 February
Microhistory:
David Bell on microhistory – handout
Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe
by Edward Muir (Editor), Guido Ruggiero (Editor), Eren Branch (Translator) Johns Hopkins Univ Pr; (September 1991)
ISBN: 0801841836
History and Theory, 38 (1999), pp. 100-10.

Week 7
20 February
Screening: The Return of Martin Guerre

Week 8
27 February
Discussion: Natalie Zemon Davis, The Return of Martin Guerre
Harvard Univ. Press; Reprint edition (September 1984)
Discussion: John Brewer, A Sentimental Murder

Week 9
5 March
Discussion:
A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812
by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich Vintage Books; Reprint edition (June 1991)
ISBN: 0679733760
Discussion: A Midwife’s Tale.

Week 10
12 March
Conclusion