

THAMES VALLEY NETWORK



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Events Day HISTORY ON FILM (Harlots or Heroines? Women in the 18th Century on Film and TV)

Yolande Paterson Theatre, St Helen's & St Katherine's school, Faringdon Road
Abingdon OX14 1BE
Tuesday 28th May 2019

The aim of the course is to examine the value of the four films as works of history. Attention will be given to the screenplay, visual effects, music and so on to demonstrate that realism and a large budget is not always the best way to either stimulate interest or enhance understanding.

Justin Hardy is the country's leading maker of historical films who has spent his working life developing historical film as a medium to both entertain and instruct. He is best known for *37 Days: The Countdown to World War 1*, the British TV mini-series shown on BBC in March 2014. He has made numerous films about the period 1660-1820, including *A Harlot's Progress*.

Laurence Brockliss is emeritus professor of Early-Modern French History at the University of Oxford who is a specialist on eighteenth-century Britain and Europe.

Provisional Programme:

- 10.00 – 10.30 Registration and coffee
- 10.30 – 10.40 Welcome, intro. & housekeeping
- 10.40 – 11.40 The Empress: Catherine the Great of Russia
Film: Catherine the Great (1996). Dir. Marvin J Chomsky and John Goldsmith
- 11.40 – 11.50 Comfort break
- 11.55 – 13.00 The Queen: Marie Antoinette
Film: Marie Antoinette (2007). Dir. Sofia Coppola
- 13.00 – 14.00 Lunch
- 14.05 – 15.00 The Kept Woman: Emma Hamilton
Film: Bequest to the Nation (1973). Dir. James Cellan Jones
- 15.00 – 15.45 The Prostitute: Hogarth's Harlot
Film: A Harlot's Progress (2006) Dir. Justin Hardy
- 15.45 – 16.00 Roundup

PLEASE NOTE: Disabled parking is available. Please ensure you use the gate to the general car park, not Deliveries!

The Events Day Fee is £12 TVN U3A members, £14 for non-TVA U3A members, which includes participation in the full programme, tea/coffee at registration and a cold buffet. Please inform Fay of any dietary requirements.

Directions will be detailed in Joining Instructions, which will be circulated one month ahead of the actual event.

All enquiries to Fay Sinai (fay.sinai@icloud.com) Ph. 07773635261/01235 537677

Harlots or Heroines? Women in the Eighteenth Century on Film and TV

In eighteenth-century Britain and Europe men and women had separate and clearly defined roles. If women were never confined to the household, as they were in some parts of the world, they were subjected to a much stricter code of morality than men and were not expected to have any involvement in public life: the ideal wife in all levels of society was loyal, supportive and self-effacing, even if she had to contribute to the family income. The reality, however, could be very different, and many eighteenth-century women lived lives that their contemporaries, male and female, found shocking. Such women have long attracted the attention of historical biographers, and the interest since the 1970s and the birth of the women's movement has only grown. Film makers have been just as keen to transfer the lives of these unconventional women to the screen, and the catalogue of movies about feisty queens and scheming mistresses stretches back to the silent era.

Film is an extremely powerful medium, and a biopic, once seen, can permanently inform our understanding of an individual's life and achievements. For this reason, a well-researched and sensitive biopic can make a positive contribution to the study of the past, while a blockbuster made simply to entertain can mislead or trivialise. *Harlots or Heroines?* will explore the way in which the eighteenth-century liberated woman has been depicted in four very different films. The first is one of many films devoted to the story of the most powerful woman in eighteenth-century Europe, Catherine the Great of Russia, whose life and loves were the staple of contemporary gossip throughout her long reign. The second deals with the ill-fated Marie-Antoinette, Queen of France, whose reputation, largely undeserved, for stepping outside her appointed role, took her to the guillotine. The third film provides a window into the character and ambitions of one of the most famous mistresses of the age, Emma Hamilton, the blacksmith's daughter who infatuated Lord Nelson and was revered and vilified in equal measure. The fourth takes us away from the world of celebrity and brings us down to earth by narrating the much more common experience of an eighteenth-century lady of the night in the guise of Hogarth's London Moll. The aim of the course is to examine the value of the four films as works of history. Attention will be given to the screenplay, visual effects, music and so on to demonstrate that realism and a large budget is not always the best way to either stimulate interest or enhance understanding. Participants may wish to watch the films beforehand, where these are easily available, or any others that deal with the same theme. Excerpts will be shown during the day.